The Fighting 36th HISTORICAL Quarterly

COVER STORY

Battalion Commander

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POWs never

forget war

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Battalion Commander

by Ray Wells

141st Infantry Regiment

MAJOR LANDRY AND RAY WELLS

COVER STORY

Milton J. Landry born January 22, 1914 in Calcasieu Parrish, Louisiana, graduated from Luling High School in 1932. He graduated from Texas A&M in 1936. Milton first entered the service at the age of fifteen and before he entered Texas A&M he was acting First Sergeant of I Company, 141st Infantry Regiment of the 36th Infantry Division when he was nineteen years old. He studied Military Science and Tactics at A&M and when he graduated from Texas A&M he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant. His first assignment with the Army was to the 23rd Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division, Fort Sam Houston under the Thompson Act. He was at Fort Sam for one year and his next assignment was as an officer with the CCC's (Civilian Conservation Corps). Following that assignment he worked with the Public Health Service for some time and then was called back to active service. Milton was first ordered to report to the Port of Embarkation, San Francisco for shipment to the Philipines. The same day he also received an order to report to the Commander of Fort Hauchuaca, Arizona and then for the third time the same day he was ordered to report to Major General Birkhead in San Antonio, Texas. With three orders in his hands ordering him to report to three different locations, he did what all good soldiers are taught to do, he took the initiative and called General Birkhead and was told to ignore the first two orders and within a few hours he received a TWX cancelling the first two orders. A Lieutenant Groom then received orders to replace Landry for shipment to the Philipines. Later Lt. Groom was promoted to Captain and later was killed on Corrigidor.

During an interview with Col. Landry in his home in San Antonio, the day after the Reunion of the 36th Division Association in Austin he told me of another incident that happened during the voyage to Salerno, QUOTE "A man from 'E Company' came to see me. He said that he was Captain Chapin's Orderly and wanted me to talk to his Company Commander for him. I forget this man's name but I believe his nickname was Sweet Pea. He was not called this by anyone except it be a good friend because Sweet Pea was anything but a Pansy. He was one fighting machine. I said. 'What can I do for you? I want my BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) back, any man can be an orderly but I came over here to kill Germans, so please talk to Captain Chapin for me. He was given his BAR back and placed in a combat squad. And during the landing he proved that he was indeed a fighting soldier. He attacked an armored car and received a bullet through his left arm. The same bullet also went through the stock of his BAR. He wouldn't go to the aid station because he was afraid that he would be taken to the hospital ship. I asked Father Fenton to escourt Sweet Pea to the aid station and to see that he was treated for his wound and then return him to his squad. That afternoon we received orders to change direction and attack the hills to the South of us which included an area known as Agropole, where naval guns had been placed by the enemy for defense of Salerno. The next morning a native who owned and farmed the side of the hill we were on, brought me two eggs in a shiny tin plate. I took out my knife and fork from my mess kit and prepared myself to partake

of this lovely feast. One taste of the eggs and I thought I had been poisoned. I later found out that the eggs had been cooked in raw olive oil which is very bitter. The well intentioned Italian had worked in Pennsylvania after World War I, where he worked as a coal miner. He saved his earnings, returned to Italy and bought two acres on the side of the mountain.'' UNQUOTE.

Up to the time when Col. Landry became Battalion Commander of the 2nd Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, he had served as CO of several of the companies, Regimental Service Company Commander, Regimental Supply Officer, 2nd Battalion Executive Officer and then as Battalion Commander. He was assigned to his last position in the 36th Division when the Regimental Commander Col Werner was wounded and the then 2nd Battalion Commander Lt. Colonel Wyatt took command of the Regiment. This transition took place in October 1943 prior to the attack on San Pietro. The mission of the 2nd Battalion was to make a frontal attack from the Southwest to prevent the enemy from reinforcing the German troops who were defending the San Pietro against the 143rd who were attacking from the Northeast. The Company Commanders in the 2nd Battalion were: Captain John Chapin who was wounded in the attack of Company 'E', Captain Hammer CO of 'F Company' who was killed in the attack, Captain Beecham CO of 'G Company' wounded. Captain Glenn the Commander of 'H Company' remained at Mt. Rotondo in order to direct the mortars and machine guns in support of the attack. One section of 'H Company' was armed with air cooled 30 cal. machine guns for the attack and accompanied the Rifle companies. Ray Wells led one squad of machine guns and Douglas Shepherd the other squad. Sgt. Jones acted as Section Sergeant (he was later reported missing in action during the Rapido crossing). All men in Sgt. Wells' squad were wounded during the attack on San Pietro and several received Silver Stars.

The TWX revoking the assignment to Fort Hauchuca assigned Lt. George Vernan Holmes to that position. Milton said that he had not recognized the name of Holmes at the time but a year later at Fort Benning he met the man and it turned out to be the Cadet Colonel at Texas A&M when they were both in school. Milton had always known him as Barney. Milton saw Barney again several years later when the Regiment had boarded ships at Oran North Africa in preparation for the invasion of Salerno, Italy. Landry was notified that there would be a group of officers from the War Department who would be observing the beach landing. Since the gang plank had already been taken up and we were about to shove off, these officers all Lt. Colonels were required to climb the Jacob's ladder. Who was in charge of these Lt. Colonels? None other than Lt. Colonel George Vernan Holmes. During the trip to Salerno the Infantry Officers would tell these Lt. Cols. that they should try to go in with the Infantry because it was going to be a surprise to the enemy and the Infantry would be way inland before the enemy realized it and the Artillery would have the most casualties. Then the Artillery officers would tell them that they better wait and go in with the Artillery because it was a known fact that the Infantry received the bulk of the casualties. After changing the landing list

several times, these Lt. Cols. were a confused bunch. In fact one of them went into shock or some disorder and never did make it to the beach. Col. Holmes was never a victim of this hoax but did state that he wanted to go in with Major Landry because anyone who could get out of an assignment to Fort Huachuca could get out of anything.

In fact a great many men were killed or wounded during the attack on San Pietro due to land mines, sniper fire, artillery and even bombs from German dive bombers. The Battalion attacked at 8:00 hours and at 11:00 hours Major Landry informed Regiment that the Battalion had lost so many men that it was difficult to make any headway and asked for further orders. He was told that the Army Commanding General Order was to continue the attack as long as there was one man able to hold and fire his rifle. The attack continued.

The following was quoted by Milton Landry to the Author in the Colonel's home in San Antonio, the day after the Reunion of the 36th Division Association Reunion which was held in Austin, Aug.-Sep. 1991.

"The orders to continue the attack came from 5th Army Headquarters and meant that we were on a suicide mission. The 2nd Battalion continued the attack until about midnight. 'L Company' from the 3rd Battalion 141st under command of Lt. Epperson reinforced us about that time. The Artillery Liaison Officer and the Sergeant Radio Operator had both been killed so Lt. Epperson took over the radio and kept in contact with the rear echelon. About daylight

Gen. Trusdale pinning Silver Star on Major Landry

we reached our objective. Lt. Epperson who was in position against a rock wall was attempting to call the artillery to have smoke laid down on our position because we found ourselves in plain sight of the enemy who were located in houses and dugouts on all sides of us. I was lying on the ground in a position so that I could tell Lt. Epperson what information I wanted him to relay to the artillery. I was in a position with my hands under my helmet so that I could move my head back and forth. I couldn't raise my head too far because when I did a sniper would take a pot shot at me. So when I did move my head back and forth my face would scrape the ground and in doing this I uncovered a metal plate which turned out to be a Coast and Geodetic Survey metal stake which meant that we should of had access to the best maps in the world but instead we were using very small scale maps where one small mark represented about 150 to 200 yards and road maps purchased from a store in Naples. (Eds. note: I believe the survey had been made around 1917). Just before 'L Company' reported to me to reinforce the Battalion an embarassing and yet a lucky event happened to me. I felt mother nature informing me that I needed to take immediate steps to relieve myself. Even on the battlefield these things happen. You don't read much about it in books, but it does happen and in some cases more there than anywhere else. Anyway, I proceeded to prepare myself for this event; first I borrowed an entrenching shovel from one of the men, looked for a secluded nook where I could have some privacy, from the Germans especially. I soon found what I thought was the perfect place behind a convenient wall. To get into the proper position I first dug a nice hole with my shovel, took off my combat jacket, unstrapped my combat trousers, then lowered my long handle drawers to half mast and the same for my undershorts. After all this I was really ready and I immediately assumed the proper position and did what comes naturally. "What a relief." I then retrieved the GI issue tissue paper from inside my helmet and completed the task. Just as I stood up to get into the proper uniform again over the wall came an assault grenade, compliments of a German soldier who saw or heard me. The grenade exploded just as it hit my arm. I wasn't badly wounded but imbedded in my arm were many small pieces of grenade which looked like fish scales or bakelight. What a sight I must of looked like to the enemy as I was doing this very important detail, the moon was out and shining brightly for all to see. I consider myself very lucky that it wasn't an American grenade because if it had been I wouldn't have been able to tell this story.

The terrain facing San Pietro was terraced almost the complete distance from Mt. Rotondo to the town itself and most of the terraces had a wire fence on top and near the edge. In almost every case the enemy had installed a booby trap of some kind including the dreaded bouncing betty. We had to figure a way to eliminate this hazard and we came up with an almost foolproof plan. Two of the larger men would lift me up so I could take hold of the wire and when I gave the signal they would drop me so that I could pull the wire down with me, explode the booby trap and at the same time be protected by the wall. If my superiors knew that the Battalion Commander was risking his life in

this way I am sure that I would have been reprimanded, but it did speed our advance considerably. It worked, so when they did hear of it, my Commander conveniently ignored it. When the booby traps exploded the enemy would open up with their automatic weapons and we would then attempt to locate their position. In many cases there would seem to be a black rock in the wall but actually was a hole and behind the hole in the wall a machine gun or a sniper. This position would be covered with railroad ties and dirt and very difficult to locate. Weeks before the attack aerial photographs had been taken as these positions were being prepared and it looked like to our Intelligence people that they were anti-aircraft positions. A man could be placed in the dugout with some water and cheese which was issued in a tube like toothpaste, bread and ammunition and he could stay in that position for days without being relieved. Until someone discovered that it wasn't a black hole in the wall, the machine gunner or sniper could fire until our troops came up to his position, withdraw back into the dugout and commence firing again when we passed him by. After we found out about this, the position would be eliminated with a bazooka or grenade. We received many casualties from these positions alone.

After we finally arrived into position we called for smoke to be laid down and not getting any, I ordered the radio operator to call in the clear and to inform them of our position and to aim for exactly that point. We were soon receiving smoke but it was the wrong kind and coming from the wrong direction. It was phosphorus so I called to inform the rear echelon that the Germans were firing phosphorus but told that it was impossible because the Germans didn't have any. As it turned out when we later captured their ammo dump, they did have plenty of 4.2 canisters of phosphorus shells all with U.S. markings. The Russians had been supplied with the phosphorus shells and the Germans had captured them and in turn used them on us. Later a German sniper hit the antenna of the radio, the bullet then hit Lt. Epperson's helmet, entered the helmet and came out the other side. Lt. Epperson never received a scratch but you couldn't put a piece of tissue paper between the bullet and his forehead. Just shortly before noon we received orders to withdraw. Out of the battalion and one rifle company our strength was only about 40 people, including myself, three or four officers and thirty-six enlisted men. In returning to the rear we were under continuous enemy fire so we had to crawl and use whatever cover we could find. While crawling back to Mt. Rotondo I could see my old O.P. where Captain Lehman my Executive Officer was. All the trees looked as if a large mower had been used on the side of the hill. There were many 88 shells stuck in sand bags which had not exploded. We received more casualties as we were returning to the rear which was about 200 yards away. After returning to my Observation Post then it hit me; all those young healthy brave men dead, some blown to bits never to be identified, what a terrible and dreadful feeling came over me. I know that I did my best to keep them safe and out of harms way the best way I knew how and to get the job done at the same time. We did have casualties and I was their Commander and that is when I could no longer hold those feelings inside of me, I sat down and cried, they were my boys and I loved each and every one of these splen-

did American men. The next day the enemy had pulled out and we were ordered to go forward even further than the position we had attained the previous day. We took a position around the San Pietro cemetery, dug in and were ready for our next assignment. While at this position the enemy would lay a few rounds of shells in the cemetery and then fire for effect on the top of the mountain just above us and to our left. Every night we would send a patrol to the road junction of #69 and Highway 6 to clear the mines the enemy had placed there. Before daylight the Germans would send a patrol to replant the mines. These patrols would run into each other and a fire fight would develop. We then receive more casualties, our ranks were becoming mighty thin, only a few of us were left.

Orders came down from Regiment for me to be at Regimental Headquarters when the Division G-3 could be there. I requested that an order be published appointing Captain Henry E. Lahman who was my Battalion Executive Officer as Battalion Commander in my absence. When I reported to Regiment I was asked why I wanted this order published and I told them that since my Battalion was in contact with the enemy I did not want to be accused with leaving my Command when the Battalion was in contact with enemy troops and I did not want to leave the frontlines under those conditions. The G-3 said you can't be in contact with the enemy since the 2nd Battalion was in Division Reserve. I informed this very knowledgeable officer that as far as I could determine my Battallion were the only troops as far as I could determine in contact with the enemy at the present time. I was politely informed that I was mistaken and that my Battalion was in such and such a position and that I could not possibly be in contact with the Germans. The G-3 wanted to know if I was sure about the situation and I informed this learned gentleman that we were being shelled every morning and requested that I be shown the overlay map which should show where we were located. The overlay map did show where the G-3 said we were, but I noticed it had been placed upside down on the large map and indicted that we were on top of the mountain. Now! they suddenly found out that we were indeed the only unit in contact with the enemy and the only unit between the Division and San Vittore. The situation would have been pretty bad for Division Headquarters if the Germans had known about this foul up. I have to back track here a few weeks.

Col. Landry's story will continue in an early issue of the Quarterly.

About the Author

Raymond (Ray) Wells, born Eagle, Colorado, April 5, 1922.

My family moved to New Mexico about 1923 where my Dad worked on the Sante Fe, RR as a brakeman and conductor. In 1933 after living in several small towns along the railway my family moved to El Paso, Texas where I finished grade school and entered El Paso High School. I heard about the National Guards and enlisted in "H Company, 141st Infantry Regiment" on February 2, 1939. My first summer camp was at Camp Palacious in 1939,

next Louisiana Maneuvers during the summer of 1940 and later in 1940 a week at Donna Ana, New Mexico. I was with the 36th at Camp Bowie, Camp Blanding, Camp Edwards and then to North Africa and Italy. During the attack on San Pietro was slightly wounded and gave myself first aid. Just before Christmas of 1943 I was sent to the hospital for an operation and after a few days after returning to the Company had an attack of malaria and back in the hospital. One of the Company drivers came to the hospital and informed me of the Rapido River attack and that my brother who was also in "H Company" was missing in action. I went AWOL from the Hospital and returned to my Company as it was preparing to go across the river again. I was wounded on February 12, 1944 near Monte Cassino and finally released from the hospital in June of 1944 and returned to the states. After a month in William Beaumont Hospital, in El Paso reported to Fort Sam Houston then to Hot Springs, Arkansas. I was discharged from the Army at Fort Bliss, Texas in June of 1945. Re-entered the service this time in the Air Force at Biggs Field, El Paso, November 1947 where I was assigned as Police and Prison Sergeant. I met my wife Joyce in El Paso while I was on duty with the Freedom Train. We were married March 31, 1948. I attended Prison & Police School at Carlysle Barrack, PA then to Okinawa in November 1948. Joyce joined me in Okinawa later and our first daughter was born in Okinawa in 1950. The Korean War started and Joyce and Toni returned stateside. I was sent to Kimpo, Korea to set up a working force of 3,000 South Koreans. I had a headquarters at Kimpo, one in Seoul and one in YongDongPo. When the area was evacuated I returned to Japan and later rotated home. I was first assigned to Hamilton AFB, Calif. as Sgt. Major of the Western Air Command. My daughter Peggy was born there. Then as Sgt. Major of the Air Defense Command, Ent AFB, Co. in Colorado Springs, my son Ray, Jr. joined us there. Soon I was on the way to Furstenfeldbruck, Germany near Munich where again Joyce and the children joined me. Next assignment was to Bitburg, Germany. After three years in Germany I transferred to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska. We picked up our car at the Port in New York, drove to New Mexico then up the Alcan Highway to Alaska, camping out along this 8,000 mile trip. Our son Richard was born in Anchorage. After four years in Alaska, my next assignment was to Warren AFB, Wyoming with the Atlas Missiles. I retired from the military Aug. 1963 and after a year in Fort Worth went to work at the Denver Mint and retired from Federal Civil Service August 1983. When I retired I was the Head of the Cash Division at the Mint. We soon moved to Marstons Mills, MA on Cape Cod just seven miles from Camp Edwards. When I visited Camp Edwards I looked for and found the barracks where the 36th had lived. Many of the barracks were still in use. After four years in Mass. we packed up again and moved to Elephant Butte, NM where we intend to stay. I first heard of the 36th Division Association about 1950 and became a member. The first Reunion I attented was in Austin in 1964 and have tried to attend every one since then. When Joyce attended her first Reunion with me she found out what she had been missing and has made so many great friends she plans with me a year ahead on the next one. Now enough about me, please enjoy the following experience of a true soldier.

It's Not Always Safest In The Rear

By George Kerrigon

I joined Co. "A" 142 right after they were relieved at the Salerno Invasion and I will take off my hat to any man that went through that terrible ordeal. So I was immediately jumped on by two guys who tried to scare hell out of me. They said you will do this or you will do that, so I said if you guys had any brains, you would try to put me straight and help me instead of trying to make me a basket case. I have no idea of how I will act in combat, as I was never a Sergeant York in civilian life.

Well when I became a sergeant I always took new replacements aside and told them how it was and I am sure there isn't a man around that can't say I didn't help them to calm down. I made a point to tell of all the funny things that really happened in my group. (All these stories that were published in my name are all true and there are men from my company who will agree with me today) as crazy as they seem. I always said that there were times when things got real rough, but they were always out numbered by the comical ones.

Well in Sept. 1944, in Alsace Lorraine, France we got a lot of new replacements, so I went through my routine and had them all loosened up, and I told them that they were lucky because when we moved out tomorrow, we were going to be in reserve and I explained the whole M.O. from the division down to the platoon, the line of march was "C" Co. then "B" Co., then the weapons Company "D" and then "A" Co., ours and even our platoon was last in line. If things got rough, then our Co. would be sent up where ever we were needed, so I said we can relax but keep our eyes open and watch our flanks.

Now out of this group was a large husky Polish fellow from "Detroit, Mich. He was my age (29) and married with two kids. He was gung ho so I said I know you can use more money and as soon as possible I will try to get you some stripes. He appreciated that.

Now the next morning was a beautiful one and we started off nice and quiet and in an hour we got to a forest and we were the last to enter and it was like walking into church, so quiet.

Then when we were about 100 yards in we were hit from both sides and the rear. The Jerries were well concealed and waited till the last group passed (ours) and then opened up. What an ambush, my platoon did not panic but faced the sides and rear and fired back, then I saw the big Polish replacement go down. I ran over to him and he was calm. I yelled for a medic and luckily two were nearby with a litter. They were bringing up the rear. He was put on the litter and then in came mortars, so they left him on the ground and got behind and when the mortars stopped the medics came back and picked the litter up again. The fellow on the litter was crying now and yelling I'm hit, I'm hit. The medics said we know you are hit , that's why you are on the litter. The poor fellow was hit a second time by mortars, then with all the shooting going on a little fellow carrying a 81 m.m. mortar barrel ran in front of me, the mortar barrel looked like a Howitzer. I yelled drop it and get behind a tree. He said no and kept going, (A damn good man). As it wound up it was a short, but wild battle and we were damn lucky to get out of it with only a few casualties, (If we were in the Jerries shoes we would have killed everyone). They must have been green troops, of course, the way our men responded, it must have taken the starch out of them. Thank God we came out so well and I hope my friend made it home to his family in Detroit.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

A Night At The Jewish Hilton

By George Kerrigon

One Day in August 1944, Sam Katzman of Co"A" 142 and I were in Naples, Italy and we had just finished training for the invasion of Southern France when were given a few days off. After the usual carousing, etc. it was getting dark and as our outfit was way out in the woods with no transportation, we decided to look for a place to shack up for the night. A couple of nights before I was taken in by the U.S. Navy and was treated like royalty. They thought the world of the Infantry. An officer took me upstairs and told a sailor to set up a bed and give me all the food I could eat. He asked my religion as the next day was Sunday, then he

gave me the time of the Masses and said he would have me called the next morning in time for breakfast. He had all the ingredients ready for me to shower, eat and go to church and told me to feel free to come back for lunch or supper. What a beautiful way to make a dog face happy. God bless the Navy!

Now this time we were miles away from the Navy and no transportation, so we looked around and then saw these fellows in British uniforms and on their arms I saw "Jerusalum", so Sam a Philadelphia Jew, starting speaking Hebrew to one. He answered Hebrew, then Sam said come on, he is going to take us to their barracks and will get an officer so we can ask him in person. I said fine let's go. On the way one fellow walked over to me and said, aren't you fellows Americans? I said yes, why do you ask? He said that friend of yours must think we don't speak English. I said maybe he thought you were Arabs, that brought a roar from him.

Well we went a few blocks and reached their barracks and waited while one went inside and spoke to the officer in charge. He come out and we gave him a high ball (a salute) and told him our story. He said yes I have heard about the 36th Infantry Division and we will be glad to put you up for the night, come in. We entered the first room and talk about discipline, everyone stood up like ram rods. There were about fourteen cots in the room, about ten were made up, so he said make up a bunk for this man (Sam) and they all roared yes sir. Then he took me into the next room and a load of sergeants flew to attention. He said fix this sergeant a bunk and they all yelled yes sir. I said pardon me sir, but I saw a few empty bunks in the next room, can't I stay in there with my buddy? He said they are all privates in there and you are a non commissioned officer. I said I beg your pardon sir but I fight, eat and sleep in the same fox hole with that little Jew while in combat so if it is all right with you sir I would like to sleep in the next room with my buddy. If I were alone I would be proud to bunk with your non coms. He said if that's what you want Sergeant follow me and back we went to the other room. The men all came to attention. He said make up a bunk for this sergeant. He prefers to sleep in the same room with his friend. I gave him all the courtesy I could think of and he shook my hand and said have a pleasant sleep and if you need anything just tell these men.

Well when he left those privates treated me like "Moishe Dayan", one of their heroes. They had never seen anything like that in their army. Today Sam and I see each other each year at the "Mid West Reunion". He lives in Mountain View, Georgia near Atlanta.

The 88MM Flak-Gun

by Francis S. Quinn, Staff Writer

FORTY AND EIGHTER

THE 636th TD

88s AS THEY WERE DESIGNED FOR ANTI-AIRCRAFT USE. Highly mobile, these 88s are shown in North Africa where Rommel's brilliant innovative use of the weapons began.

General Erwin Rommel, Commander of the Afrika Korps, looked bleakly at the low Libyan hills, the sparsely covered slopes, the rocks, the sand...He had many problems, one of which was Allied armor. He had anti-tank weapons: the 28/20mm PAK 41, the 37mm PAK, and the 75mm gun mounted on Mark III and Mark IV tanks. But they just couldn't do the job he wanted done.

His other main problem was his supply line. It was practically non-existent. Short on food and ammunition, he was going to have to fight with what he had...No more, no less.

He was interrupted in his concentration by the movement of blue uniformed figures, members of the Luftwaffe, the German Air Force. Their uniforms had red piping to identify them as anti-aircraft gun crews.

He looked past the blue uniforms, saw a gun emplaced at the side of the road, its long barrel pointed through its camouflage net toward the cloudless blue sky. Rommel's chin rose in sudden decision and a grim smile played on his lips. The reputation of the 88mm FLAK gun was about to begin!

Of all the weapons the Germans had in World War II, the one most respected by the Allied Armies was the 88mm gun. Its reputation soared as World War

II lasted, but it reached its first notoriety under Rommel.

Rommel did not invent the use of the 88mm anti-aircraft gun as an anti-tank weapon. The Germans had experimented with it in the Spanish Civil War and found it to be very effective against the light armored vehicles of the Loyalists.

It was used again briefly in Poland and the Battle of France, but with a difference. Secretly developed 88mm armor-piercing ammunition that could knock out any armor the Allied had was used.

Rommel was aware of the possibilities inherent in the 88. He also had been supplied with three types of 88mm ammunition, although with his supply line in chaos he knew he was limited.

His ammunition consisted of anti-aircraft high explosive (HE) for shooting down aircraft, normal HE for use against enemy personnel and material ground targets, and (*most important*) armor-piercing ammunition for use against heavily armored tanks.

Thus, he could use the 88mm FLAK guns as anti-aircraft, as field artillery, and as tank destroyers. You better believe it, Rommel knew what he had, even if others did not.

The diminutive Afrika Korps, consisting of remnants of two divisons, was sent to Libya in February of 1941 to save Tripoli for Mussolini. Composed of both German and Italian troops, it became known as Panzerarmee Afrika.

Despite three major blunders by Rommel at Tobruk, Sidi Rezegh and his attack at El Alamein in July 1942, the battle-tried Panzers had proved to be more than a match for the Allies.

The legend of the Afrika Korps grew as the German Army continued to fight superbly. There was no doubt that one of the main reasons for this was Rommel's brilliant use of his 88s.

Certainly, Rommel had tanks such as the Mark IIIs and IVs, mounted with their high velocity 75mm guns. He also used them as field artillery. In fact, there were many artillery combinations of guns ranging from the 20mm FLAK 30 to a huge but very cumbersome 380mm gun. As it turned out, however, none were as important to victory as the 88mm FLAK.

As Rommel stood watching the blue-clad cannoneers go through their drills with their 88mm guns pointed toward the sky, he remembered the lessons learned in Spain, in Poland and in France. Here was a gun, comparatively mobile, with a muzzle velocity of 2,690 that could shoot straighter than anything else he had. This was a gun that was particularly adaptable to the gradual, sometimes almost flat, gentle contours of desert country.

Could it knock out the Allied tanks on the ground as well as they could bring down Allied planes from the sky? How would it succeed against the new American Grants and Shermans the 8th Army was getting?

What did Rommel decide? First, he never let the 88mm FLAK guns get completely away from their primary anti-aircraft missions, but acted according to the situation.

On grounding offenses, he set up tank-proof sites along the front lines. These locations included 88mm guns for protection against tank attacks. The 88s in

turn were supported by smaller tank weapons...These points were never seriously threatened by the Allies and some fell only because their food supplies gave out.

The 88s on offense followed closely behind German armored vehicles such as the Mark III and IV tanks. When the action stabilized, the 88s went into position and a tank-proof "ring" organized around them with the 88s as the core.

In the battle at Bir Hacheim, the Germans had 60 Mark IIIs and IVs and 12 88s. The British attacked with 50 light and medium American tanks with a second regiment of 50 tanks soon joining the action. The British never had a chance. Why? The Germans had the 88s; the Allies did not. In 10 minutes the 88s destroyed 8 American medium tanks of the follow-up regiment. Some 16 American tanks were lost in the battle, all victims of the 88mm gun.

By moving at dusk or at night, the 88s were in new positions at dawn. Later, in Europe, with the 88mm also mounted on Tiger and Panther tanks, similar tactics were used...in Italy, in France, and in Germany itself in the last ditch stands of the Axis.

How many 88mm FLAK guns Rommel had is not certain, but the manner in which he moved them around made it seem much larger in numbers than there actually were.

Outstanding results of Rommel's use of the 88s came at the action at Cyrenaica, Tobruk, and Gazala until Rommel was finally stopped at Alamein.

For reasons of their own, the British tagged the Afrika Korps supermen and this superman concept stuck with them right to the end. However, supermen they were not. Courageous, yes...Most importantly, the Afrika Korps had Rommel to lead them.

Shouldn't the Afrika Korps have won the war in North Africa, especially with the tremendous advantage of having those 88s?

Who really knows what would have happened if the Germans had not had such terrible supply lines. Supply was almost non-existent. Often, the Axis soldiers had to subsist on captured British rations. No Army was worse-fed or in poorer health in World War II than Rommel's Afrika Korps. Even Rommel himself, twice became extremely ill.

Hitler (or his staff) at first did not take North Africa seriously, until it was too late—by then the Americans had begun to arrive in ever increasing numbers.

Hitler, meanwhile, had his hands full elsewhere, employing two thirds of his military forces at the Russian Front. Ironically, Rommel lost in North Africa because his victories came at a time when little or nothing could be done to reinforce and supply the Axis force there.

In looking back over the North African Campaign, even if Rommel's men had gotten good food and adequate ammunition, a German victory was still open to question. A significant change was occurring. The American M10 Tank destroyer had shown up and American battalions of tank destroyers had fought against Rommel, often with considerable success. Those M10s, the improved M18s and the terrifying 90mm M36s were to give the German armor

GIs FIRE CAPTURED 88 AT GERMANS during the battle for Metz.

fits on the mainland in Europe. The M18 was a more thinly armored version of the M10, with the same gun. The M36 was armored much like the M10 and, like the German 88mm gun, its 90mm gun was an adaptation from an anti-aircraft weapon.

The end of the Afrika Korps, however, was not the end of the 88 as the Allies found out. For example, on the Russian front, a new Russian tank that was extremely mobile and armored heavily enough to withstand most German anti-tank weapons, threatened to run wild over the battle areas. In desperation, the Germans turned the AA 88s into AT 88s and stopped the Russian tanks.

In addition, 88s already had begun to appear mounted on several different self-propelled chassis, the most reknowned and deadly of these being the Panzerkampfwagen Tiger I and Tiger II tanks (early models of which had existed at the beginning of World War II) and the Panzerjager (Jagdpanther) Panther tanks.

Most military historians agree that the 88 was among the most versatile of weapons used during WWII. It ranks with the Jeep, the 2½ ton truck and the C-47 cargo aircraft as important equipment used in innovative fashion.

Anzio

by Brigadier General Felix L. Sparks, AUS (Ret.)
45th Infantry Division

After the passage now of some forty years, I still vividly remember many of the tragic events and bizarre situations which took place following the Allied landings at Anzio on January 22, 1944. Only a month before the landing, I had returned to the regiment after a period of hospitalization for wounds received in the early part of the Italian campaign.

Upon my return, I reassumed command of my old unit, Company E, but found that about half of the men who had landed with me at Salerno were no longer around. After Anzio, none of these original soldiers were left, although a few later returned after recovery from wounds.

As an infantry captain at that time, I received very little information about the grand strategy being employed by the Allied forces. In early January of 1944, the officers of the regiment and division were informed that we would become a part of the VI Corps for a landing at Anzio, with the mission of securing Rome. When my company subsequently landed at Anzio several days after the initial landing, events seemed to be well in hand and I assumed that we would move rapidly inland towards Rome. This assumption did not last long.

On the second day after our landing, I was informed that our advance elements, now some fourteen miles inland, were meeting with reverses. I then received an order to relieve an engineer company along the left flank of the beachhead bordering the sea. Upon making this relief, I found that the 36th Engineer Regiment had been impressed into service as an infantry unit. Since that regiment had critical duties to perform in the port areas, I began to suspect that things were not going well on the beachhead.

As my company, along with others, was constantly being moved from one position to another within the beachhead for the next three months, I had little knowledge of the overall strategy, if any, that was being employed in the beachhead area. I do, however, have personal knowledge of what transpired within the small sphere of my rifle company. In the recent years since my retirement, I have studied various publications and historical documents relating to the Anzio campaign. In addition, I had the good fortune to receive a copy of the German Fourteenth Army Journal covering the day-by-day operations of the German forces at Anzio. This copy came to me through an old friend formerly of the 45th Division, who was stationd at the Pentagon. Excerpts from that journal are incorporated into this publication.

Most of my knowledge of the overall Anzio strategy comes from the reading of various publications and historic documents, which may or may not be entirely accurate. The observations and conclusions which I have drawn from these publications and documents and my own personal experiences also may

not be entirely accurate, particularly in view of the fact that I harbor many bitter memories of the Anzio campaign.

It will be noted that the critical battle for control of the Anzio Beachhead occurred during the period February 16-23, 1944. At the conclusion of the battle, the VI Corps commander, General Lucas, was relieved and sent back to the United States. At the conclusion of the battle, only two men were left to answer roll call in my company, out of an original strength of almost two hundred.

It was at the outset of this battle that one of the more unusual events of the war occurred. During about the first five hours of the German attack on February 16, almost half of the men of my company were either killed or wounded. Because of the constant German fire, we were unable to evacuate the wounded. At about 11:00 a.m. on that date, a German halftrack approached us bearing a white flag. As it reached our positions, a German captain dismounted and I went out to meet him. He spoke to me in good English with words to this effect: "Captain, you have many wounded and we have many wounded. Would you agree to a thirty-minute truce, so that we can both evacuate our wounded?" I immediately agreed and ordered all firing stopped. However, I did not notify any higher headquarters of this brief truce. We did evacuate all of our wounded, using the one vehicle that we had left, a 1½ ton truck. It was the only time during the entire battle that we were able to evacuate our wounded, except for the few walking wounded who were able to filter back.

With this somewhat lengthy prelude, I turn now to the setting for the Anzio landing and the events which followed.

Sometime in late October or by early November of 1943, it became apparent to the Allied high command that further progress through a sea of mud, flooding streams, high mountains and extensive German fortifications was a losing cause. With the ardent support of Winston Churchill, a bold plan was devised. The American Fifth Army would launch a major attack to secure the Liri Valley, about thirty miles beyond Cassino. Once that area was secured, a single American Division (3rd Infantry Division), assisted by paratroops, was to be landed at Anzio, about thirty miles south of Rome. The two forces would then link up, and Rome would fall. So went the scenario.

The attack to secure the Liri Valley went badly. Rain, mud and flooding rivers compounded the problem. The attack stalled short of the newly established German Gustav Line, extending north and south through Cassino. And so, for about two dreary months, the 45th Division was bogged down in the mountains near Venafro, as were the other divisions of the Fifth Army.

With utterly no chance of a linkage between the main forces and the planned Anzio troops, the Anzio excursion was abandoned. But wait! Now comes Winston Churchill to the rescue. Disdaining the advice of the British and American commanders on the scene, Mr. Churchill takes his case to President Roosevelt, who was no match for the wily Churchill. And so the Anzio invasion was ordered at the highest level.

On January 10, 1944, the 45th Division was relieved in the mountains above Venafro by a French division and sent into bivouac near Naples. The rest was most welcome, but preparation for Anzio became the order of the day. An unsurmountable problem with the forthcoming invasion of Anzio was the lack of invasion ships. Most of the available shipping had already been dispatched to England for the scheduled June invasion of France across the English Channel. With the limited shipping, the largest force that could be landed at Anzio at one time was two infantry divisions, plus supporting troops. Turnaround time for the ships from Naples to Anzio was estimated at three days.

And so it was that the early morning of January 22, 1944, found the American VI Corps, under the command of Major General John P. Lucas, landing at Anzio. The landing caught the German army by surprise, and there was no initial German opposition. Properly planned and supported, the Anzio landing could have been a brilliant tactical maneuver leading to the immediate fall of Italy. Instead, it became the bloodiest piece of real estate ever occupied by American and British forces during World War II.

At the time of the landing, the American VI Corps consisted of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, the British First Infantry Division, two tank battalions, four paratroop battalions, commandos, rangers and supporting troops. Remaining divisions of the corps, the U.S. 45th Infantry and 1st Armored divisions were still in Naples awaiting pick-up by the returning ships. While the initial landing was unopposed, the Germans reacted swiftly. Various units in Northern Italy, France, Yugoslavia and Germany had been designated previously as defense forces in the event of such an allied landing. No troops were withdrawn from the Gustav Line as the Allied commanders had hoped for.

General Lucas was a cautious man. What he actually was ordered to do by his immediate superior, General Clark, has never been made clear. In any event, he assumed that his first priority was to establish a secure beachhead. He apparently had no intention of advancing swiftly towards Rome, as Churchill raged at this presumed timidity, General Lucas began the task of consolidating the beachhead.

The 45th Division was landed at Anzio piecemeal as ships became available, although the 179th Infantry of the division landed shortly after the initial invasion. A full week passed before the entire division was ashore. By that time, German bombing of the harbor was heavy and constant. As a result, the 158th Field Artillery suffered a number of casualties in the landing. Anzio Annie was also lobbing shells into the harbor on a periodic basis. The 157th Infantry landed on January 29. An estimated 70,000 german troops were then encircling the beachhead.

By February 1, the Allied drive reached its maximum penetration by taking Campoleone on the main highway from Anzio to Rome, about fourteen miles inland. However, the Germans swiftly eliminated this penetration and drove the Allied forces rearward. On February 3, the VI Corps gave up the attack towards Rome and began digging in for the defense of the beachhead. At no time did the Allied advance ever reach the Alban Hills, the critical high ground

between Rome and Anzio. As a result, German observation covered the entire beachhead at all times.

From the time of its initial landing, the 157th Infantry has been used almost exclusively in defensive positions, mainly on the left flank of the beachhead extending to the sea. On the night of February 15, the regiment was ordered to relieve the badly battered British First Division astride the critical Rome-Anzio highway in the area of Corraceto and Aprilia (The Factory). The decisive battle for the beachhead began only a few hours later in the early morning of February 16. At the time the German Army, under orders from Adolph Hitler to remove the "abcess below Rome at all costs," launched an all-out drive to destroy the Allied forces. The ensuing battle was to last until February 23.

At the time of the German attack, the 45th Division was occupying a broad front in the central sector of the beachhead with all three infantry regiments, only the 1st Battalion of our regiment being held in division reserve. The main German attack was directed down the Albano Highway leading from Rome to the towns of Anzio and Nettuno on the beach. Two battalions of the 157th Infantry were deployed along that highway, the 2nd Battalion occupying the forward position just south of Carroceto and Aprilia (The Factory) and the 3rd Battalion occupying a blocking position along the highway about 2½ miles to the immediate rear of the 2nd Battalion.

The 2nd Battalion was the left flank battalion of the 45th Division and was deployed with E Company astride the highway and F and G Companies echeloned about 400 yards to the rear and left of E Company. E Company was reinforced by a machine gun platoon from H Company, 1 anti-tank gun and two tank destroyers from the 645th Tank Destroyer Battalion, for a total of about 230 men. I was the company commander.

About 200 yards to the immediate right of E Company was G Company, 179th Infantry Regiment. These two companies bore the brunt of the initial German attack and were virtually annihilated the first day, although the survivors were to fight on for another six days. The attack then enveloped the remainder of the 2nd Battalion of our regiment and most of the units of the 179th Infantry. By the morning of February 18 the German attack had penetrated to the highway overpass area being occupied by I Company of our regiment, some 2½ miles to the rear of our 2nd Battalion. Despite repeated German attacks and heavy casualties, I Company held its position and the German drive stalled at that point.

By the morning of February 19, the remnants of the 2nd Battalion were completely encircled by German forces. Allied counterattacks to relieve the beleaguered battalion failed, and on the night of February 22 the battalion was ordered to attempt a breakout. By daylight the next morning, 225 men of the battalion escaped through the German lines, the only survivors of an original battalion strength of almost a thousand men. Of the reinforced E Company contingent of about 230 men, only two men made it back on that final morn-

ing. However, the German attack had been broken and the beachhead was secure. From that beachhead there was ultimately launched the Allied attack which secured Rome.

There has come into my possession a copy of the German operations journal covering this battle period (German Fourteenth Army Journal). It is quite voluminous and makes interesting reading. For the purposes of this article, I have extracted some portions of that journal, as follows:

"16 February 1944. Our attack with the purpose of eliminating the enemy beachhead began. The Commander in Chief of the Fourteenth Army, with his Chief of Staff, moved at 0615 to the forward command post, located in a house 2.5 kilometers southwest of Genzano. During the night of 15 to 16 February, our assault detachments engaged the enemy along the entire army sector."

"The 65th Infantry Division and the 4th Parachute Division seized the ride south of Cle Buon Riposo and the Carroceto Valley against strong enemy resistance, including flanking fire, which prevented a further development of the attack."

"The Panzer Division Hermann Goring, attacking under support of heavy artillery fire, gained 1 kilometer of ground, but it was then forced to dig in because of the effective enemy defensive fire, which caused heavy losses. Combat training units of the Hermann Goring Panzer Division and the Parachute Demonstration Battalion were wiped out. This action occurred mainly in the area of Aprillia."

"Toward evening, the Infantry Demonstration Regiment, which had lost a large number of officers and non-commissioned officers, fell back about 500 meters without permision."

"As expected, enemy resistance was strong and determined. The enemy prevented a breakthrough, despite several crises which arose during the morning at Aprilia and southwest of Cisterna. Although we may assume that the enemy has suffered losses, strong enemy resistance and counterattacks along the entire front during 17 February must be anticipated."

"German losses: 324 killed, 1,207 wounded and 146 missing."

"Allied losses: 224 prisoners (141 British, 60 American, and 23 nationality not yet determined), and 7 tanks destroyed." (It should be noted here that the Germans did not attempt to estimate the number of Allied soldiers killed or wounded. In their journal they listed only the Allied soldiers captured and the Allied material they believed they had destroyed.)

"17 February 1944. Against stubborn enemy resistance on the ground and in the air, it was possible during night and day attacks to penetrate the enemy main line of resistance, and to win initial positions for further attacks on 18 February."

"Today the enemy's artillery fire and air bombardment was the heaviest since his landing on the beachhead. He made continuous raids in waves of 30 to 40 planes throughout the day, attacking troops, artillery positions, and rear area. The estimated Allied ammunition expenditure is 22,000 rounds."

"After previous unsuccessful attacks, the stubbornly defended strong point 2 kilometers southwest of Aprilia was taken by a frontal attack during the night of 17 to 18 February." (Note: This was the E Company position. The German version is not entirely correct. There were still 27 men and one officer left in E Company on the morning of February 18, but we were not able to stop the German advance on both sides of us. We protected our remaining pocket of men by requesting artillery fire on our own positions. The Germans then bypassed us.)

"In the afternoon, continued attacks enabled the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division to push further south and to cross the Carocetello Creek 2.5 kilometers south of Aprilia." (Note: This brought the German attack into direct contact with F and G Companies of our regiment.)

"The morale of unseasoned troops was affected by the unusually heavy artillery fire. The initially poor fighting qualities of the Infantry Demonstration Regiment have improved."

"The heavy losses of the day are expected to have weakened the enemy. However, continued resistance an be expected along the entire front."

"German losses: 222 killed, 635 wounded, and 35 missing."

"Allied losses: 571 prisoners (245 Americans, 326 British). 19 airplanes shot down and (13 by anti-craft and 6 by fighters), 17 tanks destroyed, and 4 heavy anti-tank guns destroyed. Several vehicles set afire."

"18 February 1944. Continuing our attack, the initial penetrations were enlarged in depth and width. However, no decisive breakthrough was achieved. Strong Allied counterattacks were halted by the I Parachute Corps and the LXXVI Panzer Corps."

"On 17 February, the following units were indentified on either side of the Aprilia-Anzio Highway: the 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry, 2nd Battalion, 157th Infantry, and the 2nd Battalion, 179th Infantry (adjoining the 157th Infantry Regiment, relieved elements of the 1st Infantry Division (British)." (Note: This bit of German intelligence was correct, except that the 3rd Battalion of our regiment was misidentified as the 1st Battalion. The 1st Battalion of our regiment was in division reserve in the Padiglione Woods).

"We expect the enemy will try to avoid a breakthrough on the highway to Nettuno by withdrawing all available troops from the less threatened sectors and by committing newly arrived troops. Heavy enemy losses are no indication that enemy resistance will diminish."

"German losses: 63 killed, 350 wounded, and 21 missing."

"Allied losses: 364 prisoners (293 Americans, mostly from the 179th Infantry Regiment and 2nd Battalion, 180th Infantry Regiment). 14 tanks destroyed and 4 airplaces downed by anti-aircraft fire."

"*19 February 1944.* During the day, strong enemy counterattacks, supported by tanks, forced partial withdrawals from newly gained positions. Heavy enemy artillery fire resulted in great losses and halted the attack of the 65th Infantry Division. However, the Division's left flank advanced towards the south, and in a simultaneous attack from the east by parts of the LXXVI Panzer Corps,

the strongpoint Cle Buon Riposo was encircled." (Note: The strongpoint the Germans were referring to was the one being held by the remnants of our 2nd Battalion.)

"Our attacks have confused the enemy and also brought about emergency situations in some of his units. The enemy command has repeatedly called upon isolated and dangerously placed units to hold their positions, by promising reinforcements."

"German losses: 48 killed, 167 wounded, and 25 missing."

"Allied losses: 83 prisoners and 10 tanks destroyed."

"20 February 1944. As a result of our attack from the west, the enemy was completely surrounded t Cle Buon Riposo, and a defensive front toward the south was established. During the day, an enemy tank attack was repelled." (Note: The enemy referred to at Cle Buon Riposo was the remnants of the 2nd Battalion of our regiment. Note also that for the first time, the Germans stated that they were establishing a defensive position. This was a tacit admission that the drive to the sea had failed, although the journal does not contain any direct admission of failure.)

"We aim to destroy the enemy troops surrounded in the area of Buon Riposo, and to prevent a break-through from the southwest designed to assist these encircled troops. To avoid losses, the Fourteenth Army ordered that the Panther tanks, brought up to clear the pocket of Buon Riposo, be used only as armored artillery." (Note: Here again was a tacit admission by the Germans that the drive to the sea had failed. There was no point in wasting time and troops against what was left of the 2nd Battalion if the attack were to continue. The fact was at this point that the Germans intended only to establish a defensive position, and the 2nd Battalion occupied a salient deep behind the main German defense line.)

"During our attempt to clear the pocket at Cle Buon Riposo, the enemy bombarded his own positions with heavy artillery fire. His troops were protected against this, as they had taken shelter in the caves and ravines to be found in that terrain. Our own fire could not reach them. It has become very difficult to evacuate the wounded. All ambulances, including the armored ones, have been lost, making it necessary to use assault guns and Tiger tanks for the evacuation." (This German action against the remnants of our 2nd Battalion became known as the Battle of the Caves.)

"On 19 February, the enemy supplied his surrounded troops at Cle Buon Riposo by air. Air reconnaissance reports show active disembarkation in the Anzi-Nettuo harbor."

"German losses: 61 dead, 211 wounded and 8 missing. Total losses from 16 to 20 February: 5,389 men."

"Allied losses: 62 prisoners, (53 British, 9 Americans), and 1 tank put out of commission. According to prisoner of war reports, the enemy lost many heavy infantry weapons."

"21 February 1944. Our aims are: First, the destruction of enemy positions at Cle Buon Riposo by the morning of 22 Feburay. Second, the immediate

relief of the forces of the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division west of the Aprilia-Nettuno highway. Third, the seizure of Colle del Posso by about 24 February." (Note that the Germans now gave a high priority to the complete elimination of our 2nd Battalion. This was because the battalion was now a thorn in the German defense line.)

"German losses: 84 killed, 236 wounded, and 8 missing."

"Allied losses: 4 tanks destroyed, 1 tank rendered immobile, and 1 radio station captured."

"22 February 1944. The attack to destroy the enemy pocket at Cle Buon Riposo did not succeed. Under a heavy enemy barrage, the troops had to fight in difficult terrain with deep ravines. Up to the present, 150 prisoners have been brought in."

"By order of Hitler, tank assaults in small groups will be made prior to the attack from and south of the area of Borgo Podgora in the direction of the Mussolini Canal." (Note: At this point the Germans decided to give up their attack against the central sector of the beachhead and try against the right flank of the beachhead. This sector was occupied by the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division, paratroop units and special forces. The German attack failed.)

"German losses: 86 killed, 232 wounded, and 84 missing."

"Allied losses: 265 prisoners (75 from Cle Buon Riposo), 5 tanks destroyed and 2 tanks put out of commission."

Note: On the night of February 22, the 2nd Battalion of the Queen's Royal Regiment received an ill-advised order to attempt a relief of our encircled 2nd Battalion, 157th Infantry. Suffering over fifty percent casualties in the process, the valient men of this British battalion did indeed reach our positions. Our 2nd Battalion then attempted to fight its way back through the German lines, leaving behind the many wounded under the care of the battalion surgeon, Dr. Peter C. Graffagnino, and his small detachment of aid men. Only a portion of the remaining men in the battalion made it back through the German lines that night. The fate of the wounded and of the British battalion which relieved us is described in the German journal under date of 23 February 1944, as follows:

"23 February 1944. After a brief artillery preparatory fire, the 65th Infantry division renewed its attack at 0530 against the encircled enemy at Cle Buon Riposo. Supported by self-propelled guns, we succeeded in penetrating the enemy's defensive system. Two enemy relief attacks, in battalion strength from the south, were repulsed after heavy fighting."

"German losses: 33 killed, 184 wounded, and 8 missing."

"Allied losses: 402 prisoners (majority from 2nd Battalion, 157th Infantry, and 2nd Battalion Queen's Own), and 1 tank put out of commission."

And so you have the German version of their attempt to eliminate the Anzio Beachhead, with emphasis on the Battle of the Caves, along with my editorial comments. During this prolonged battle, the 2nd Battalion, 157th Infantry, suffered about 75% casualties as a battalion, E Company casualties were 99%, and the casualties in the 2nd Battalion, Queen's Royal regiment were 100%.

The two E Company survivors on the last night were Platoon Sergeant Leon Siehr and Captain Felix L. Sparks. Sergeant Siehr was killed during the subsequent breakout in Rome.

From my many observations during this crucial battle, I would say that the greatest number of German casualties occurred as the result of our artillery fire. On the several occasions that I called for the 158th Field Artillery to fire on my own company positions, the Germans broke off the attack. Without that fire, we most surely would have been overrun on the first morning of the attack.

Following this epic battle were several months of stalemate. While casualties were fewer, they continued to mount on a daily basis. Hitler was furious, Churchill was furious, and General Lucas was relieved of command on February 23, the final day of the battle. Ironically, it was General Lucas who relieved General Dawley after the Salerno debacle. Both men were returned to the United States in semi-disgrace. Personally, I have always believed that higher heads should have rolled in both cases.

The brunt of ther German drive to eliminate the Anzio Beachhead in February of 1944 fell squarely on the 45th Infantry Division. Every regiment of the division suffered heavy casualties. Casualties in our regiment alone numbered nearly a thousand. Subsequently, the Presidential Citation was awarded to all units of the Second Battalion and to Company I of the Third Battalion.

Although the German drive to the sea failed, there was no opportunity for the beleaguered Allied units to rest and relax. The Germans still beleived that they could eliminate the beachhead and began bringing in reinforcements. Allied reinforcements and replacements were also coming in. The battered companies of the 45th Division were brought back to nearly full strength and sent back into battle. Almost all of the new men were fresh recruits from the States. I had only a few days to organize and train a new Company E, but the new men responded well.

The next three months following the February battle brought on a war of attrition. There were casualties every hour of every day. Because of the constant German bombing and artillery fire, being in the rear areas was almost as hazardous as being on the front line. In the hospital areas, nearly a hundred medical and personnel were killed, including six nurses. Because the entire beachhead was under direct German obsrevation, virtually all movement and resupply took place at night.

In the meantime, Allied units to the south were being heavily reinforced with additional troops, including free French and Polish units. Intensive preparations were under way for a major spring offensive against the German Gustav Line. On the night of May 11, 1944, the American Fifth Army and the British Eighth Army launched a coordinated attack against the German forces. The success of this drive exceeded expectations, and the Germans were forced to weaken their Anzio forces to meet the threat from the south.

Of particular note in this action to the south were the fierce fighting qualities of the French Goums brought in from Africa and the free Polish division which

was assigned the formidable task of taking Monte Cassino. The Polish cemetery, later established near Monte Cassion, bears silent testimony to the terrible price which the Polish soldiers paid for their successful conquest of that mountain. Following the end of the war, the monastery on Monte Casino was completely reconstructed (with American money), and the ravages of war are not evident, except for the quiet and beautiful Polish cemetery. When I visited the monastery a few years ago, there was no friendliness evident either.

With the German situation deteriorating rapidly in the south, the VI Corps at Anzio, now reinforced by the American 34th and 36th Infantry Divisions and a considerable number of artillery battalions, launched an attack towards Rome on the morning of May 23, 1944. This attack was preceded by one of the heaviest artillery barrages of the entire war. Our regiment alone was supported by ninety-six artillery pieces. Advancing into the teeth of the German defenses and extensive mine fields, Allied casualties were nevertheless very heavy. In the first five days of the attack, over 4,000 Allied soldiers fell. Casualties were actually considerably higher than during the German February offensive. But finally on the afternoon of June 4, American troops entered Rome, some four months later than originally scheduled.

The total Allied battle casualties of Anzio numbered about 35,000. Noncombat casualties (malaria, dysentery, hepatitis, psychoneurosis, etc.) numbered about 37,000. In summary, the total casualty race was over a hundred percent of the initial landing force.

Because of the many imponderables, it is impossible to evaluate Anzio as either a great failure or a great success. I have nothing but bitter memories of the place. The fact is that it is difficult to put the entire Italian campaign in the proper perspective. Winston Churchill constantly referred to Italy as being "the soft under belly of Europe." After the initial Allied success in taking Naples, Mr. Churchill is reported to have said: "It is true, I suppose, that the Americans consider that we have led them up the garden path in the Mediterranean, but what a beautiful path it has proved to be. They have picked peaches here and nectaries there. How grateful they should be."

I have always taken exception to these purported remarks by Mr. Churchill. I never at any time considered Italy to be a garden path, and many of the Italian peaches had gonorrhea. As for nectarines, I never saw any. Actually, Mr. Churchill's overall assessment of the value of the Italian campaign and the Anzio landing was probably correct. Both the total campaign and the Anzio landing could have been smashing and quick successes, if it had not been for two major obstacles.

The first of these handicaps was the lack of enthusiasm by the senior American commanders for the Italian campaign in the first place. They appeared to believe that the Italian venture would be a waste of resources and would detract from the main Allied effort across the English Channel, scheduled for and actually executed on June 6, two days after the fall of Rome. This negative feeling may have had its origin in the fact that President Roosevelt was constantly preoccupied with punishing the Japanese for the attack on Pearl

Harbor. He therefore had much less personal interest in Italy than did Winston Churchill.

A second major handicap was the divided Allied command in Italy. The Allied forces in Italy consisted of the American Fifth Army under General Clark and the British Eighth Army under General Montgomery. Both men were obsessed with their personal images and traveled everywhere with a large retinue of reporters and cameramen. The total Italian Theater was under the command of General Sir Harold Alexander of the British Army, by most accounts a very competent officer. In any event, disagreements were frequent and direct communications often very poor.

In his postwar memoirs, General Alexander was sharply critical of General Clark. He points out that although the German army was forced to abandon both the Gustav Line and Anzio as a result of the successful Allied spring offensive, the bulk of the German troops were able to withdraw to new defensive positions north of Rome. There they remained until the end of the war.

General Alexander contends that the successful withdrawal of the German army resulted from the failure of General Clark to close the ring around the Germans retreating from the Gustav Line in the south. He claims that General Clark had specific orders to intersect the German excape routes with the Allied troops advancing from Anzio, but that Clark ignored such order in favor of basking in the glory of being the liberator of Rome. The Germans had previously declared Rome to be an open city and had evacuated their troops. I therefore suspect that General Alexander's complaint has some validity. While the Anzio troops, accompanied by General Clark, were marching triumphantly through Rome, the German army was escaping to the north. To the best of my knowledge, the VI Corps made no attempt whatsoever to intercept the retreating German forces. But we had a great time in Rome.

At critical times, key American generals appeared to be very timid as compared to their British counterparts. As an example, General Lucas, the original American commander at Anzio, wrote in his diary just prior to the invasion: "Army has gone nuts again. The general idea seems to be that the Germans are licked and fleeing in disorder and nothing remains but the mop up. They will end up by putting me ashore with inadequate forces and get me into a serious jam. Then who will take the blame?"

It is quite apparent that General Lucas never had any intentions of making a rapid advance towards Rome after the initial landing, which was the sole purpose for the landing in the first place. However, he never at any time revealed his true intentions to his superiors. He was obsessed with failure at the outset. The possibility of success never seemed to cross his mind. It seems to be very true, however, that he was given inadequate forces at the outset.

Legent has it that Nero fiddled at Anzio while Rome burned. In 1944, it appears that General Lucas fiddled at Anzio while Winston Churchill and General Alexander burned. The Churchill analysis of Anzio was stated as follows: "Surprise was complete and surprise is half the battle in war. If only

the force we had flung ashore with such trouble had raced swiftly for the hills and got across the German lines of communiction and acted with resolution, Kesselring's reaction might have been different. Nothing is gained by not taking risks—and the prizes at stake at Anzio were worth every risk.''

General Alexander supported the Churchill view this statement: ''The commander of the assault corps, the American General Lucas, missed his opportunity by being too slow and cautious. He failed to realize the great advantage that surprise had given him. He allowed time to beat him.''

In contrast, the supporters of General Lucas point out that he was fatally handicapped at the outset with an inadequate landing force. On this point, Field Marshal Kesselring, the German commander in Italy, made this observation: ''It would have been the Anglo-American doom to over-extend themselves. The landing force was initally weak. It was a half-way measure as an offensive that was your basic error.''

It is fact the Anzio landing force was inadequate, and it almost certainly was, the primary blame must fall squarely on the shoulders of the two senior commanders who directed the operation, General Sir Harold Alexander and General Mark Clark. Whatever the failures, however, the indisputable fact is that the Allied forces did destroy or immobilize a significant portion of the German army in Italy. On this point, Field Marshal Kesselring stated after the war: ''If you had not pitted your strength against us at Anzio-Nettuno, you would never have landed in Northern France.'' It is my opinion that Kesselring overstated the value of the Anzio operation. I doubt that it contributed much to the successful Normandy landing.

It is actually imposible to draw definitive conclusions about the overall value of the Italian campaign. A few days ago, I wandered through the rows of silent crosses at the American cemetery at Anzio. It struck me that neither time, memories nor speculations will resurrect those buried there. In whatever manner any war is fought, the price will always be much too high.

Short Homecoming

by C.A. Wood

F Co. 141st Infantry

I had been sent back to the rear to fill in as mail clerk. My duties were to go to regimental headquarters each day with the out-going mail and pick up the incoming mail. At times there would be three to five large canvas bags of mail going each way. I was back in the area with the cooks and supply Sgt. Joe Kinyon. One day a member of our unit returned from the hospital where he had recovered from wounds received earlier. He was eager to return to his squad.

The supply Sgt. had some supplies that had to be taken up to the front, and I had some bags of mail that needed to be taken up also. Late that afternoon we loaded up the supplies and mail and the returning veteran. It seemed like a nice quiet afternoon. Nothing much happened.

We reported to the command post and delivered the supplies and mail. The returning veteran reported in to the C.O. By this time it was getting late and darkness had set in. The command post was an old stone houe set along the side of a hill. There was not enough room in the main part of the C.P. so the three of us, Sgt. Kinyon myself and the returning veteran were ordered to go up to the loft of the building for the night. There were a few boards across the roof for little protection.

We had just spread our blankets on the hard floor when several rounds of artillery shells came crashing into the area. The shall bursts were very loud and sharp and very close. The shells kept coming in faster and faster and landing mighty close. The C.O. sent a messenger up to where we were with instructions to abandon the loft and get into some fox holes that were in the side of the hill about twenty yards from the building. We gathered our blankets and equipment and tried to guess the timing of the shells as they came in. Joe and I waited but the returning veteran got a little excited and he bolted out towards one of the fox holes. Just then a shell came screaming in and exploded very close. The man cried out "I've been hit." Medics were called for and they came up and got him. Joe and I took advantage of a temporary lull in the shelling and dashed for the fox holes. We made it safe and sound. Meanwhile the medics had taken the wounded man down to the C.P. and were trying to find out how bad he was hit.

In the dim light they had to work with they couldn't find anything. He kept complaining of great pain in his side. The medics then hurried him down to

the battalion aid station where better conditions prevailed. The surgeon examined the man and finally found a very small hole in his side. This piece of shrapnel had hit him with such force that it went thru his heavy overcoat, all of his clothing and entered his body. After the piece of shrapnel had entered his body the wound had closed itself so that no trace of blood showed up.

By the time the surgeon found the wound the man had bled to death internally. The surgeon told the medics not to feel badly about not finding the wound sooner because that little piece of steel had hit such a vital organ that even had the man been in the middle of a general hospital when this happened nothing could have been done for him.

In such a short time Sgt. Monroe K. Blaser reported from wounded to active duty and from active duty to killed in action.

BROTHERS MEET TWICE IN ITALY

My outfit, Co. F 141st Infantry, 36th Division had been pulled back from the front lines. We were in a rest area. I had heard that my brother, who was in Headquarters Co. 7th Infantry, 3rd Division, was somewhere in the area. I mustered enough courage to ask my C.O. if I could have permission to find my brother. To my surprise he granted my request and furnished me a jeep and driver. When I asked if my good buddy St. Joe Kinyon could go with me, he said "Yes."

We filled the jeep with gas and our canteens with water. We grabbed a couple candy bars for our lunch. We were on our way in the general direction where my brother's outfit would be. We were on smooth roads, bumpy roads and muddy roads. We had to back track several times because we had taken a wrong turn.

We were approaching a cross road when an M.P. raised up out of a fox hole and stopped us. His first question was, who were we and then what were we doing on this road. We identified ourselves and then I explained that I have been given persmission to find my brother whose outfit was in this area. I gave him the name of my brother's outfit. The M.P. said that we were close but we had come too far. In fact, he said that we were between our lines and the German lines. In other words we were in no man's land. He gave us exact directions to my brother's outfit and told us to get out of here fast. Following his directions we had not trouble in finding my brother's outfit.

We pulled into the area and I asked an officer where could I find Sgt. Wood, that I was his brother. He showed us the way to a cave in the side of a hill. He called, "Hey, Sgt. Wood, your brother is here to see you."

I could hear my brother reply in a loud and surprised voice, "My what?" When we met we shook hands and looked at each other for a long time. I then introduced my buddy Joe Kinyon and my jeep driver. For the next hour and a half we had a fast and furious visit. We talked about the old hometown, and our family back home and of the many events that had taken place since we last saw each other.

When it came time to leave we shook hands again and each said how much

we had enjoyed our short reunion. The trip back was without further incident as we knew the way back much better than when we first started.

After returning to our outfit I reported to the C.O. that I had found my brother and that we had had a real good visit. I thanked the C.O. for letting me go.

SECOND VISIT

Co. F 141st. Infantry, 36th Division had been back on the line for some time. Our sound powered phones were not working very well, and we were having trouble in getting replacements from the communication supply depot. They were short on equipment also. I hinted to my C.O. that maybe I could wrangle a set of phones from my brother's outfit if the C.O. would let me go back to the rear and find my brother again.

The C.O. thought it was worth a try so he gave me a jeep and the same driver and he let Sgt. Kinyon go with us again. We had no trouble in finding my brother's outfit this time.

When I explained our situation my brother said he felt sorry for us but under no condition could he let us have any of their sound powered equipment. Our visit was much shorter this time as this was supposed to be a business call for much needed equipment.

On our way back to our outfit I thought to myself, how many G.I.'s were as fortunate as I had been, to meet a brother in a far off foreign country during a war. Not once but twice. Each meeting was like setting a piece of the old hometown in our lap.

DOWN TO THE RIVER WITH BOATS "THE RAPIDO RIVER"

The 36th Division was chosen to lead the assault across the Rapido River. The 143rd Regt. was to be the lead unit with my outfit the 141st Reg. in support. The river was at flood stage due to heavy rains. The assault was to be a frontal attack which meant there were two strikes against the division before the push started.

It was dark and cold the night we were to make the assault. A heavy fog settled in which made it even more difficult to see. We gathered at our staging area to pick up the large heavy wooden boats furnished by the engineering corps. Each boat could carry a squad of men along with their equipment.

The engineers had cleared a path thru a mine field down to the rivers edge, and had marked it off with white tape. Each squad picked up their boat and started carrying them towards the river. After going several hundred yards, artillery and mortar shells started crashing in on us. Each time a shell screamed in or a mortar shell fluttered down we would drop the boat and hit the ground. Many times we heard the shrapnel hit the side of our boat, and each time it would leave a hole in it. By the time we got to the rivers edge our boats looked like sieves with all the holes in them.

To our dismay we found that our particular part of the river had a bank so steep that it would be very difficult to launch a boat down it. The river was running very swift. We tried to slide our boat down the steep banks and when we did what loose equipment that was on the bottom slid forward to the bow of the boat. With all the holes in the boat, the water running so swiftly and the heavy equipment in the bow of the boat it was disastrous. As the boats hit the water they had no chance to float out onto the water, instead each boat would plunge down into the water and disappear. The river had swallowed them up.

Other units had much easier access to the river and some of them made it across the swollen Rapido. Those that made it across met with the stiffest resistance ever encountered. The Germans had many more men than we had. In fact we were only about one third strength. The Germans also had all positions on their side of the river zeroed in and could fire with great accuracy. Those that did make it across were as close to hell as they would ever get.

We later learned that the Rapido River crossing was in a sense a diversionary move so that other U.S. troops could make a surprised landing at Anzio.

The Rapido River crossing cost the 36th Division 1,680 casualties. What a price to pay.

FIGHTING 36TH

REGIMENTS:
- 141 Inf
- 142 Inf
- 143 Inf
- 144 Inf

ARTY UNITS
- 131st
- 132nd
- 133rd
- 155th

SPECIAL TROOPS
- 111 Eng
- 36 Signal
- M.P.'s
- 736 & 111 Ord
- Div Hqs
- 36 & 111 QM
- 636 TD
- 36 Cav Recon
- 111 Med

The Velletri Infiltration

Five Years Ago Rome Fell and a New Story Is Told

By Kenneth L. Dixon

(Reprinted from the Dallas Morning News by special permission)

(Note: This feature, written by Kenneth L. Dixon, noted Associated Press war correspondent, who has followed the T-Patchers from the beaches of bloody Salerno, tells one of the war's greatest stories

Reprint from the T-Patch
August, 1949

Five years ago in June, 1944, and Rome was ours-Rome, the first Axis capital to fall and the only one to fall to American troops.

When the wild, kissing, flower-throwing, wine-drinking welcome finally subsided, veteran soldiers and reporters spoke among themselves in awe about the fantastic speed of those last few miles into Rome.

"What really happened to the Alban Hill defense line?" they asked. "What turned the siege into a rat-race?"

But the men who could have told them in all its bare-knifed, behind-the-lines detail—Maj. Gen. Fred Walker and his fighting 36th Division were not there. They had made that last swift race into Rome possible, but they themselves had passed through in the night, greeted only by the invisible and eerie applause of a balcony audience, and now they were on beyond the Tiber, ordered to chase the enemy on northward.

Then, next day, the Normandy invasion began, and the world forgot our entire miserable Italian campaign for a while. And thus it was that the Velletri infiltration—still by military experts to have been the most brilliantly successful combat-line maneuver of the entire war—became the most quickly forgotten operation of the Mediterranean campaign.

This, then, is the story of the Velletri infiltration which made it possible for us to be in Rome five years ago.

On Memorial Day, 1944, the German Alban Hill line was solidly anchored at Velletri and Valmontone after repeatedly bloodying the noses of the four most casualty-ridden infantry divisions of the war. Frontal assaults, Fifth Army's old faithful routine, got nowhere and remnants of the First Armored Division that tried a so-called "end run" came back looking so shredded they resembled a battered battalion, rather than a

division. The little men sat on the hill, as always, and spotted every move almost before it started.

The 36th Division sat in the middle of this semi-circle of head-bucking futility, right below Velletri. One regiment was in reserve, the 142nd, and it had drawn the short straw for the next assault.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon of Memorial Day, General Walker, as fine a Texan as ever come from Ohio, paced grimly back and forth in the cowbarn that served as the war room for the division command post. He spoke to no one, which was unlike him. Major Frank Reese of Houston, Division G-2 took me aside and said there were two plans under consideration: General Walker's plan for mass infiltration of a weak spot they'd discoverd in the German Line, and Army's plan for a fancy head-on assault with tanks pulling riflemen sledges...

(Now the General's grim-faced pacing was understandable. There had been two plans at the Rapido River, too—one was Walker's and one was army's, which meant Lt. Gen. Mark Clark's Army's plan was used until the thirty-sixth was butchered beyond belief and pulled out; then Walker's flanking-infiltration plan was used by the Thirty-fouth Division which successfully crossed the river.)

Twice submitted, Walker's plan had been rejected, but the corps commander, Maj. Gen. Lucian B. Truscott, was making a final plea for it. Suddenly his jeep raced up to the cowbarn, and he waved to Walker with a triumphant grin. The infiltration was on—and there was less than an hour to get started.

The plan was basically simple. The 142nd would be transported twenty miles by a circular route to a spot between the other two regiments, just across from the weak point in the German line. The motor trip would start just before dusk so that the eyes on the hill could spot the regiment seeming to move out away from the line, but could not see it swinging back in the darkness.

The infiltration point was east of Velletri, west of Valmontone. Shortly before midnight, with the veteran "mountaineers" of the second battalion spearheading, the 142nd would start through German lines. To the left the 141st and the combat engineers would stage a feinting attack; to the right, the 143rd would get set to follow with a flanking infiltration. The top of the hills was to be gained by dawn—note this!—not one shot was to be fired until then, come what might. Only knives and hand grenades could be used, and the latter only in dire emergency.

The general said it would work, and I believed him and, like others, I was glad it was his plan being used... (But we had to pass through Cisterna, where the last such subtlety had resulted, through a combat-line freak, in the killing, wounding or capture of almost all of 900 Rangers who attempted it. Then, too, before we even jumped of Memorial night, a sniper-spy three miles behind the line, shot a young lieutenant through the heart. They caught him and he was "executed" then and there and the cold clutch of fear moved behind all our frozen faces.)

Col. George Lynch, dark and mustached West Pointer who commanded the 142nd, passed along the orders to battalion company and platoon commanders in a harsh,tight-nerved voice. He concluded with the no-shooting order: "We'll take no chances on some dough getting trigger-happy, either. I don't want a single cartridge in a rifle chamber until dawn! Now get that! One crazy shot can foul up this whole deal. This is a night for knife work...That's all..."

We jumped off at 10:55. Lynch and his headquarters staff elected to stick with the spearheading second battalion. I have forgotten who was commanding the second that night, but without insult to him or Lynch, for that matter, the real leader seemed to be Lt. Col. Sam Graham, the stocky, middle-aged ex-school teacher from Huntsville. He was regimental exec, but he'd led the "mountaineers" on deals like this before (Mt. Lungo was one) and they'd trust and follow him anywhere. All night long, the soft-spoken, hard-fighting Sam crawled up and down that shadowy line, whispering orders and encouragement, traveling three tortuous yards to our one.

At 2:30 a.m., we crossed the Velletri-Valmontone highway and now were deep in enemy territory. ("Sorry," Lieutenant Lynch rasped angrily at one nervous young officer, "I don't like this deal either, but it's too late now to turn back!" Neither word nor tone was cheering.)

The diversionary firefight crackled and spat to our left and tracers and flares lighted up the sky. Once, creeping upward through a terraced vineyard, the flares blossomed directly overhead and we lay flat and trembling on our bellies for what seemed like hours until they died out. Then we crawled on. Now and then we heard screams, ahead and to the left and behind, and a battalion aid man in front of me would grit his teeth and whisper wild oaths at being forced to stay where he was.

Once a dog almost gave us away, barking wildly as we lay in frozen silence ten yards away. Someone silenced him then with German shouts, and then a shadow slipped out of the line behind me and began inching toward them and the dugout beyond. Those who followed found the way quieter...

The moon came out and through it meant more danger, it somehow put heart in the crowd. A young rifleman named Kennedy, a fearless Texan from South Chicago, crawled up and nudged me. "That guy over there must know you . He's smiling." I looked. The German propped against the tree had two gaping grins—the white one just above his chin and the red one just below... A flanking rifleman crawled in to report, spotted M/Sgt. Connie Snyder of regimental headquarters company. "Migawd, Snyder," he hissed. "Headquarters company! We must be miles from any Germans!" When two of the T-Patchers stalked each other and almost started knifing before recognition came, we all thought it was funny as hell. So did they.

But always it was nightmarishly rough, and some gave out along the trail, panting in wild wordlessness from nerves and exhaustion. Someone

stayed with each one to keep him quiet...

Proverbially, the darkest period was just before dawn. Someone used grenades to the left. A German machine-pistol rippled twice, sickeningly, and then was silent. We waited. Time was running out. Maj. Cliff Clyburn of Big Spring (later killed in action) came by to whisper that we'd never make the ridge by dawn unless we abandoned our timber route and risked crossing nearly a thousand yards of open plateau. One way we might be massacred in the moonlight, the other, we'd be sitting pigeons at sun-up. We crossed, crouching and double-timing. Not a shot was fired, although scores of Germans were captured, in the surrounding timber next day.

At dawn, we dug foxholes at the top of the Alban ridge, some five miles from the jump-off spot as the crow flies, but at least ten as we had zig-zagged, crawled and twisted. We chewed K and D rations while Lynch and Maj. Jerry Sorenson of Stephenville set up radio contact with division.

Later we learned that not until 8 a.m. did the Germans discover we had infiltrated—and then they thought it was only two companies. Actually, for perhaps the first time in history, almost two regiments were on the move behind German lines by then. Already the infiltration pathway was being sealed off with riflemen posted at intervals and the bulldozers were ripping out supply roads right straight up to the slopes where we had crawled. The Alban line was broken; the hills were ours.

You know the rest. The pincer closed on Velletri, cut off the supply routes, swept Mount Artemisio and Mount Cavo.

You know the rest. The pincher closed on Velletri, cut off supply routes, swept Mount Artemisio and Mount Cavo. Hundreds and hundreds of Germans were killed, wounded and captured—and the entire division's casualties could be counted in tens, rather than in thousands as at Salerno, San Pietro and the Rapido!

Thus the road to Rome was open, except for rearguard and delaying tactics (which themselves cost more lives than the Velletri maneuver) and last-stand details. The other outfits were pouring through the gap as the men of the 36th came down out of the Alban hills three days later. The last line was broken and the rat-race was on...

So that's the story, except that army ordered the tired T-patchers right on throuh Rome at night. And when they went back south finally to prepare for Southern France, army refused to give them rest-leave in Rome.

But General Walker, as fine a Texan as ever came out of Ohio, and a master strategist, ordered a refueling stop set up in Rome for the south-bound convoys.

And sometimes it took, oh, maybe two-three days to fill up those dry old gas tanks...

Bath on an LST

By John D. Wildman

Co. M and 3rd Bn. Hdq. Co. - 143rd Infantry

I first joined the 36th Infantry Division in the summer of 1943 and was assigned to M-Co., 143rd Infantry Regiment. We landed with the 36th at Salerno and took part in much of the fighting in Italy. I received the Purple Heart with one cluster, the Combat Infantryman's Badge and the Bronze Star.

I wrote one other story for the Quarterly, "From Maryland to Altavilla," published in Vol. X, No. 2, page 48. This story actually showed some bad judgement.

In 1944 we were brought back to the Salerno area for invasion training of Southern France. The weather was exceedingly hot. Here, I was transferred to 3rd Bn. Hq. Co., became a T5 and placed into the Communication Section. We were taken by small craft and put onto an LST. Here we received two new men. One was named Crowley and I'll mention him later. Early next morning we were told we would climb down the nets and prepare for an invasion. A sailor who was manning one of the guns on the LST and myself struck a conservation and we learned we were from the same town in Maryland, Bowie. We had a lot in common inasmuch as Bowie had a race track and we both liked the track and its excitement. He knew nothing about infantrymen and asked a lot of questions. He asked how we got a bath and I told him we bathed from our helmets and bathed as often as possible. My new friend offered to take me to his quarters when he was relieved from gun duty and fix me up with a hot bath and soap and give me a bunk to take a short sleep. I got my bath and had just stretched out on the bunk when I heard my Lieutenant calling for me. He proceeded to give me hell and told me one of my men had walked off the boat, apparently sleep walking. Some sailors had jumped in with life jackets and ropes and was pulling the guy aboard as I walked up. I apologized to the lieutenant and he told me to forget it. I really think he was more angry with me for having a bath and smelling clean than for one of my men falling overboard. Anyhow, he really smelled like an infantry lieutenant. The fellow who walked off the ship wasn't hurt and he also caught hell from the lieutenant.

Things returned to normal and we continued to train and finally took off for Southern France. My platoon suffered heavy casualties on the invasion, including myself. I was wounded and woke up in a hospital. Here, I received some mail and you'd never guess who was censoring the mail. A Lt. Crowley, the same fellow who joined us at Salerno as we boarded the LST. He had moved up fast and was now a 2nd Lt.

"A TOAST" To the Men On The Front Line

by Al Dietrick

Sometime around the middle of November, 1943, B Co. 141st Inf. was relieved off the front line at Mount Retondo. The company had been in the lines for several weeks and welcomed relief from the everyday dangers we lived with. A few men would not be returning for they had gone to eternal rest. The company's casualties had been light, but when you lose even one comrade it takes awhile to erase him from your mind. Then you remember those men lost at Salerno just a few months ago and you realize there are going to be more. You try not to think about it.

We moved into a rest area about 15 miles from the front. Here we could rest, walk around and relax from the hazards of front line duty. We settled into Pyraminal tents and it wasn't long when the mail clerk came around to each tent to give each one of us our mail and a copy of the Stars and Stripes Newspaper. The Stars and Stripes was the only source we had of the outside world.

I settled down, read my mail. Berdie, my wife, wrote frequently and my parents wrote occasionally so a few letters had accumulated. After reading the mail I picked up the Stars and Stripes to see Bill Mauldin's "Up Front" with Willie & Joe. I couldn't wait to see what Willie and Joe were up to. Front Line, Rear Line, it didn't make any difference where you served, they were favorites with everyone. I hurriedly scanned thru the pages and my eyes caught a small verse with the title "A TOAST." I thought "What a strange title." My curiosity got the best of me and something told me to read it. Poems were never popular with me in my High School English courses. This is the way the poem went---

A TOAST

I drink to him who has felt the battles' sting.
I drink to him who has felt in anguish pain
the sting of the enemy or of a bullet
marked with his name.
I drink to him who would not boast he knew no fear
when death was near, but shook like a leaf
in a frenzied wind.
I drink to him who still had courage to go on and win.

Poet -- unknown

As I read this poem, chills ran thru me and I believe my eyes watered. What a perfect TOAST to the man who had been under fire. I cut this out and carried it with me reading it occasionally when I would clean out my wallet. The contents of my wallet were: Berdie's picture, Social Security card, a couple of foreign currency bills and a clipping of this poem.

After I returned to the U.S.A. I lost this paper clipping. I searched my memory and to my surprise I realized I had memorized it. But it should be no surprise because it had left a deep impression on me. I have recited this poem no more than 5 times on some occasion to veterans and their wives. Now after 47 years I still tingle everytime I read it.

Al Dietrick
B Co.. 141 Inf.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Honorary Texan

by Paul D. Hinkle

Company 'L' - 141st Infantry Regiment

Since I read the article by Robert Hunter from my unit L-141st I felt need to write a parallel story to his and several others who served at the same time as I did, June thru Sep. 44. Like Bob Hunter I was a replacement joining the 36th in early June 44.

I was 1 of 5,000 who sailed on the Gen. Butner from Norfolk to Casablanca in Mar. 44 then by train to Oran. A British ship took 2,000 of us to Naples, all with no enemy interference.

9 April 44 was Easter Sunday. I was kicked out of the hammock early because it was the Dining Compartment! I went up on deck to see a beautiful blue sea and the Isle of Capri go by, a God-given Sunrise service. Later the same day we were hauled by 6x6 trucks from Caserta to the Repl. Depot, the dairy farm!

It was then night and raining, tents had been set up in the mud pasture, no lights, finally we got candles, and chow in a mess kit full of rain. I set my candle on a nail I found on the center pole, kicked off my boots and climbed into the cot that was knee deep in mud. I wondered was it all the same day?

In June I was assigned to L-141 in a squad with SSG. Kelly of the 3rd platoon of SFC, Jeton. Company 1st. Sgt. Wolf. We started invasion training at Batapagilli north of Salerno. Using LCIs we would hit the beach, run up a 600 yd. hill then go back and do it again.

Aug. 15, 44 was my first combat experience, over the side of an assault transport, into the LCIs and head for the beach. I had about 5 minutes training as the 2nd man on a flame thrower, on the way in, the No. 1 man got so sick the OIC told the Navy Chief No. 1 man was not going in, so I got the honor. When I hit the beach I went down on my knees, I thought from the weight, I looked up and saw a huge stone projecting from the back of the beach 30 to 50 feet high. All I could think was god what a tombstone.

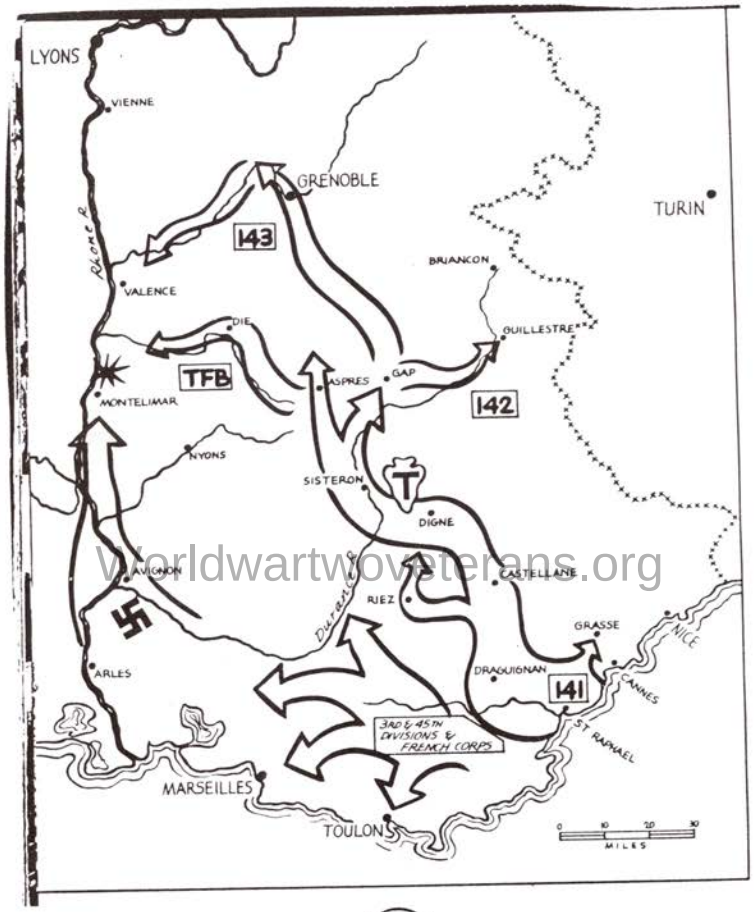
With the flame thrower I had no rifle, the OIC opened the valves and told me to head for the nearest Pillbox. As I started across the road I noticed a sign "Agay" the closest town to us. Out in front the GIs were going left or right around 2 quarries with a near 4 foot wide, level path across the middle and nobody using it, so I figured the least traffic, the less opposing fire. Three

completed pillboxes did not appear occupied. When I got close enough I squatted and let go with a 20 sec. shot at the door opening then the firing slit, back and forth for about 5 shots and the fuel was empty. I recalled later it only had 90 sec. of fuel.

I dropped the empty tanks and started up the 600 yd. hill. Off to our right across a small bay there was return fire from a lookout or light house, and everybody on the beach and hill was firing at it. By the time I got to the top of the hill I had a rifle and don't know where I got it.

SSG. Kelly got the first souvenir, some kraut had dropped a belt and holster with a P38 in it, along the path we were using to go to the nearest farm house. At that time a light spoting plane from the artillery circled and landed in the field next to the farm house. Nobody was home so we helped ourselves to some table wine and left.

L-141st spent several days in the area around le Tayas, St. Raphael, Frejus, and then Draguignan, on clean-up operations. At that point the army came up with 6x6 trucks for us to move up fast and outflank the Germans. As we



left a cemetery was being started at Draguignan. Before we left we took a bath in the local reservoir! In several days we passed thru Grasse, Digne, Gap, then cut west to Crest. I never knew till today what we were doing there. The Germans wanted out of the Rhone Valley and we had them blocked. NOW the 1991 calendar and the quarterly tells of the fighting around Montelimar. So we cut the Krauts off at the pass.

After L-141st dug in at a little old village west of Crest we pulled out of our positions at dusk back to Crest and over night the Germans moved into them! So the next morning we had to take them back. In the pre-dawn attack, I moved too far to the left and ended up with M-141st at the base of a hill road entrance to the village. Two shermans were using their 30 cal. MG; on top floors of the homes the walls were built like an ancient fort. An M company officer used the interphone box on the back of the tank to ask the crew to use the 75mm. on the firing slits on the top floors in order to stop the return fire on our positions; they replied that it would bring equal size responses! Then the tanks pulled back.

A group of young Krauts were throwing grenades down the hill and using machine pistols on our positions when a Lt. from M company moved up and told us to cross the gap in the stone wall to the other side? When no one moved, he said "Follow me," and before anyone could stop him he was up and out and hit; he went down and never moved. I asked an M company GI the Lt.'s name, he replied "Lt. Crook." In 1973 I visited the cemetery at Draguinan, he's buried there.

To get better cover some of the GIs moved into a house just to our left at the Y in the road. The Germans then moved down the hill and started tossing grenades into the windows of the house. The M company radio man who had to stay close to the window would throw them back out! After the 4th one they gave him a quicker fused one and it went off in his hand. The OIC of the group asked about ammo? There wasn't enough to fight our way out; the Germans were calling for our surrender so the Lt. told us the radio man needed a medic bag so we gave up.

We were held thru the night by the Germans, they packed up, loaded us with equipment and moved out into the valley just north and west of Crest. After midnight about 3 a.m. U.S. artillery started to lay down a blanket of fire that looked like a lightning and thunder storm, at first I thought it was. It did not stop for almost 3 hours. The Germans with 10 prisoners cut to the north and east along the slope of the hill. Just as the firing stopped a GI on outpost challenged the group, so we yelled that there were Americans with the Germans; they told us to hit the ground. The German NCO opened his holster and the guard shot him; the rest threw down their weapons and put their hands up.

Let me go back to the day before, the M company radio man who tossed the grenades out the window, he deserves a medal because he saved 10 or more of us from injury; the rest of us only earned our pay.

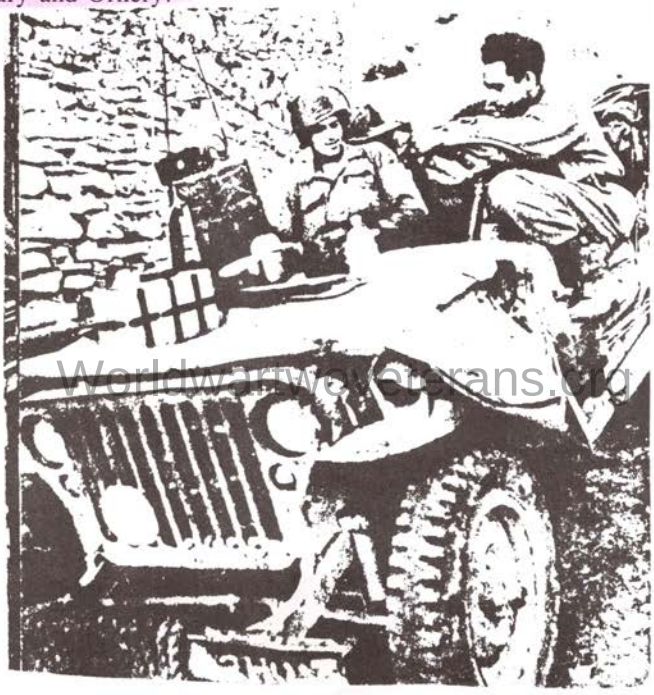
After the artillery stopped firing at dawn all we could see in that valley was wrecked vehicles, dead horses from their artillery, and dead Germans.

Those that were alive and able to walk, raised their hands and lined up to surrender. After the area was cleared we walked thru the equipment and found a paymasters bus loaded with French Francs from the Bank of France; we were told that only francs from the Bank of Morocco were good, so we threw them to the wind, only to find out later they were good!

In trying to get back to my outfit, I caught a ride with a 143rd unit, two 4x4 weapons carriers trailing anti-tank guns, we headed north out of Romans on a 2 lane road, no vehicles in sight, in open country when we saw several aircraft circling; 2 peeled off and started a straight run at us, they looked like P40s or P47s, then they opened fire. We were moving at 30 MPH or more. None of us in the back waited. We rolled out over the side.

Both vehicles rolled to a stop in flames, the first driver made it out, the driver of our vehicle died in the cab. We hid under a road culvert until medics came for the wounded. I was in the hospital for 3 weeks, no real bad injuries, again I would give a medal to the driver of the WC. He was in the A/T 143.

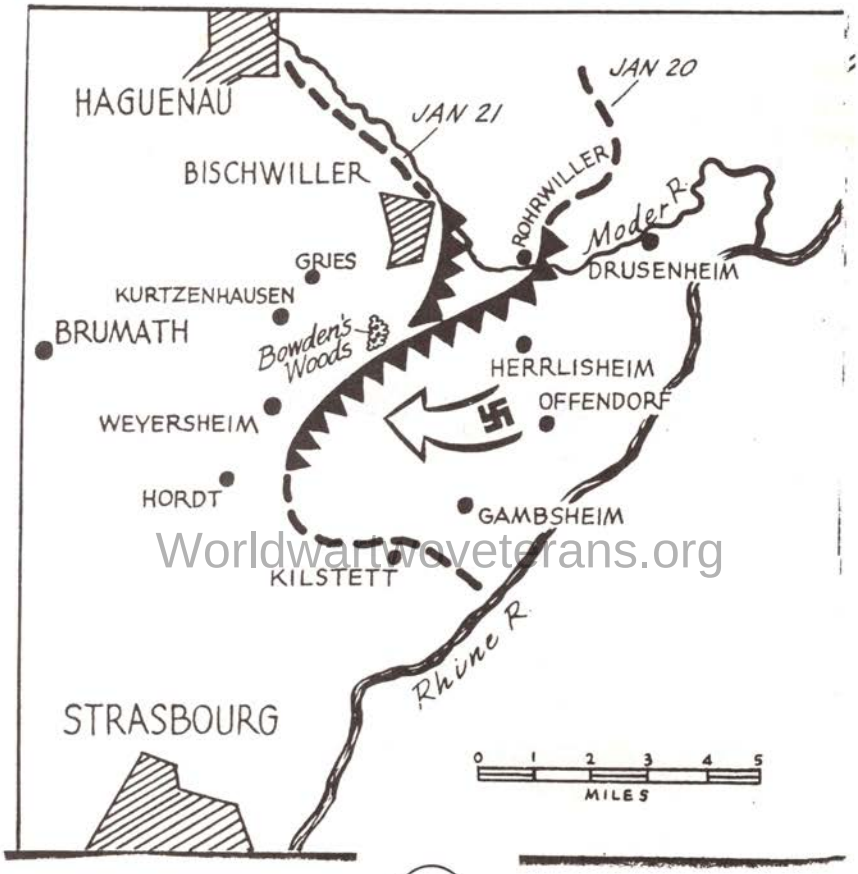
That was the last I saw of the 36th Div. The rest of my time in Europe was uneventful, it don't come near to Aug. 44 in southern France. RE: the article title, on or about June 5th, 1944 the Commanding General of the 36th Div. was replaced by a non-Texan so they made him an Honorary Texan. Later they gave all non-Texans that honor. So we came up with 2 types of 36th GIs, Honorary and Ornery!



RADIO TEAM STOPS ALONG THE WAY.

What Wasn't Written In The Shreveport Times About Weyersheim

By Rex Harrison, Jr. & Laudis H. Brewer
Co. L., 143rd Infantry



The Quartermaster Truck Unit delivering us to Weyersheim came to an abrupt halt as soon as the first mortar rounds burst in the area. We quickly dismounted and discovered there was almost two feet of snow on the ground.

We lined up and started to march to our designated area. One of the guys had stopped and appeared to be tieing a boot lace. I cautioned him to catch up. He didn't and was subsequently court-martialed for desertion. Because of his previous good record, every chance was given to him to return to the unit and should he perform his duty, the charges would be dismissed. He refused and was sentenced to twenty years at Leavenworth, I think in April, 1945. This was one stupid individual.

Our Platoon Leader, First Lieutenant Francis E. Donavan (Norfolk, Mass.) selected a position intersected by a small drainage ditch parallel to our front and the other leading away from the outpost line toward Weyersheim. So started Day One.

I selected a spot on the bank, above the water line in the ditch, and with my shovel commenced digging. The ground's crust was frozen solid and at day's end I had made very little progress but the exercise was keeping me warm.

The First Platoon Sergeant, T/Sgt. William N. Tanner (Voth, Texas) elected to place his faith in the depth of the ditch. The Platoon Guide, S/Sgt. Joseph E. Fitzpatrick (Portland, Maine) was expecting to be called from our position to catch a R&R to Paris, he just stayed on the phone wanting to know had the Paris trip started yet and why hadn't he been called. The Platoon Runner, PFC Jerry M. Foss (Mount Olive, N.C.) started digging one for himself and Lt. Donovan. The second morning, 21 January 1945, started with a fairly severe mortar barrage. Sgt. Tanner came sliding over to my hole and asked permission to share. I immediately pulled him into the hole on top of me; he may have been too lazy to dig but he became an effective shield. Sgt. Bernard K. Wallin (Rockford, Ill.) and PFC Clyde Lulham (Ellensburg, Wash.) rushed into our CP and informed us that German patrols were in the area, dressed in white camouflage clothing. Our Platoon Leader, Lt. Donovan, elected to move back to another cross ditch, about fifty yards from our present position. Sgt. Tanner jumped from the hole and started down the ditch; however, the "to open zipper" on my F..... sack wouldn't open and I started cussing him for leaving me. Obviously, I soon opened the damn thing, pulled on my boots without lacing them up, mounted my Medical Pouches and started after Donovan, Tanner, Foss, Wallin and Lulham crawling up the ditch through the ice and water. As we crawled along, what appeared to be tracer fire was following me on my left side. The thought, as stupid as it seems forty-seven years later, was if that S.O.B. shifted that gun about six inches to his right, my posterier was going to get a full load and I would never make it back to Shreveport, Louisiana again. Eventually I figured out that my flashlight had selected that very moment to turn itself on; I'm crawling through that broken ice and water cramming snow in my pouch trying to hide that damn light. I was confident that every German in the area was watching that fearless retreat down the ditch.

Eventually we reached an area where the Company Commander, Captain William B. Black (Mesilla Park, NM) had established the CP. Firing to our front was commenced with the available weapons. What few riflemen remained, quickly ran out of MI ammo and we were trying to load the MI clips with some MG ammo from only the Lord knows where. At this time, the Third Battalion Executive Officer, Major Marcus W. Adams (Whiteburgs, KY), mounted in one of and leading two other light tanks from our Cannon Company drove up and commenced firing with all three tanks at the enemy advancing through the heavy ground haze towards us. The rate of fire was sustained for about ten minutes. Calls were heard - "L Company quit firing." Captain Black told Lt. Donovan to take a squad and find out what the calling was about. Donovan and I moved toward the shapes in the snow. The Germans had captured S/Sgt. J.H. Smith (Humbolt, Tenn.) and several other "L" soldiers. The enemy had shoved our troops out in front of them as they advanced toward our position. The Cannon Company Tanks had effectively stopped that advance. Motioning the tankers into the field, we loaded the wounded on the tanks and pointed the walking prisoners back toward Captain Black's position. The tankers carried those wounded back to Weyersheim, where the Battalion Aid Station was located.

Having left five cartons of cigarettes and a sleeping bag in my hole, I went looking for them. The hole had been cleaned out and was not headed toward Germany. I picked up the 3.5" Rocket Launcher Tube and started walking back across the open field toward the Company CP. A sniper commenced firing at me, one round went through the Launcher, others were pecking at and marking the edge of my walk. I was too tired to run, let the A.. Hole hit me. If the wound wasn't fatal, I was going back to the CP and kill all of the prisoners. That S.O.B. had no reason for shooting at someone wearing a Red Cross on his helmet and carrying a bazooka over his shoulder.

Since I had just pulled on my boots when Wallin came up and in the period of about an hour after the "Sh.. had hit the fan," water had accumulated inside of them and had frozen. The Second Platoon Aid-Man, Sgt. John T. Bodick (Old Greenwich, Conn) being present, I asked Captain Black and was granted permission to go to the Aid-Station and dry out.

Meanwhile, the tankers, after delivering their load of wounded, had returned to the area. I was walking toward the town when Major Adams pulled alongside and asked me where I was going. After telling him, he told me to climb aboard the tank. I informed him that I would rather walk. He again invited me to board the tank, at that time I took the hint and climbed up on that slick piece of steel. He then proceeded to lead his troops out in front of our original positions and started firing the unit's machine guns into the woods to our front. I expected that at any minute to slide off of the damn thing and under the tracks.

Later he deposited me at the Aid Station. My boots and socks were cut from my feet, dry ones were issued. A round hit the top of the Aid Station. I headed back toward the troops and met them coming into town. Shortly after Ma-

jor Adams and his tanks had left the area, a German "Tiger" tank drove across the bridge and commenced shelling the CP position. Needless to say the troops executed "How Able" and started crawling up the canal toward Weyersheim. Captain Black was the only one wounded by the tank fire. I think that was about his second week in the Company.

That night what was left of Company "L" (less the third platoon) were marched for a number of hours and later led to a school house. There wasn't anything to burn. I've never been so cold, miserable and hungry before or since in my life. I wanted to burn the town and get warm.

Third Platoon "L" had remained in position. The new temporary Aid-Men in the snow was me. T/Sgt. Tanner had briefed me about the Third Platoon Sergeant, T/Sgt. Bert D. Hogge, DSC (Brooklyn, NY). I had lots of coffee, Sgt. Hogge was glad to see me. The Platoon CP was in a dug-out above the ice level in the drainage canal. We would make a cup of coffee and before it was cool enough for anyone to drink, Hogge would drink it and laugh at us. I also think that with a mouth like his, he could eat cactus. Hogge never lifted a finger, he was a perfect dictator. Due to the heat in the dug-out, some of the roof would cave in and fall on us, it was up to Sergeants Joseph B. Gripp (Louisville, KY), Raymond A. Longo (Cranston, RI, now Miami, Fl) and I to shovel it out.

As to the length of my sentence, I don't remember, but it was at least a week. Also, there were about fifty dead Germans hung up on the barbed wire in front of the platoon position. A mighty effective killing unit.

IN AN ACTUAL COMBAT position near Weyersheim the bed sheet blended well with the snow. In one week while on defense snow piled to one-foot depth.

The "Shreveport Times" dated 22 January 1945 quoted Seventh Army sources that limited enemy patrols were encountered in the Weyersheim area. Not everyone gets all the news, all the time.

Last month I received a letter from a former member of S/Sgt. J.H. Smith's squad, then PFC Laudis (Little Brewer) H. Brewer (Newnata, Ark., now P.O. Box 948, Mountain View, Ark., 72560-0948). This was the first time in a number of years that I had been addressed as LTC Harrison. I would like to quote excerpts from his letter about another Weyersheim adventure.

We called him "Little Brewer" as we had two in the company, the other being Durward "Big Brewer" Brewer (Hatton, Ark.) and this is Laudis's story.

My experience at Weyersheim happened at the beginning. Two of us, myself and Pvt. Chester O. Murphy (Rt. 2, Grossett, Ark.) were assigned a spot down by the canal, to the left of the bridge. A machine gun unit was located on our right and down a distance from the bridge.

Murphy and I proceeded to dig through the frozen crust at the location near the water line in the canal. After breaking through the crust, we dug down until water began to seep into our hole, this was bad on our F..... Sacks. We were shelled pretty bad that day. The Germans were yelling loud and clear over in the thicket behind the canal and reving up tank engines. We didn't have any telephone or visual communications with anyone.

After the sun went down, just before full darkness, a group of about fifteen or twenty Krauts showed up out of the thicket with a machine gun. I was on watch and immediately alerted Murph, he grabbed his M1 and began firing, unfortunately he was lying on top of my BAR at this time. I don't know how

LANKY, SS LIEUTENANT HELMUT KUNTE, was the 20,000th prisoner taken by the Division after the Southern France landings. He was captured by the 143rd.

long this went on, misfortune struck Murph when he was wounded on the side of his head above his right ear. This shook Murph up; however, he then moved from the top of my BAR. I started firing toward them until I also received a wound across the side of my head above the left ear. Murphy and I were both addled now. All of this time the German MG was engaged in a fire-fight with our MG down a ways to the right of the bridge. Now the Germans began throwing potato mashers and one became unlucky for us; it landed on top of our tarp which was stretched over our hole. The grenade exploded in Murph's face and I was wounded again in my right shoulder. Murphy ran off, I stayed to gather my thoughts. My decision was to wait until the moon went down and it started to snow again. I could see black forms across the canal and some were moving around. I believed at that time if I crawled out of the hole someone would shoot me in the back as I crawled up the bank. Finally the right time came and I crawled out and up the bank. I came to the flat field, jumped up and ran to the Company CP. I glanced back and could see several black forms in the snow.

When I showed up at the CP, Sgt. John T. Bodick (Old Greenwich, Conn.) (Little Brewer thought it was me; however, we were still on the canal as we didn't leave until the next morning) was in the hole with Captain Black. Bodick checked me out after I told the Captain about the tank's noises and the firefight. I was told to follow the telephone line across that field, where a jeep was waiting for me. They hauled me to the Aid Station where they put me on a cot and when I woke up the next morning, I saw Murph again. Murph told me that he had killed a bunch of the enemy. That was the last time that I saw him. That day I was sent on to an Evac Hospital; they operated on me and when I came to the next morning, I awoke on a bunk beside Captain Black. He told me that all Hell broke loose the next morning after I had left, that something like seven or eight tanks had crossed the bridge and shot up things. That was the last time I saw the Captain. I would gladly give a $1,000.00 for my old helmet, it looked like it had been banged with a sledgehammer. A bullet hole at the back was so large that a quarter would have fallen through it. I discarded it at the Aid Station.

I remember the day you made Lieutenant, I met you face to face and I neglected to salute because that Gold Bar caught me by surprise. We live just out of Mountain View, Ark. on a little 300 acre farm. I go into town about every day and I meet up with Robert Massago at the post office sometimes. Bob was in Div. Arty. Thank you for writing to me, this is my story.

We wish to thank you, "Little Brewer" for helping us to tell about our experiences as a part of Company "L", 143rd Infantry.

Harold D. Craft, Captain Courageous

by Alan "Chum" Williamson

On "Black Monday," 13 September 1943, on the Salerno beachhead, Corp. Charles E. "Commando" Kelly, of Co. L, 143rd Infantry joined a small group of men in a storehouse near an ammunition dump on the outskirts of Altavilla, Italy. Kelly had gone to the dump to replenish his supply of ammunition.

The men occupying the storehouse were a detachment of Co. K, 143rd Infantry. Captain Harold D. Craft, CO of Co. K, was with them. Col. William H. Martin, CO of the 143rd Infantry, had sent the company into Altavilla to relieve LTC Gaines J. Barron's 1st Battalion, 142nd Infantry, which the Germans threatened to surround. (Barron was captured). And now, Co. K was surrounded.

Kelly was later awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in defending the rear of the storehouse. According to the citation, he fired two automatic rifles until each, in succession, locked from overheating. With the enemy threatening to overrun the position, he "picked up 60mm mortar shells, pulled the safety pins, and used the shells as grenades, killing at least five of the enemy."

The 60mm mortar has two safety pins. Pulling the first was no problem. Normally, the second pin is released when the shell strikes the bottom of the mortar tube, detonating the propelling charge. Since Kelly had no mortar, he solved the problem by banging the shell against the concrete floor until the pin popped out. Then he threw the shells on to the enemy soldiers below.

When it became necessary to evacuate the building, Kelly volunteered to stay behind and cover the withdrawal of Captain Craft and his men. Craft was taken prisoner. He spent the rest of the war in Oflag 64 and other German POW camps, as did LTC Barron. Kelly succeeded in rejoining Co. L.

When he returned to the States on rotation, Kelly went through Fort Benning, Georgia. There he was asked to demonstrate the feat of pulling the second safety pin from 60mm mortar shells by hand. Using shells from the same lot Kelly used, they were unable to remove the second pin even with a hammer. Kelly declined.

When told of the skepticism, Craft said, "I was there! I saw him do it! I handed the shells to him!" He did say that there was so much firing going on around the building that he couldn't tell if the shells were exploding on impact or not.

Hal Craft was one of the company commanders of the 36th Division most admired and respected by his men. The soldiers of Company K, 143rd Infantry, one of the Waco units before mobilization, idolized him.

Harold D. Craft, of Basking Ridge, New Jersey, died 10 June 1991. He is survived by his wife, Pat. He was 82.

A Combat Engineer's Experience

By B.G. Pullen

Company B, 111th Engr. Bn.

This article first appeared in a newspaper at Shelbyville, Texas. B.G. Pullen joined the 36th Division in January, 1941. Two years before entering service he worked on drilling rigs in Texas and Louisiana. He operated a bulldozer at Ackerman for 8 months before moving back to Shelbyville. In Shelbyville he built a nice building and his wife operated a hardware and dry goods business for nearly five years. He had a concrete business at the same time. Later, he entered the saw mill business, running two that he built. The military draft caught up with him in January, 1941, at Center, Texas in Shelby County. He was taken to Houston, examined and sworn into the Army. From Houston he was sent to Brownwood and stayed in an induction center about six days. From the induction center he was trucked over in front of 111th Engr. headquarters and put out with his barracks bag. Shortly thereafter, the First Sergeant of B Company came by and carried him over to B Co. area and gave him a rifle and told him to clean it up. B Company became his home for nearly five years. His story follows.

Shelbyville Veteran Writes Account Of His Experiences in World War II

By B.G. Pullen

Co. B., 111th Engr. Bn.

My military career started in January 1941, being one of the first men drafted in Shelby County, and lasted nearly five years. We were inducted into the service for one year of training.

I left Center with a group of men going to Houston for examination. After being examined, some were sent to Ft. Crockett, Galveston, and others were sent to Camp Bowie, Texas and went into the 36th Infantry Division, including myself, not knowing at the time what hardships some would face, and some would not return.

Lots could be told about the two years we spent in the United States training before going overseas, such as the Louisiana maneuvers, time spent in Camp Blanding, Florida, then from there into the Carolinas for maneuvers, winding up in Camp Edwards, Massachusettes to spend the winter before going overseas. But I will devote most of this to the 36th in combat for close to two years. Our wives spent that winter in Massachusettes with us. We had very little money so when we rented a house, about two couples would go make the deal, then there might be five couples move in. Camp Edwards was out on Cape Cod. This was a terribly cold winter out there. I could say a lot more about that place. The winter passed, and early spring, rumors began to spread about shipping out somewhere. We were doing lots of practice drills on packing and loading on ships. Finally we were told we had better send our wives home. My wife went back to Mississippi and spent most of the duration of war working in Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

I had seen dark days, I thought, such as entering the service, then December 7th, but finally the day the trains backed down into camp with all the shades pulled down, I thought this was the last straw. We were loaded and started the ride from Massachusettes to Staten Island, New York, looking at nothing but each other. We were crammed, jammed and overloaded with everything we could hang, strap and hold to. Our tempers were a little on the ill side. The trains were pulled into the dock side at Staten Island. We unloaded and started the walk up the long ramps to load on ships. I had everything I thought a man could possibly carry, such as a pack, rifle, coats, blankets, all together that weighed a ton. I was given a typewriter to carry on to the ship - to top it all. I dragged and carried until I finally made it on the ship. I looked at my right hand, and it was bloodshot and bleeding from the cord on the barracks bag.

That night the ships slipped out of the harbor while most of us were trying to sleep. When daylight came, we could see New York in the far distance. Many things ran through my mind as she faded away in the distance. We were on a brand new troop ship, built in Biloxi, Mississippi. When I say we, I mean my battalion. The rest of the division was on other ships. This was a rather large convoy, made up of almost any type sea-going vessel. I believe the word got around that most thought we were headed for North Africa. After a day or so, most were so sick they didn't care if they were going to Berlin. The ship's name was **Henry S. Gibbens.** After a day or so out, we ran into a terrible storm. The waves that beat against the ship were something. You could see the old battle wagons off to each side. They would go under a wave and stay out of sight for two or three minutes. Finally the sea calmed down some after a day or so. To top it off, the ship quit. The convoy moved on and left us alone. We were alerted that this boat was a sitting duck for German subs. The trouble was finally overcome and after a couple of days, we pulled back in with the convoy. I would say in about ten days out of New York, we came in sight of the straits of Gibraltor. About this time the sub-chasers detected enemy subs. They were running in full speed every direction dropping ash cans (depth charges). We passed through the Straits and on out into the Mediterranean Sea. Several days later, we awoke one morning and looked out and we were in the harbor at Oran. That night we were unloaded. Again I started walking and hauling all that load. I was so glad to get back on land I never noticed the load as much this time. After walking a great distance out of the dock area, trucks came in and we were hauled out into the country side. I remember when the trucks stopped, we were told to bed down. My good friend and long time war buddy, John Bob Parks jumped out, threw our gear to the ground and we fell over in the rocks beside our barracks bag and we were sound asleep by the time we hit the ground. We awoke the next morning and the sun was out bright. We began to look around in awe at what kind of country we were in. It looked rough. At this stage of the war, the fighting had been pushed on into Tunisia. In a couple of days, some of us were called on to go by truck into a small port town up the coast close to Spanish Morrocco, to pick up trucks and equipment that was coming in on freighters. This would not be a very pleasant trip for me. We arrived in this port town thinking we would be given tents to sleep in and eat in mess halls with men already there. A major met us. When he got through throwing his voice, of what we could do and what we couldn't do, Captain Clifton Bellamy, our officer, told us to go across the road out of his area and we would set up something and do our own cooking, too. After a day or so about four of us decided to go to town and eat in a French cafe. We had had no contact with the French or Arabs so far. That night, due to a misunderstanding and a glass broken in a door by a French waiter, the M.P.s were called. We were asked to pay for the door by them. This we refused and stuck to it. Then the major was called. He brought two jeeps loaded with M.P.s The first thing he did was, in vulgar words, state the type of Texans we were. And in about the same words, we told him the

same. I don't know what state he was from. Anyway, we were herded into the trucks at the point of guns. We were carried out to the edge of the hills and thrown into cave dungeons. Captain Bellamy came to our rescue the next day. I remember how he and his driver laughed. As I came out in the bright sun, I couldn't see at all, and my clothes were real white after lying in chalk dust all night. Many years later Bellamy and I met for the first time since the war at one of our annual reunions. The very first thing we thought of was this incident and we had a heck of a laugh. We got what equipment we had come into this port. Come to find out the ship my big truck was on was sunk. Seems like the bulldozer was sunk, too.

The big thing we did in North Africa was guard along the Spanish Morrocco border and train. My company was an engineer company of the 36th division. We were referred to as over-trained infantrymen. Other than being a trained infantryman, we had the duty of keeping roads passable on the front, build a bridge, lay mine fields or take them up, blow up things, you name it, my company could just about do it.

There would be lots to tell about in North Africa but I would needs lots and lots of time to tell all about those Arabs. We were pretty tough on them. They really loved to steal. At one time my company went to a place in the edge of the Sahara desert for mine field training. I remember the Colonel that was over the training school. His name was Colonel Wyatt. I believe he was one of the roughest officers I ever saw in my five years. Someone said, thought before the war he was over a prison in New York State. The lieutenants in my company were as afraid of him as if he was a bear. He got me one day for not saluting him and he made me stand and salute him until I nearly gave out. I didn't forget to salute him any more. This came under just part of discipline used on soldiers. And if an army don't have it you might as well throw up your hands and run. This fine soldier was at a later date transferred into the 36th and was killed in combat in Italy somewhere. He was a batallion commander at the time. We in time moved on down the coast around Arzew. In this area we spent most of the time practicing assaults on the beaches. My company was practicing with the landing vehicle called the duck. We used this vehicle on the Salerno beach landing. The fighting ended in North Africa with the defeat of the German army. I think a few small units of the 36th might have seen the end there, without much combat, if any.

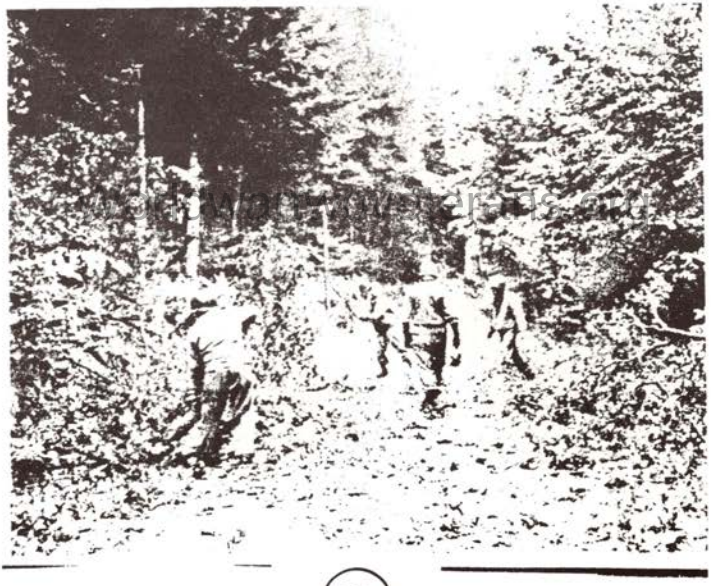
Not too long after the end in Africa, the Island of Sicily was invaded, but the 36th had no part in this. The Germans and Italians were soon defeated there. This meant our time would soon be coming up. So it did. I would say along the first of September, 1943 the 36th moved back in the ports and began loading out to be the first American division to invade the European mainland to test Hitler. Before dawn on September 9, 1943 without navel or air bombardment the first waves of the 36th stepped ashore near the ancient city, Pestum. The day before this the Italians had surrendered, but I will say one thing the Germans had not. They knew we were coming and they were waiting for us. I carried Bob Parks and our bulldozer to the port of Oran, where he

prepared it for a beach landing. I headed out down the coast to Algeria. I was in charge of a few men and a few pieces of equipment, such as three motorcycles, two or three trucks and three old 37 MM guns. After in combat, they were all proven useless. The old 37s would just make a German tank mad. And all the motorcycles were fit for were to cripple riders. In this area was the first bombing raid I was in. We were far enough out of the target area, but if the Germans didn't drop all his bombs on target, when he circled to return, he would unload to keep from hauling them back. And you were in danger from anti-aircraft duds. This is a shell that doesn't explode in air and does so on impact when it hits the ground.

After several days, we were loaded on a big British freighter with other small elements of the division. This convoy moved out very slowly. After several days out, one night, about midnight, the Germans pulled a small bombing raid on us. We were blacked out and our ships never fired one shot. I was standing guard and heard these planes fly over us. I thought it was nice to know that our planes were watching after us. They flew out a short distance, circled and came back over us, dropping bombs. I then changed my mind. Two or three bombs hit alongside of our ship, but didn't do any damage at all. The fighting had been going on for a couple of days on the beach when we came to where at night we could see the continuous flashers. We sat back a ways, as they were thinking about trying to get the troops back off the beaches and back on the ships. As I said before, the Germans were well dug in and waiting for us. And they were really pounding our men. Sometime later things gave a little in our favor. These ships now moved in toward the beaches. I could see that something was going on around us. One of the first things I noticed was a liberty ship with the nose straight down, with the back of it sticking up out of the water. The small cruisers were running as close to the beach as they could laying down smoke screens. All the navy combat ships were continually firing their guns. We sat there a couple of days like this. With German planes trying to strafe and bomb every time you looked up, day and night. The British were to provide air cover and it proved to be very poor. The hour came for us to put our trucks and equipment over the side of the ship onto landing craft. I thought that I just couldn't wait to get back on land and get away from bombs and strafing. When I got loaded on the craft, started for the beach, but he couldn't make it close enough to unload. The craft would back out and try again. This was done off and on all the evening without success. The Germans were lobing in shells all up and down the beach. I saw that it didn't look too good. Late that evening, we pulled in close to the sunken ship I was talking about, and anchored down for the night. That night the Germans pulled the granddaddy raid of them all. Next morning they made a run at the beach and made it in O.K., as the tide was in. The fighting had moved back a short ways to the foothills of the mountains. After a while, I found our company C.P. in behind a hill. I began asking about my company. Some had been killed. My company consists of about 175 men. Bob Parks made it with the dozer, I believe the first day. One dozer was hit on the beach and

burned up with the driver sitting in the seat. One day while behind this hill, they began calling out "gas." Half of them had lost their gas masks. You could see them running up this mountain until they went out of sight. And there was no gas. My company worked in and out of this area along the front. My first mission was to carry Parks and the dozer up right under the German's nose and fix some blown out places in a crossroad. I never thought about what I was doing. Parks had already been under all sorts of fire and told me that it might get rough. This man had as much guts as any man I saw in the

CANT HOOKS are used to roll logs off to the side of the road. *(Below)* **111th ENGINEERS** clear remaining brush.



HEAVY RAINS KEPT ENGINEERS BUSY ON THE BRIDGE APPROACHES.

war. We pulled out in an open place off the road to unload and prepare to work. As we got started with the work, the Germans started laying the 88's in on us. We ran off out to the side and jumped into some foxholes that some of the Infantry had dug prior to this. They threw in many rounds, but missed and then quit. Parks and I decided, if we could load back up, we had better get. We got set. He ran to the dozer, cranked it and made a run for the trailer and loaded it while I was off to the side being eyes and ears. As we pulled up in this crossroad, they began running them in again. We made it through without a scratch. I had my foot all the way up to the radiator, hunting for more gas. My next mission was to haul some of the infantry up into position and to leave the old big truck back a ways. I went on up with the infantry. We were told to dig in, as Germans were all over the place. The ground was just like a rock. I dug nearly all night. I don't know how many blisters I made and broke on my hands. I finally dug a long foxhole that I could lay down in and be about one inch under the surface. I threw a blanket in the hole and jumped in and was asleep in a minute, as I was exhausted. When I woke up next morning, the sun was high. As I lay there in the hole, a colonel in the infantry had a phone nailed to a tree and was talking and in his conversation I heard the Germans had run. Now from here, we were to go nearly two years in this. Eighteen days of some of the roughest fighting our men were ever to see ended with forces in pursuit toward Naples. About the next thing that came up for me was to go load up the dozer and head back up into the foothills of the mountains into an open area just below a little Italian town of Altavilla. That made history in this fighting. Charles E. Kelly was decorated with the

first Congressional Medal of Honor for action on the European continent, killing over 20 Germans singlehanded in this town. Parks and I were to start digging long trenches with the dozer. Hundreds of men were to be buried. They began to haul them in by truck loads. Some of these men had been dead as high as eighteen days. We had two dozers on this, one from Company C and one from Company B, my company. We would dig long trenches, then small individual graves were dug by hand. The body rolled in a G.I. blanket was placed in. The small grave was backfilled by hand, a 2x4 stake drove down at the head and one of his dog tags nailed to it. Then the dozer would backfill the long trench. I worked, ate and slept for two days in this area. It took me a long time to get the scent out of my nose. As this was about to come to a close, some man in my company asked me if I knew there were soldiers from Center, Texas buried in this. I said no. We walked down a ways and I found two men that left on the bus out of Center with me. They were good friends of mine. They were in an infantry line company of the 36th.

ENGINEERS CONSTRUCTED A PLANK FLOOR OVER SECTIONS OF SEVEN AND ONE-HALF MILE ROAD TO "LOST BATTALION."

Parks and I were now ready to move on back to the front, which was by now around Naples. As we were preparing to move out, an old pig came by. We grabbed it and tied it under the tractor. We also picked up two old hens and a turkey. We had lots of cases of C rations on the truck, but we thought about how good roast pig would be. After midnight we pulled into Naples. It was raining so hard you could hardly see ten feet ahead. The streets were deserted and you could hear machine guns cut loose every now and then and also some sniper fire. When we pulled over on the side of the street, I cut off the key and fell sound asleep. So did Parks. When morning came, I woke, raised up and looked around. Italians were everywhere. I don't know where

they all came from. These were about the first ones we had had any contact with, as to where we came from, we seldom saw anybody. As I was looking this all over, a bunch of Italians were motioning me out. I reached over and took my rifle and stepped out. One caught me by the hand and carried me to the back of the trailer and showed me one of my hens was dead. She probably drowned. I stepped up on the trailer, reached down and cut the string that held her. I raised up and threw the old hen in some hedges. About the time she landed, about 50 people landed in the hedge on top of it. They clawed and fought and chicken feathers went everywhere. These people were really hungry and meant business. The soldiers along the street began to pull out the old C rations by the case and hand it out to them. I gave away several cases. When you handed it out, they would jerk the cans open as quickly as possible and begin to gobble it down. We moved on through Naples and just across town. My company held up in some noted stadium, I believe named after Mussolini. We barbecued the pig while in there. My company moved into the port of Naples to do some clean up work until other troops could be moved in to do this type of work. All the structures were bombed to the ground. Boats had been sunk everywhere you looked. We cleaned up enough to let a few small ships up to the side of docks. We then pulled out aways from Naples and began the task of replacing the men we had lost and then training them. This time passed quickly.

We moved back up and began to take up positions along the front. The winter line would halt in the area of Cassino. There are many other small towns and mountian names that could be talked about at length, like Million Dollar Mountain, Hill 1205, Sammucro and Mt. Lungo, towns like San Pietro, San Vittore, Venafro and Cassino. It was cold and rained nearly all the time in Italy. Our soldiers endured great hardships in these parts. Unless you were in an extremely good place, you just about had to stay dug in all the time. Two soldiers could dig a good hole and take two shelter halves and putting the rest of their equipment together and make a pretty good place to sleep. You just about had to be below ground at night, as the Germans did the largest part of their shelling at night. My company was up and down our ground at night, as the Germans did the largest part of their shelling at night. My company was up and down our sector of the front, day and night, doing various types of jobs. We were used to hold part of the line all along. My company did jobs that involved many hazards. When a squad of platoon would go out, we would have a dread, seeing them coming back in, until you could find out if anyone had been killed or wounded bad. The 36th Infantry division was called upon to make needless assaults upon the Germans. This cost lots of casualties. The Rapido River crossing was the biggest blunder of them all. General Mark Clark gave the orders on this and others. General Fred L. Walker, our division commander, would have to carry them out. My company helped to provide foot bridges and to sweep mine fields. A large amount of the 141st and 143rd Infantry crossed the Rapido. This river had straight up and down banks, was real swift, ice cold and about 15 feet deep. But final-

ly the enemy fire became so intense all the crossings were knocked out. In one company, the company commander was killed. The second in command was wounded bad along with 30 of his men, before they could even cross. Of the men that were caught across the river, only a few swam the icy river back to safety. I would say there was a sergeant from Neuville in this, and probably a man from East Hamilton. They were both in the 36th.

We had famous correspondents, such as Ernie Pyle, Eris Sevareid and Wick Fowler. Ernie Pyle wrote of a Captain Henry T. Waskow of Belton, Texas. Captain Waskow was killed and brought down the mountain on a pack mule. Mules were used to carry up supplies and would bring the dead and wounded down. The men at the C.P. at the foot of the hill would check the mules when they came in to see who was wounded or dead. They go out this time to find their company commander dead. And the story goes from there how his men took it. The Italians were used as mule skinners most of the time. This was in later years, made into a movie. I saw it at the Rio in Center. There has been other movies and a television show based on the 36th. I believe the name of another movie was "The Lost Battalion." They were rescued by the 442nd Japanese Infantry Regiment attached to us at the time I saw it. The television series that ran for about two years was "Gallant Men." I met the two men that played the lead in this, I believe in Austin or San Antonio. I never watched too much of it, as there was too much ficticious stuff in it. This was premiered one year at a 36th Division reunion.

Our first Christmas was in the Cassino area. I remember Christmas night. It was midnight when my company came in from their mission. The field kitchen had a hot meal fixed, but it was no turkey dinner. It was real cold and raining just as hard as it could pour. The men ran by with their mess kits to be filled, and by the time they could run and try to find some dry place to eat, the mess kits were running over with water. This was one time no Italian kids were around. The kids always came with their bucket or pan when they saw we were fixing to eat. When we got through eating, they would run over each other to get what we had left. I have seen many soldiers still hungry, but divide with the kids and old people.

We were sometime later pulled back a ways, so we could get re-equipped and eat the turkey dinner we had missed. When we arrived in the area, Parks and I, along with a couple more men set up one of the six-man tents. Then Parks and I got some boards and rope, and built us a double bed. We took our mattress covers and filled them full of straw and we had a real nice place to sleep. The cooks were to start the cooking about midnight so they would have that well in hand next day. That night, Parks and I climbed into our nice bed for what we thought a long nights rest. Around midnight we were awakened to find a storm going on. It tore our tent all to pieces and blew just about everything we had away. This included our whole company, too. It blew just about everything for a mile down a hillside. Now this included the kitchen which was set up in a large field tent. The food, pots and pans, turkey and all were strewn all over the hillside. Nearly everything we had would have to be replaced. I forget whether we had a turkey dinner or not.

The time came again to move back along the front. Many, many things happened from then on until around May. For one thing, I remember most was the bombing of the 1400 year old Benedictine Abby on Montecassino. General Eisenhower decided that it had to be destroyed. The Germans occupied it and had excellent observation from there. I was on the mountain next to the Abby and could see fairly good, when about 225 bombers came over at different intervals. You could see the bombs released over us and glide on into the mountainside. We would never hear the end if we were to do something like that today.

Fighting alongside of us were men of an Indiah Punjab regiment and the Guoms of North Africa. The Guoms were feared by the Germans, as it was said many times when out on patrol, they would bring back warm German ears. They liked to use knives.

Around the middle of May we were pulled back to areas around Naples. My motor sergeant came around one day and told me to be prepared to carry a dozer onto the Anzio beachhead. I believe I went with some of the first 36th elements to go there. I was loaded on an L.S.T. and headed for Anzio. Anzio was known as a hot spot. The Germans had a ring of steel around the beachhead. You were subject to artillery shelling out in Anzio harbor. I arrived there and went ashore at night and went inland toward the front lines for some distance. Then taking the dozer and digging myself a hole to live in for a few days; afterwards I hid the dozer as best I could. During the daylight hours, if you got out of the hole you didn't wander off very far. The Germans might make you hunt it in a hurry. After a while most of the combat elements of the 36th had arrived on the beachhead. The word came around late one afternoon that an all out effort to break through and the same time the fronts along the Cassino lines would make the same effort. I remember before daybreak they shelled the lines with everything that would shoot. The 34th and 45th divisions hit the Germans with very little in gains for several days. The 36th began to engage our troops into lines, with the front finally bogging down in front of the town of Velletri. I guess by this time the big brass were trying to figure it all out, which in the past their figures hadn't done too well. Somewhere along here, our General, Fred Walker, had come up with a plan. I think he had sent Colonel Stovall to check out a mountain to see if there were possibilities to getting tanks and men over it. I believe Colonel Stovall told me once he flew over this area in an obsrvation plane and looked it all out. They finally came to the conclusion that it could be done. When General Walker told the high brass his plans, they turned him down flat. Said it was too high of a risk in men, also the trails couldn't be made usable to get tanks over. General Walker making another request to try, was finally given permission and was told that he better not fail. We were then assembled in hidden areas and the Infantry began to infiltrate the hill. By this time, my old partner, Parks had made it onto the beach with his dozer. He came into the foothills and we began behind the Infantry with the dozers. Parks was taking the lead as he was on the heavier

tractor. The further we would go, the hotter it would get. It looked as if at times it was just pure suicide to move up any further. We caught tank, artillery, mortar, machine gun and sniper fire. The best I remember seems as they strafed with planes some. The way we had to work was that one of the two with the dozers would have to get some distance away to be the eyes and ears for the man on the dozer. The man on the dozer would watch the other, as you couldn't hear what was going on. If you saw red tracers pass your head, you knew where to go. When you pulled up, the first thing was to pick out where you were going, if you had to. A nice big deep hole or big rocks were good. After about two days and nights we came down to the highway to the rear of this mountain. The tanks poured out onto the road to cut the Germans off in the Velletri area. For several hours, I was having stomach cramps. My nerves had just tied me in a knot. I remember my company commander and his driver drove up and Parks told Captain Crismon he had better take me to the Medicos.

To be continued in an early Quarterly.

Moselle Bridgehead

This story reprinted from the **36th Pictorial History**

The capture of Luxeuil-les-baines marked the end of the pursuit of the Nineteenth German Army. Up until this time the VI Corps, with the 36th Division on the left, the 3rd Division in the center and the 45th on the right, had been driving for the Belfort Gap. The First French Army, which had captured Toulon and Marseilles and then moved up the west bank of the Rhone Valley, was given the mission of forcing the Belfort Gap. The VI Corps was ordered to change the direction of its attack and drive straight across the Vosges between the Belfort Gap and the Saverne pass. To accomplish this it became necessary for the First French Army to move across the rear of the VI Corps, relieve the 45th Division and the right of the 3rd Division. The 45th Division was then to move to the left of the 36th and the 3rd was to come up abreast of it on the right. As this regrouping of forces would require some time, it appeared that the 36th might get a few days of badly needed rest.

Such was not to be, however. Because of the VI Corps' new direction of attack, the 36th found itself well in front of the remainder of the corps and only one day's motor march from the Moselle River. It was evident that the Germans planned to defend this considerable obstacle as far north as possible. Few usable crossings existed and defensive works on the east bank had been prepared. The autumnal rains had begun and, momentarily, floods which would make any crossing exceedingly difficult were to be expected. Motorized reconnaissance by the 36th Reconnaissance Troop and the Reconnaissance Company of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion indicated that Remiremont was held in force and that the Luxeuil-les-baines-Remiremont road was heavily defended. To the north, however, the road from Luxeuil to Plombieres was open. If the German plan to defend the Moselle was to be circumvented it was imperative to move at once to seize a bridgehead over the river. The 36th, because of its location, was the logical choice to do the job. The period of rest would have to wait.

Therefore, during the afternoon of September 19, General Truscott ordered the 36th to move without delay up to the Moselle in preparation for a crossing. The 3rd Battalion, 142nd Infantry, commanded by Major Everett S. Simpson, and Lt. Col. John N. Green's 132nd Field Artillery Battalion were ordered to move out at once via Plombieres to seize the heights overlooking Remiremont and to prepare to attack the city the next day.

At daylight next morning the Division planned to move out in two columns, capture Remiremont and seize the west bank of the Moselle as far as Eloyes in preparation for a crossing. The 142nd RCT (less the 3rd Battalion and its artillery) on the right was to take the road from Luxeuil through le Val-d'Ajol to Remiremont. The 141st RCT on the left was to take the road through Plombieres to the heights north of Remiremont. The 143rd RCT was to follow the 141st as Division reserve.

The 142nd encountered bitter fighting soon after it left Luxeuil. The 3rd Battalion and its artillery, which had succeeded in making a surprise move the night before almost to the outskirts of Remiremont, was heavily engaged in attacking the heights just northwest of the city. The 1st Battalion, under Major James L. Minor, made contact on secondary roads east of le Val-d'-Ajol and was forced to fight two days and nights to overcome the resistance there. Meanwhile, the 2nd Battalion, under Lt. Col. Samuel S. Graham, by-passed the resistance holding up the 1st Battalion and, marching by trails and secondary roads, moved to join the 3rd Battalion. Several miles from the city, however, it too encountered strong road blocks, the reduction of which was slow and difficult because of the rugged, heavily-wooded terrain.

The 141st moved without incident and at 0900 had reached the wooded hills between Remiremont and Eloyes. Reconnaissance of the river in its sector was immediately started. When Col. Clyde Steel, the Regimental Commander, told the Division Commander at noon that he thought a crossing that night was feasible, the order to cross was given and this information sent to the Corps Commander who approved.

To attempt to cross without more preparation was risky, as the Germans were still in force on our side of the river and might attack the flank of any crossing operation. It was apparent that the 142nd was not going to be able to capture Remiremont and drive the Germans out for at least two days. Boats for the crossing were not available and would not be until late the next day. Only one practicable crossing site existed, an old ford without adequate approach roads. Detailed reconnaissance by lower echelons would be impossible and supporting fires would have to be extemporized. However, it would also be risky to wait. The speed of our advance from Luxeuil had surprised the German defender. In another day he would be able to move in heavy forces to cover the river at the proposed crossing site.

No roads led from the assembly areas to the river, only small trails. The terrain was extremely rugged and heavily wooded. Guides had to be found. The 70-year-old Mayor of the little village or Raon-aux-Bois, a retired French Naval Officer, extended his services. Starting at midnight he led the regimental column straight across the hills through the forests to a place on the flats opposite a bend in the river where the ford was supposed to be. Veterans who remembered the bloody attempts to cross the Rapido noted the similarity between the deadly S-bend in the Italian river and the curving of the Moselle.

The leading battalion, the 2nd of the 141st, under Lt. Col. James Critchfield, moved downstream on the near side of the river to a point opposite the town of Eloyes which it was to attack as a feint. The next battalion in column, the 1st, under Lt. Col. Victor E. Sinclair, deployed and moved toward the wooded banks of the river where it was to cross. The last battalion, the 3rd, under Major Kermit Hansen, got separated from the others and reached the river about a mile and a half upstream from the ford. With movement through the rough terrain in pitch-black darkness extremely slow and daylight about to break, Major Hansen decided that he would have to cross where he was. He led a platoon of I Company, commanded by Captain Roy F. Sentiles, across

the river by fording. As they reached the other side and started to fan out they were hit by the fire of eight heavy machine guns centered on the shallows where the crossing had been made. Captain Sentiles and several others were killed, the remainder of the platoon were wounded and only four survived. Before he was taken, Major Hansen managed to send word by radio to move the remainder of the battalion downstream to follow the 1st Battalion.

The 1st Battalion, meanwhile, had reached the chosen ford. It was a ford but it was shoulder deep. An engineer, Cpl. Walter Lindsay, swam the icy river with a rope tied to his belt and fastened the rope to a tree. Using this as a guide, the battalion started across. Their bandoliers lashed on packs and rifles held high, they clung to the guide rope and battled the stiff current to the other side. Ammunition bearers, loaded and soaking wet, made their way across, slipped and fell, but kept on going. This was far different from the usual river crossing where assault wave follows assault wave on a broad front in boats. Here the crossing had to be made in single file.

Soon the alerted enemy opposite this crossing, fortunately not very numerous, turned their mortars on the ford. When snipers from the hills and flanks spattered the water with their shots and almost severed the life-line, another was slung across in a semi-circle, gaining the steep bank and a few hundred yards of exposed flank. Slowly the bridgehead expanded, but movement across the river was difficult. It was afternoon before the First Battalion was over. Then came the reorganized 3rd Battalion.

Meanwhile, downstream a couple of miles, the 2nd Battalion, in a splendid coordinated attack, had captured that part of Eloyes on the west bank or near side of the river, and threatened to cross in that sector. The enemy reacted violently and kept the bulk of his forces in that area because it was the logical place for a crossing.

It was apparent early in the morning that the 141st did not have sufficient strength to seize and hold an area large enough to permit a bridge to be built. The 143rd was therefore moved up and ordered to cross immediately behind the 141st and, once over, to strike downstream to capture Eloyes and the hills surrounding it. The 141st (less the 2nd Battalion) was ordered to move upstream and capture St. Etienne, the town opposite Remiremont, to prevent escape of the Germans from Remiremont.

The fight for Remiremont was going slowly. The Germans were desperate in their efforts to hold it. However, the 142nd was not to be denied. The 3rd Battalion seized the ancient stone fort on the high hill just out of town and then started forcing its way into the suburbs, house by house. The 1st Battalion finally crushed the last resistance out of le Girmont-Val d'Ajol and hiked over the hills to the heights southwest of town while the 2nd Battalion inched forward against road block after road block. On the morning of the 23rd the final mop-up within Remiremont cleared the town. Earlier, fleeing German elements had crossed the river and blown the road-bridge.

By this time at the original crossing site near St. Nabord the engineers had installed a pontoon bridge, and light vehicles and weapons were pouring across

to the bridgehead. A heavy steady rain seriously affected the muddy, rutted approaches that had had to be routed over soft fields to the river. Engineers worked round-the-clock with shovels, with guidemarkers, pulling jeeps out of holes, directing and shouting, urging the traffic across. Near-by artillery howitzers, emplaced along the main road and railroad, kept up a clatter to screen advancing troops on the far side.

A rugged, hilly, heavily-wooded obstacle confronted the Division east of the Moselle. After Eloyes, the 143rd moved north to seize Jarmenil while the 141st struck south and east to take St. Ame, widening the salient to ten miles. But in the center only little trails penetrated over the hills on the axis of advance. Here the 143rd, turning northwest from Jarmenil followed the good road to Dorcelles, beat off a counterattack south of the town and experienced heavy enemy artillery fire before winning it on September 26th.

Increased enemy pressure began to show itself on the Division right flank. The 142nd's advance on Tendon which had cut the lateral Docelles-Le Tholy road, had to be called back temporarily when enemy inflitrations and fresh German strength seriously threatened the security of the bridgehead. On top of this, rain lasting for several days combined with the autumn cold to impose a bitter hardship on the attacking infantry. As it had been in Italy, there were few places of shelter in these scrubby highlands. Extreme fatigue caused more casualties than battle and reduced fighting strengths to a nub.

Moving forward again, Tendon was gained by the 2nd Battalion, 142nd, on September 27th. The fighting moved to the hill mass east of Tendon and to a lengthy road block on the main Le Tholy road. For three long days and nights all three battalions were involved in an exhausting battle about Hill 827, until it was finally secured. The road block resisted repeated efforts to take it until the morning of October 1st. Afterward the Germans poured such heavy artillery upon it that two tank dozers were lost as they tried to clear it.

The 1st Battalion, 141st, captured a German battle group in taking St. Ame on the extreme right of the bridgehead. Elements of the 3rd Infantry Division were crossed into the bridgehead and began relief of the 141st units of St. Ame on September 26. On the 28th the 141st motored by way of Eloyes and Docelles to an assembly area between the 143rd and 142nd near Xamontarupt. Bruyeres now became the Division objective with the 141st attacking on the right of the 143rd. At the jump-off up the valley toward St. Jean and Houx, German artillery countered heavily to throw back the first attack. But slowly the 141st ground out gains until an objective line at Herpelmont was reached.

The Moselle Bridgehead, now more than 25 square miles, stood firm. Bridges were well established. Other units, the 3rd and 45th Divisions, were moving across into it and VI Corps operations reached out from it. But it became clear that German resistance had toughened and that a continuous, slow-moving front had been formed.

The 141st Infantry Band and the PFC

by Ramon Narvaez

Part III

This is the final part of Narvaez' article of the experiences of the 141st Band.

March 1-9: The next few days we made some crates and packed our equipment, it rained some, went to Caserta and Santa Maria, got back and finished packing. March 10: Took down the tents and turned them in, loaded the truck with our crates, boarded some trucks and convoyed to Naples where we boarded the ship "R.W. Emerson." March 11: Still in the harbor, some of us were in the gallery watching the ship's cook frying eggs for one of the seamen. The seaman refused the eggs, said they weren't cooked the way he wanted them. The cook pushed the eggs aside and cooked some more eggs. The seaman was satisfied and accepted them. One of the bandsmen asked the cook, "Where are you going with those eggs?" He said, "Throw them in the garbage." The bandsman said, "Can I have them?" "Sure," said the cook. That morning we had eggs just the way we wanted them. Very ironic, in the Army we take what is cooked, here we ask how we want our eggs. Later we made a deal with the mess steward; we exchanged our rations for their food and help in the kitchen. Some of the seamen we talked to said they liked our rations, they were tired of the cook's cooking. Can you imagine those guys bitching about the food. One thing, they were well fed. March 13: Finally put out to sea. Saw the Isle of Capri and Mt. Visuvious smoking. That night as we approached the Island of Stromboli we saw in the distance a red line sticking out of the sea. One of the seamen told us that it was Stromboli and that the Volcano was putting out hot lava which we saw as a red line or stick. March 14: We enter the straits of Messina around 7:30 AM and dock at Augusta around 2 PM. On the 15th we left Augusta at 3 PM. Having nice meals, passed by the Isle of Pantelleria and hit the coast of Africa near Bone. The sea is real smooth. March 19: Still at sea. Today is my birthday, 26 years old and sailing the Mediterranean Sea. The 20th and are now anchored outside the harbor of Oran. The 21st dock in Oran, but pull out at 12:00 (noon) and went to Arzew and dock for unloading. Said goodbye to Karl and other seamen and left the ship around 8:30 PM and arrived at the 8th Replacement Depot at 9:30. Went to bed.

March 22, 1944: Back in Africa, we are now the 8th Replacement Depot. The troops around here call it Lion Mountain and we are at the foot of the mountain. We are several miles east of Oran. The bandsmen had to clean up the hut and the area, got new clothing, (Khaki's) and a new name. We are now the 316th ASF Band. The dance band started to have rehearsals and played over the PA system. On the 29th the dance band played for a dance at Mostaganen. March 31st: Payday, got $29.50. Had retreat and then went to the town. Saw Col. Price. Learned that he had been wounded in Italy and maybe was on his way home. I took him to see a show (music) and so ended the month of March.

April 1, 1944 (April Fool's Day): The band played over the PA system for the troops and the dance band played for several dances. On Easter Sunday the band played for the Sunrise Easter ceremonies. For the rest of the month the band played reveille and retreat while the dance band played for the enlisted men and officer dances. Once on the 29th before we started to play for the officer's dance (around 7:30 PM) I started to feel sick, went ahead and played the Baritone Sax. Around midnight as we got to camp, I got off the truck and went to the medic. I then told the Medical Officer that I had a chill and felt hot. He asked me if I had had pork chops. I said no. He told me I was going to the hospital cause I had high fever. At the hospital I was given hospital pants and shirt. Told to go to bed. I was really feeling bad; fever and chills. The nurse came in and put some ice on my head, soon I fell asleep. The next morning I felt good and I told the nurse I wanted to go back to my unit, that I wanted my clothes. She said, "No, sir. We have to keep you here for at least a couple of days." I asked why. She just looked at me. That afternoon right after dinner I started to have fever and chills again. A nurse came to see me with a large (3 or 4 inches long and about 1 inch round) syringe full of a yellow liquid. I asked her what she was going to do with the needle. She said, "Put your pants down." I said, "Oh no." She said, "Oh yes." I then lowered my pants down and she gave me a shot in the hip, emptying the whole tube of atabrine into my hip. Boy, it sure did hurt, then she told me that I had malaria and the atabrine would cure me. Another nurse came and put some ice packs on my head again. The first week that I lay in bed in the morning I was feeling good but after dinner I would get fever and chills. By the ninth day I started to get better and I wanted to leave but they would not let me leave. On the 6th of May, Lucas, another bandsman, brought me some mail and I seemed to be able to sit on the bed. The fever and the chill were getting less and less.

May 14: Two weeks have gone by. Blondie, one of the nurses said, "Tomorrow you may walk around if you feel like it." On the 15th I started to walk and I met another nurse by the name of Gracie. On the 17th, Galvin, another bandsman, came and saw me. I also met some of the 141st soldiers who were in the hospital. They told me of the Rapido crossing, that the 1st battalion had gotten a beating and they layed the blame on Clark. For twenty-three days I was in the hospital. During that time the nurses would come in and talk to

the boys in the ward. They were very nice, made you feel at ease, joked and laughed. They were very friendly. As I got better I would help them in making the beds and clean up the ward. I left the hospital on the 23rd of May.

On the 24th (at camp) I got the Infantry Badge, and three ribbons, the American Defense, the Good Conduct and the EAME Theater ribbon with Bronze Service Stars and a Bronze Arrowhead and four Overseas Service Stripes. On the 29th, Lad Hernandez, (another bandsman), left for the hospital. I got back into the dance band ending the month playing for the officer's and enlisted men dances.

June 1-13: Most of the time the band played for both the enlisted men and officer's dances and the regular band played for reveille and retreats. Then we started to pack again, rumors moving again. On the 15th we went to the hospital and saw Spivak and Bedford. Saw Gracie and Blondie and told them we may be leaving again, said goodbye. On the 17th June, W.O. Tampke (the Band Director) went to the hospital. On the 18th we went aboard the British ship Samaria. They fed us mutton and later gave us some ale. Sandoval, one of the bandsmen, brought aboard a little female pup in a briefcase. The dance band played for the officer's mess. June 19: Pull out for the sea. On the 20th a fight between our GI's and the British cooks. It seems that our boys saw that some steaks were being cooked by the British cooks and they asked if it was for us, the cooks said no, it was for the British lads. The GI's saw that the meat boxes were stamped USA and an argument started, ending with a fight. Later it was learned that an American Official had traded the steaks for the ale, we will never know the truth. There were several ships in the convoy. On the 21st we passed by Sicily. June 22: We dock in Naples harbor around 4:30 PM, from there we were taken by truck to the 2nd Replacement Depot at a dairy farm near Capua. June 23: First day in Italy. (Again). Same old Italy but now everything was greener. And a lot different from what we left in Africa. (Oh yes, the little pup was fed during the trip and now was the band's mascot). June 27: Went to Naples and saw the opera "Rigoletto" and the month of June ended.

July 1: Told to get ready to leave again, started to pack. July 3: 5:30 AM, leaving 2nd depot, went aboard the ship at 2:30 PM after a truck drive. Going north, maybe Rome. Traveled all night on the 4th (July), arrived at the port of Civitavecchia at 4 PM. July 5th: Still out in the harbor waiting for a tug boat to take us in to the harbor for docking. Finally went ashore.

July 2-20: Since our Band Director, W.O. Tampke, had to be left at the hospital the band was assigned a Lt. James E. Parnell to direct the band. More band and dance band rehearsal and dances to play for. On some occasions the bandsmen were invited to dinner by some Italian families.

July 21-31: Left the present area for a new area. Bedford and Kolenberg came in plus a new arrival assigned to the band named Merold, a sax player.

August 1-30: Band and dance band still on rehearsals, playing for the troops' reveille and retreats. On the 21st we learned that the 36th had invaded Southern France. Stewart (sousaphone player) and Geyer (Assistant Band Director), came back from the hospital. Learned the W.O. Tampke wasn't coming back.

September 1-30: The band and dance band are playing more often for the troops. September 7: Italy surrendered a year ago. September 9, 1944: One year ago the 141st band now known as the 316th ASF Band left the ship at 4:30 AM and landed on Italian soil at 7:30 AM.

September 11: Left for Rome at 10:00 AM and arrived in the afternoon. Quartered at the Oriental Hotel and then played for the Red Cross. September 12: Several of us bandsmen went to visit St. Peter Square and Vatican. Saw the Pope (Pius XII, R. Fantuzei). Had picture and rosary blessed by the Pope. September 14: Started back to camp and started to pack again. Leaving. September 15: After several hours of riding by convoy we arrived at new area. We are now seated in a vineyard full of grapes. September 17: That afternoon we were in band formation marching down the company street, since I was at the end of the column I saw a very lovely Italian girl waving a handkerchief. As I passed by I grabbed the handkerchief and the girl followed. We stopped, the girl asked for her handkerchief and I returned it and we got to know each other. We (Spivak, a bandsman) spoke to the girls, Maria had a sister named Valeria so Frank Spivak and I made new friends. The next few days Maria and Valeria would come to the camp and talk to us. Frank asked Valeria for a date but Valeria said that her sister Maria had to go with them, so Frank asked me to accompany Maria while he went with Valeria and so that started a new friendship for quite a spell. Later we learned that in Tuscany the girls would have a chaperon whenever they dated, whether it was only a Sunday walk or a dance, somebody had to accompany the girl-either a grownup or a child. At the dance usually there was an older lady with the girls while they danced. Looking back, in Africa (Oran) I had seen old ladies at the dances. And so Maria and I acted as the chaperon for Frank and Valeria. We also learned that the 8th Replacement Depot was just south of Ponte Egola on the Hiway that led from Pisa to Florence along the Arno River.

September passed and then the month of October came and went. I was no longer with the dance band-only played with the military band. The military band was now playing for more reveille and retreats and band rehearsal. During the month it usually rained and was beginning to get a little cold. November came and another turkey dinner. This time I and the rest of the band were able to eat turkey together. Maria and I were seeing each other more often along with Frank and Valeria. Late November, snow was beginning to fall up in the mountains towards Florence, it also started to rain quite a bit. Lucas (another bandsman), had left for the State. The creek that ran thru Ponte Egola had risen and water was almost near our tents. The front was somewhere south of Bologna and south of La Spezia but north of the Arno River. The American armies could not break into the German armies because of the mountains and weather, south of Bologna. On the last of November, Maria and I got engaged.

The 8th Replacement Depot was just that, where new recruits would replace those wounded at the front and the armies kept on fighting. Most all GI's going out of camp to see their friend or to the bars were stopped by the MP's. If found to be carrying cartons of cigarettes, they would confiscate the cartons. Later we learned that the MP's would sell the cigarettes themselves.

The month of December came, rainy and cold. There were several occasions when the band couldn't play because of the weather. Christmas day came and Frank and I spent the day with Valeria and Maria. New Year came and went and we were seeing 1944 going and 1945 coming. Frank and I had dinner at Maria's home. They only lived a few miles up a side road just above Ponte Egola. January 6th came and that was the day in Italy to give gifts on Epifania Day, the day of the old lady, they call it. Since I would play with the dance band once in a while I was more free to see Maria in the evening. We also had a small combo that played when the dance band didn't. On several occasions the marching band went to Leghorn or Florence. Leghorn had been hit hard. Florence has been hit hard mostly at the rail station and the rail yards.

January 23: Snowed and it got real cold. Vey few band rehearsals because of the weather. January has gone by and February is now here. Still getting colder and rainy. But that didn't stop me and Frank from seeing Maria and Valeria. The American armies are bogged down south of Bologna and La Spezia.

March came. On the 4th, the band got a new Band Director, W.O. Frost. During band rehearsal the guy is getting more picky. The music has to be so, so. Maria's birthday came on the 13th and I gave her a bracelet. March 19 came and my birthday came. I am 25 years old. Maria gave me an Italian cake and a pocketbook. The band is playing more often.

April came. With the new Warrant Officer, the band is having more rehearsal and playing more often. On the 13th we heard that President Roosevelt had passed away. By the end of April the American armies started to push the Germans farther north. Bologna and La Spezia had been taken by the American armies as per the Stars and Stripes account.

May 3: The war here in Italy is over. Now we are waiting for word from the other armies that are still fighting in Germany. May 5: The war is over, boy were we glad. Now we can go home, but when? Maria has to move to her real home in San Romano which is nearby the Arno River about 10 km. from camp. Several days later as I was going to see Maria at her new home, a convoy of trucks came by. The lead jeep was carrying an American driver, and American officer and an MP and a German officer. The rest of the trucks were carrying German prisoners. The last truck had an American MP. They were headed for a prison camp near Pisa that is now called Camp Darby. The month went by and now June came.

Maria and I wanted to get married, but when I spoke to her Father he said, "Go see Mom." I spoke to Mom, but she said, "First you go home, become a civilian, then if you still want to marry my daughter then you come back and we will talk about it." So that's it. Had several alerts that the band may move out real soon and so the month of May has gone by, no move.

June is here. June 6: The band played for the guard change and then I went to Maria's home. She told me she would wait for me. Still waiting for others so we can leave, also learned that some of us in the army had as high as 96 points, more than enough to get out and be discharged from the army, but

that faded away when we learned that the Air Force guys had 150 points. After several days it came out that the army guys would be the first ones to get out.

June 15: Orders came out that we would be leaving for Marina di Pisa and go to the 27th Depot for processing and return home. June 16: Last night I said goodbye to Maria and told her I would get a discharge from the Army and return to marry her. She said she would wait for me. June 17: Just before I got on the truck that was taking us to the 27th Depot, I took some pictures of all of us going home. And here they are:

William Lucas (French Horn) — Armando L. Breton (Saxophone)
Henry Schreader (Cornet) — Harry R. Kolenberg (Saxophone)
James Stewart (Sousaphone) — David Kraft (Trumpet)
Guadalupe V. Leal (Drum Major) — Ramon Narvaez, Jr. (Clarinet/Sax)

The above musicians are the original musicians that were mobilized at Camp Bowie with the 141st Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division and were at the invasion of Italy on September 9, 1943. We are going home after four (4) years and 7 months and 21 days. On the 27th of June we left for Marina di Pisa. During my stay at the 27th Depot I went to see Maria at her home in San Romano about 30 km. away on the road to Florence. She said she would wait for me and with those thoughts in mind, I was glad to go home.

On the 28th of June we went to the airport in Pisa and got aboard a Stripped B-17 Bomber and left for Africa. June 29th: Got into Port Layeote, then July 1st we again boarded the B-17 for Dakkar, Africa. July 7: Left Dakkar, Africa for Natale, Brazil by C-54. When we boarded the B-17 at Pisa there were only eight of us from the band. The rest were from other outfits, about 14 others. The C-54 was much bigger and had more personnel. Arrived at 2 PM.

We got some food and left on a C-46 for Bellem and then Georgetown and then Porto Rico (San Juan). Arrived at Miami at 7 AM July 8th. At the airport in Miami we sure did drink lots of milk and it was good to taste it; and then Camp Blanding. At Camp Blanding no salutes were permitted between enlisted men or officers. Had to get used to civilian life-was the motto. July 10: Left for Texas and Fort Sam Houston. We got to Fort Sam Houston on July 14 and on the 15th of July were given the RUPPTURE DUCK and a piece of paper we had been looking for-the "DISCHARGE PAPERS."

Four (4) years and nine months after seeing four train rides, five boat rides, three aircraft rides, four continents (North America, Africa, Europe and South America), seven convoys and one invasion, several shell barrages, etc.; yes it was costly, some of our buddies paid with their lives and just because of a nut who wanted to start a new race of individuals.

And in the days of David Crockett and James Bowie a new legend can be added to the annals of the "Alamo City," now called San Antonio, Texas whose motto is "Remember the Alamo," which the 141st Infantry Regiment Band carried throughout the four (4) years and nine (9) months, although on March of 1944 the name of the Band 141st had been changed to 316th AFS Band. The ESPIRIT de CORPS of the 141st Infantry Regiment Band was still within the eight (8) Texas who returned to San Antonio, Texas where it all

started. The eight (8) Texans are as follows:

S/Sgt. David R. Kraft 20801039 San Antonio, Texas Trumpet
Tec. 4 Harry R. Kolenberg, Jr. 20801048 Karnes City, Tex. Saxophone
Tec. 4 William H. Lucas 20801049 San Antonio, Texas French Horn
Tec. 4 Henry Schrader 20801053 Boerne, Texas Cornet
Tec. 4 James A. Stewart 20801055 Kennedy, Texas Sousaphone
Tec. 5 Armando L. Breton, Jr. 20802891 El Paso, Texas Saxophone
Tec. 5 Guadalupe V. Leal 38025711 Harlingen, Texas Drum Major
PFC Ramon Narvaez, Jr. 20808872 Galveston, Texas Clarinet/Sax.

Craft and Lucas were the original musicians with the guard prior to mobilization of the 141st Band. The rest of joined the 141st Band after mobilization. The ironic part is that Ramon Narvaez, Jr., the author, calls Galveston, Texas his home. He actually was born in San Antonio, Texas (March 19,1918). Thus showing that Narvaez's destiny was meant to be as such thus helping in bringing a new legend to his birthplace, the Alamo City (San Antonio), and so it was meant to be the new legend, is the 141st Infantry Regiment Band, a group of musicians that were meant to entertain the soldiers of the 141st Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division, II Corps and many others during WWII. So ends the 141st Infantry Regiment Band and the PFC (Private First Class) Legend, but the PFC (Proud Favorite Civilian) continue a bit more. One point I wish to be known, that although there was the 142nd and 143rd bands, I wish it be known that the 141st Infantry Regiment Band was the first American Band, as a band's group and as a combat unit to invade the European Fortress at Salerno Beach (Paestum) on September 9, 1943 at approximately 07:30 hours. If anyone rebuts this claim, please let me know.

Rip Cord Davis

By George Kerrigan

Rip Cord Davis was the most controversial G.I. that I ever met. He hated authority and because we were in a Texas Division, hated Texans with a passion. He had the biggest eyes and told the biggest lies that anyone ever heard. He actually believed them himself. One story was: He was flying in a D.C.3 over Anzio, when the plane was hit by a German Stuka. He bailed out but on the way down he spotted the pilot and co-pilot coming down with no parachutes on. He grabbed both and held them until he hit the ground and all he got was a sprained ankle. He was in combat since the Salerno landing and no one ever saw him fire a shot. In the Southern France invasion, I was in the lead boat and was in the front, (we were supposed to land on Red Beach, but as it turned out they could not clear the beach, so we went into Green Beach instead). So our Platoon Sgt. Jim Britt of Texas asked me if I would plant a flag of Texas he had made up on a bamboo pole as I hit the beach. So I said, "Sure." Well I then felt a rifle in my back and Rip Cord said, "Kerrigan, I like you but if you plant that flag of Texas on the beach, I will shoot you." So Jim Britt took the flag back and said, "Never mind, George, I'll do it myself."

The day before we landed (while we were on the liberty ship) a major from Texas gave all the officers from Texas a small Texas flag with an elastic so they could put them on their arms for the landing. (We were all given American flags which we sewed on our sleeves so the French people would know that we were Americans before we got on the boat.) Well, we were all below decks when Rip Cord came down and yelled, "Everybody on deck, I want you to see a show." We wondered what he had in mind, but when we were all on deck, he yelled to all the officers gathered there, "Hey, there I am, Private Rip Cord Davis of the United States Army and I am ordering you to take those flags of Texas off your arms. As officers of the U.S. Army you all should know that no flag flies higher than the flag of the United States." A major turned around and said to another officer, "See if he is right." As he held his arms out and Rip Cord said, "Yes, I am right and I want them removed now," the major said, "O.K. take them off." Rip Cord smiled and walked away - talk about guts.

Now this brings me to Sept. 29, 1941. We were above the town of Tendon, France in the Vosges Mountains. The going was rough as I had ever seen it and as I was short of help, I saw Rip Cord and got an idea maybe I could find a spark of manhood in the lad. So I said, "Rip, I am going to give you

a squad. Show that you can fight as good as you can talk." He said, "George, you know what you can do with your stripes, and crawled away. I said, "O.K., to hell with you." And as I looked back at him he had his face down. He wasn't going to fight as usual, then things got worse and a little later Rip Cord came over and stood up in front of me. I said, "For God's sake, get down," but he said, "George, give me that squad you were talking about. I am going to get those B_____S. They are over there." And as he turned around to point, I saw that both his leg pants were torn and covered with blood. He was hit with schrapnel. I then knocked him down and called for a medic. He was still trying to get up to fight. I said, "You lousy son of a B_____, over a year in combat and you never fired a shot; now that you are wounded you want to fight." They took him away on a stretcher, still yelling.

We had a load of casualties. Jim Britt had just returned from the hospital and had a beautiful warm naval jacket. He was hit again and gave me the jacket. Ten minutes later I was hit in the shoulder and the new jacket was ruined. There was not a medic around so I took off for what I though was to the rear. As I crawled away (you could not stand without getting hit), a guy said to me, "You don't need your rifle or ammo anymore; could I have them, I'm running short." So I gave him them. And after awhile I stood up and headed down a trail in the woods, then two shots rang out and I turned around and there were two Jerries with rifles nervously looking all around, so I put up my left arm and said, "Kamerad." Then like a drowning man I thought they must have been blind missing me walking slow at about thirty yards and the way we were all mixed up, they could not take prisoners. That was why they fired in the first place, so I did a pivot and took off down the path, hoping they would miss me again; but I think they were more scared than me, for they did not fire again (thank God they were in the German Army instead of ours.)

It took me about nine hours to get to an aid station. (See enclosed story regarding that ordeal in a previous story). After a few days in an evacuation hospital, I was put on a hospital train heading south and after three days we arrived at a station. The train was broken into two sections-the ambulatory cases on one side and the litter cases on the other facing each other, and the ambulances in the center. As I exited, I heard someone yell, "Hey, Kerrigan," and it was Rip Cord being carried out of the train facing me. He roared out, "Do you know why we could not get combat boots up front? Look at all these rear echelon sons of B_____s." There were loads of officers (mostly doctors) there, but he had to get his message across and his audience loved it as he hoped they would. Well, I arrived at the hospital and was getting settled when I heard an awful racket. It was Rip Cord yelling. The head doctor was trying to take his German luger away, so I went over and said, "Rip, the doctor is right as it is against the law to have a weapon in a hospital. They will give it back when you leave." The doctor said, "That's what I told him." So he said, "O.K., but take good care of it." Things quieted down and I went to his ward every day as he was the only man I knew there. Then one day

all hell broke loose. Rip Cord came screaming into my room and had two nurses trying to hold him. I said, "What the hell is wrong. You are not supposed to be walking." He said, "That son of a B_____ of a doctor is shipping me out and won't give me my luger back." Then four male attendants arrived and carried him away, so I followed and the head doctor was there. He said, "He never had a pistol when he arrived here." And Rip was screaming, so I said, "Doctor, are you saying he had no pistol?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "I was the one that told him to leave it with you." He said, "You are wrong, he never had a pistol." So I blew my top and said, "The lowest thing in this world is an officer that would steal a pistol from a wounded man and you are a no good B_____ to boot." By this time they had about every male attendant in the place holding us back. So they carried Rip Cord out to an ambulance and his last words were, "I am coming back, you bum, and I will kill you." This was the only time I ever agreed with him, and the next day I was shipped out too. I never heard any more from Rip Cord but he sure in hell left his mark.

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