The Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Lt. Joseph Kulik, Italy, 1944

"Up For Seconds"

COVER STORY

VOL. XII, No. 2 - Spring 1992

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POWs never

forget war

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CONTENTS

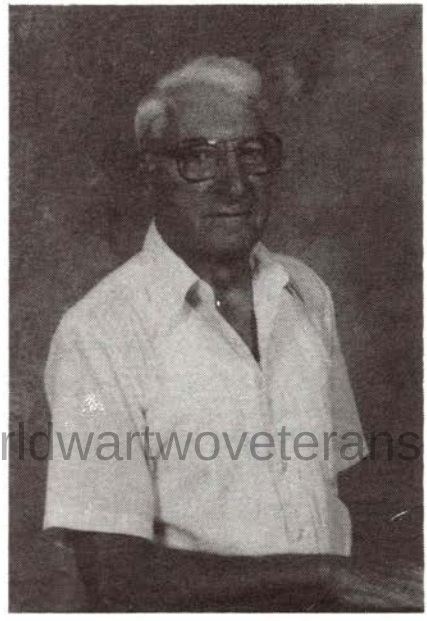
VOL. XII, No. 1—SPRING 1992
CONTENTS

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

"Up For Seconds"

by Martin Caretto
Company E, 143rd Infantry

Dedicated to the officers and enlisted men of Easy Company, 143rd Infantry, 36 Division.



Martin Carretto at a Texas Division Reunion

Introducing my personal heroes, two Lieutenants, a Sergeant, and five enlisted men from Easy Company: Thanks boys...

1st. Lt. J. Kulik, Commanding Easy Company - Italy, 1944, June. Lt. Kulik fought in the Pacific theater as a Sgt. and received many citations. Lt. Kulik came to Easy Company as an officer. He was tough, fearless, and a born leader. The other men I only know as being in the same company.

Then we have Lieutenant Zimmer, Platoon Leader. PFC Ranking, Radio Man - 300 set, 40 lb. battery carried on the back like a pack. This set was shot off of Rankin's back in prone position. Rankin survived.

PFC Neeves, Company Wireman feared artillery. Who didn't? Fearless against small arm fire. Neeves, I will take the enemy, me and my tommy gun. Not issued. Battalion Colonel would request Neeves as his personal body guard when he went forward to assess the situation.

PFC Hill, regular army, ex-calvary man, came to Easy Company as punishment for shooting an English M.P. The Englishman only suffered a headache. Both boys were off limits in an Africa Sporting Palace.

Martin Carretto, Camp Edwards, 1942

Askins entered army out of high school, 18 or 19 years old. Company runner - one of the best. Capel, company runner, also the best. Might say just kids. I was 30 years old at the time.

These officers and enlisted men were some of the finest men in the armed forces. There were many, many more. All heroes from Easy Company, 143rd Infantry. These men and boys were ready to die for their country and their buddies.

The following story is proof of their devotion to their country. Buddies, and cause, this was wirtten for the **Stars and Stripes** by PFC Stein, a reporter.

Here's the way it was in 1944 in Italy...

First Lt. Joseph A. Kulik of Shamokin, Pennyslvania was carrying on his shoulders his communications Sergeant, Sgt. Martin Caretto, of Joliet, Illinois, who was wounded in the left knee, by machine gun bullets. He was weak and exhausted and staggering under the weight of the Sgt. "Lieutenant," said Sgt. Caretto, "you better put me down and leave me, and get the hell out of here."

Lt. Joseph Kulik, Italy, 1944

''Caretto,'' said the Lieutenant, 'hell no', I won't put you down, I'm going to get you out and that's that.''
Lieutenant Kulik didn't put Sgt. Caretto down, and after a little while, the Sgt. was at the Battalion Aid Station getting professional care. It marked the climax of one of the most hectic days that Company E in the 36th Texas Division had experienced in its many months of combat duty.

Company E, which had been spearheading their divisions efforts for 12 consecutive days of fighting and advancement, was assigned the mission of attacking a hill late one afternoon, which was occupied by the Germans, near the town of Grosetto, Italy. At the foot of this hill, in a large draw the Germans had set up in position mortars, machine-guns and self-propelled guns, with some infantry. They let Company E come to within 50 yards, where a fire fight ensued. Company E had caught the Germans unaware. The fire fight alerted the other German units in the vicinity, causing Company E to bear the brunt of all type weapons fired on them by the enemy, which was devastating...most of Company E's men took cover in the small folds in the ground, and nearby ditches, and continued to exchange with the enemy...but a few were hit by the enemy fire, before they could reach safety and they had to lie down on the ground where they fell, raked by enemy fire. One of the wounded men was Lieutenant Zimmer, of Sharon, Pennsylvania, who was hit in the arm and left leg. PFC Wesley Rankin, of Elyria, Ohio, and PFC George Hill, of Maine, who were in a ditch about 20 yards away, took a blanket and crawled to the Lieutenant, rolled him onto it, and they then began to crawl, and drag the blanket behind them, until they got to safety, where the stretcher bearers took over and took the Lieutenant to the aid station...the stretchers being supplied by the courtesy of Cpl. John C. Neeves of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, who looked like Brooklyn, and talked like Brooklyn and laid wire like a genius. Neeves had wandered all over the countryside, and practically over the German lines in search of litters for the wounded. He originally came up to install communications to the Company but the German mortar fire kept knocking it out, so Neeves just followed his usual custom, and wandered all over the front to see if he could make himself useful.

It was now 7:30 P.M. and Lt. Kulik, Company E's commanding officer, was supervising the withdrawal of Company E to reorganize for another push. In a short while, the whole Company had pulled back except Lt. Kulik, Lt. Goldsmith, PFC Rankin, and PFC Andruskiewicz of Danvers, Massachusetts. They had remained because Sgt. Caretto who was laying in the open field wounded, was the last to be evacuated, refusing to be moved until all the others had been evacuated first, they were going to get him out. Although the enemy fire was still intense, they began to move their wounded comrade. Lt. Kulik, getting there first, boldly stood up, and raised the wounded man to his shoulders, and began to carry him from the battlefield. After an hour, and 1,000 yards, under the most adverse conditions, they finally stumbled into the aid station with Sgt. Caretto.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

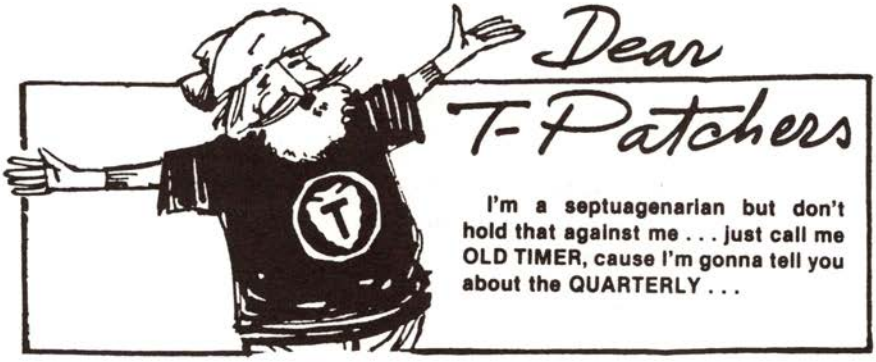
After several months in Naples, Italy hospital, I was sent back to the states and finally discharged. This is how I survived and lived to be 78 years old, shooting for 80 or more.

Enclosed find 3 photos. One of me at Camp Edward, Mass., one of me at 36th reunion in 1984, one of Lt. Kulik in Italy 1944.

Also enclosed are stamps to return the photos to me if possible. Use the extra stamps for corresponding.

Regards, just an old 36 vet.

Martin Caretto



The ole Fightin' 36th is a true-blue bunch of men from Texas, plus about ten thousand out-landers from every state in the Union . . . we gotta bunch of tales to tell about — roundin' up a couple of critters like Adolph and Benito.

Nobody, But the 36th Offers a Historical QUARTERLY

The QUARTERLY is a vehicle designed to seek, record and print stories (all kinds) about the encounters of the valient men who took our adversaries To Task while proudly wearing the old T-PATCH.

The record of the 36th is well known, and EVERY one of our troopers HAS A STORY (of some kind) to tell . . . and that's what we need.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Landsberg Revisited

By Clayton Grinage, Jr.
111th Engr. Bn.

After a long and often very interesting trip across Bavaria, from roughly Stuttgart to Munich area, we arrived at a Luftwaffe Hq., which was in some kind of public building hardly identifiable, since it was by then after dark and very cold. We tried to keep warm by standing around a small fire someone had obviously started days before, in front of the entrance. The German troops were very well equipped with long leather overcoats, warm boots and mittens. We had been traveling with other troops of the 141st RCT, mostly at the head of the column at least as far as we could tell. Occasionally there would be a recon vehicle at some vital crossroad, but no MP's, Inf., or other so-called ''forward'' troops. We had no occasion to be alarmed, nor was there any opposition from Wehrmacht, or other enemy. The sole indication that we were in such position was the constant drone of Luftwaffe planes, ostensibly heading for surrender areas, as we had been told.

Such a long ''march'' was, even by truck, quite unusual, it having been the longest by far since Repl. Depot to Epinal, or debarking at Le Havre to board the train to Paris. We passed through a bakers dozen of intriguing small villages, both around the resort lakes of that area, and the Spas, one of which Von Rundstedt was enjoying when he was captured by one of our other RCT's. In every respect, it looked like things were winding down, but being cautious was still the main theme, even if yours truly tried on a German cap and instead of alarming our Squad Sgt. Rimes ('Fatha', so called for his legendary concern for his people) it caused him to draw so quickly, I was fortunate to have wits enough to duck and deter him with a call of his name. The moustache I had grown for ''as long as the war lasts'' was no help to his nerves, I imagine.

To get back to the subject I started to relate. The next morning, after chilling myself all night, only to find that the front seat had been available in the warmth of a heated cab, was really inspiring! We sped off, for whatever reason we may have had and wound up in Landsberg where Hitler wrote Mein Kampt. The very same place was now full of rotting, dried, and otherwise dead of all unknown origin to us at the time. We had heard some very weak attempts to hail us as we approached the gates, and there was evidence that the inmates

had turned on their guards, inflicitng sometimes fatal blows, after repeated bludgeoning, if such faint blows could be called that. These were zombie-like, walking corpses, only the first of 10's of thousands we would be seeing in the next few days. I heard the whole story from a tiny 75 lb. girl of 13 or so, who looked the size of a 7 year old, and had the expression of an old lady. With her was a really **old** lady of 30 or so, along with her brother, a trio I was to be "Nei Forgessen", even to this very day. I have little info on the brother, but the "old" lady had been a concert pianist in her home in the Ukraine, Lwow to be specific, and the wife of what we would call a State Supreme Court Justice. She had studied with Paderewski (Paderewski), pronounced Pader-refski) since the age of 5 and before the war was a famous protege' known throughout Europe, having played with Manhuin, etc.

In 1939, after the War (?) Polish) had begun to show what Hitler had in store for the world, it was still not a fearful place for such high-placed families, or at least so they thought. Eventually they were to start the trek through the "camps", among them Auschwitz, and finally Landsberg, where the very last of the "sheep" were slaughtered, having been "shorn" many times, many

TWO JEWISH GIRLS, DRESSED IN STRIPED-PRISONER GARB, LOOK DISTASTEFULLY AT CAR LOADED WITH NAZI VICTIMS.

months before. I must continue this in later section, as the story is a long one, as I said, it stretches as far as my own lifespan.

I learned later that many of the so-called internees were really dressed many times in the clothing of the inmates, but really were SS, and more often than not war criminals who had acted in the camps as guards, ''weasels'', called even by the ones interned as ferrets. Often, possibly nearly always, these people had committed at least treasonable acts, and very likely many turned up as ''internees,'' and eventually sent to U.S., as well as other sanctuaries. (Mengele), Klaus Barbie, are familiar names to us all. I have personally along with ''Dusty'' Watson, who naturally hailed from Kansas, captured many of those in striped clothes who had tried to get through our intelligence setup this way. I also worked with an officer of the AMG, during our stay in Germany, after the close of hostilities, where we forcibly in many cases, sent ''White'' Russians, against their will, back to the homes they no longer wished to see. Many really were in danger of execution and probably deserved it, war being the game it was at that time. Mostly, we deloused the people, majority of whom being women (the men of course were probably long ago conscripted to Army, work details, or worse) of all ages. I preferred helping the very young, as they were easier to reason with, and needed our help to a greater degree than most, since they were usually orphans. Also not yet exposed to the political chicanery so there was little doubt that they could be helped without worrying about their loyalties.

About this time, early in June, I believe, I had the opportunity to go to England as a student again, with the American University, which was set up

DIVISION MEN SAW NAZI BRUTALITY AT FIRST-HAND.

with "imported" professors from U.S. who came to Shrivenham, Univ., in Swindon, England, to keep our interest up in further education. Some of the same professors I had at Univ. of Ky. were among the ones in this group, 3 to be exact, and one was the head of the Physics Dept., another a mathmetician, while I took music courses, including Band, Concert Band, and Symphony, all conducted by a Warrant-Officer (CWO) who had studied at, and was the star pupil of Wm. Revelli, a renown bandmaster from the Univ. of Michigan, where the first "formations" were invented that we now see so commonplace on the gridiron. This was Thor Johnson, who went on to become the first American-born conductor of a Major U.S. Symphony, when he accepted a draft from the Cincinnati Symphony, later going to Tokyo Symphony, where he succumbed to cancer at a very young age. Ironically, he was followed by a compatriot of mine from Kalamazoo, made famous again by the former newsboy, so famous in 36th Division history, Albert Kudzia.

This young genius from Kzoo was the famous Thomas Schippers, who unfortunately also passed on long before his "four score & ten", again from cancer. I stayed in this "school" atmosphere just long enough to nearly miss transportation home, as the last truck was rolling out for Metz, and points south, just after the last of the turkey on Thanksgiving Day had given out, and I had traveled across France and Germany, stopping for "food" at the transient tents set up for the purpose. Spam and coffee seemed to be in unusually good supply, at least I was not hungry! I rode free on the Paris-London boat train, from Thames river station to Calais, and thence via SNCF, the French National Ry. through Paris with a stopover that lasted two weeks, through Nancy, where another period of "delay enroute" was just the ticket, and Strasbourg, where I caught the Red Ball with no stops for foolishness, as I would have been lost. I nearly missed as it was, in fact I did miss the grand Parade down Broadway, but to tell the truth, I wasn't aware it happened until recently when reading the Quarterlies. Paris was not only an experience, but an education, having been there four times in the span of less than a year, I saw everything in a different light at every trip. I could never find the kind of food it was famous for the first two times, and after that it was so expensive I couldn't stand the freight. Other things changed just as rapidly, with each succeeding trip. To top off the round of coincidences that followed me through the entire time in service, my "chauffeur" for the trip to Marseilles was none other than Don Thomas, a 36th driver who had been there a long term, and a former neighbor of mine and classmate through the 6th grade in a rural school in Michigan where both our folks had grown up and gone to the same two-room school house. In fact, my Father's relatives ALL went there at one time, when the place was named after an uncle of his. Later after the discharges of us both, we lived about half a football field away from each other for 2 or 3 years, in the early 80's, just before Don passed away in '86. He had married a classmate of both of ours, and this meeting on Thanksgiving '45, was the first time we had seen each other for over a decade. Not a long time, but then it was half our lifetimes.

Salerno: The Battle the Allies Almost Lost

By Joseph Albright
Cox News Service
The Greenville News
Submitted by: F.E. Healer
Co. E 142nd Infantry Regiment

SALERNO BEACH, ITALY—

Three days after the GIs landed, the senior American ground commander, Maj. Gen. Ernest Dawley, was so battle-weary that his hands shook.

His landing force of some 70,000 Americans—many of them green, untested kids from the Texas National Guard—was in imminent danger of being driven into the Mediterranean.

Dawley telephoned his superior, Fifth Army commander Lt. Gen. Mark Clark, to say that German tanks had broken through a gap in his defenses and were fanning out behind his lines.

"Well, Mike, what are you going to do about it?" asked Clark, the overall commander of American and British invasion forces.

"Nothing," Dawley replied. "I have no reserves. All I've got is a prayer."

"That's OK, but you better do something else besides," said Clark.

It was 40 years ago this month that American and British troops landed near Salerno to establish the first Allied clawhold on the Nazi-occupied European mainland in World War II.

No monument marks the spot at Paestum, 20 miles south of Salerno, where the first Americans waded ashore at 3:30 a.m. on Sept. 9, 1943.

But this Sept. 9, town officials of Paestum will award Clark an unusual medal.

It honors him not as a military genius but for the care exercised by his troops in sparing Paestum's temples and other archeological treasures. Clark, 87 and ailing, will not travel to Italy for the ceremony. Instead he will be represented by his son, William D. Clark, himself a deputy assistant secretary of the Army.

The Salerno landing, code-named Operation Avalanche, marked the first full-scale attack by American troops against Hitler's main forces in Europe.

It was the beginning of a slow, blood-drenched march north through Italy—a campaign that would take the lives of 32,000 Americans and 42,000 British troops before the final German surrender in May 1945.

"It was an unglamorous mission," said Gen. Clark in a recent telephone interview from his home in Charleston, S.C. "We were like guards and tackles on a football team making a hole for the fleetfooted running of Eisenhower."

Yet the Salerno landing was, as Clark put it in his memoirs, "a near disaster."

Because it was such a near thing, it emerges in retrospect as one of the turning points in the war.

For if the heavily outnumbered Germans could have repulsed an Allied landing on the gentle shores of southern Italy, who would have risked ordering the even chancier landing at Normandy, France, in June 1944?

And if Allied armies had been seriously delayed in reaching France, how long could Stalin have held out against the Germans? What would have stopped the Americans from dropping the first atomic bombs on Germany instead of Japan?

Clark was never able to drive the German armies out of Italy. What the Italian campaign accomplished was to force Hitler to fight the Allies on three fronts: in France, Italy and the Soviet Union.

When Eisenhower's Normandy invasion forces broke into the clear and rolled into Germany in 1945. Clark was still fighting 30 German divisions—forces that could have served as Hitler's ultimate reserves.

Leonard Wilkerson, now 58 and living in Dallas, remembers the fear and confusion among the Texas National Guardsmen of the 36th Division who hit Salerno beach first.

"I didn't know what was happening," he said. "I was an 18-year-old private at the time, a young kid...

"We landed at 6 a.m. and the Germans were waiting. We thought we would land and not have any opposition, but we were surprised. I was scared to death. In my company alone, we probably lost 25 percent of our men." Men bellied up the beach, threading through barbed wire and land mines. German machine gun nests and a few tanks opened fire on the attackers. In the air, Allied fighters strafed German rear positions, trying to delay a counterattack.

Hundreds of soldiers were separated from their units and had to make it on their own.

Pvt. J.C. Jones rounded up one bunch of 50 stragglers, led them through heavy fire and destroyed at least two German machine gun nests.

Lt. Clair Carpenter and Cpl. Edgar Blackburn knocked out a machine gun position and a tank with their 75mm howitzer. Then the Germans sighted in on them and killed them both.

Bloody as the first day seemed, the losses were lighter than military planners in London and Washington expected. Among the American troops, 100 were reported killed and another 400 were wounded or missing.

At 8:30 a.m. on Sept. 10, Clark wrote in his diary that the situation was "well in hand" in the American sector, at the southern half of the 36-mile-long landing area. At that point, the British forces to the north, also part of Clark's Fifth Army, were up against more concentrated German fire.

Over the first three days, the Allies slogged inland several mils and established a semi-circular defense line on the flat plains below the mountains.

Nicola Di Spirito, then 10, remembers the Americans marching up the road from the beach toward his home in Paestum.

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Nicola Di Spirito, then 10, remembers the Americans marching up the road from the beach toward his home in Paestum.

''My feelings were of wonder for the richness of the American soldiers,'' recalled Di Spirito. '' Soldiers gave babies bouquets and chocolates. They gave me a box of charms.''

By then, the Italian armies were bystanders. Two months earlier, Benito Mussolini, Hitler's fascist ally, had fallen from power in Rome. And on the eve of the Salerno landing, an Italian caretaker government surrendered to Eisenhower's envoys.

After the first shock of the invasion, the German Panzer units pulled back from the American front lines and headed north onto the hilltops overlooking the coastal strip.

On Sept. 12, Dawley, the American ground commander, made a tactical blunder. Clark, his superior, did not wake up to it until after the German commander jumped to exploit it.

Dawley, trying to strengthen his forces on the south end of his lines, pulled out some units from the north end. That left a gap several miles long in his defense.

That evening, German troops started inflitrating through the gap toward the sea. No one stopped them.

A startling opportunity, realized the German Tenth Army commander, General-oberst Heinrich von Vietinghoff gennant Scheel. Noticing that the Allies had ''split themselves in two sections,'' Vietinghoff ordered his tanks to pour through the gap to strike Dawley's forcs from the rear.

It was then that Dawley telephoned Clark to say he had no reserves and could do nothing but pray.

His prayers didn't help the second battalion of his 143rd Infantry. When the German tanks struck from the rear, the batallion commander ordred the men to stay covered while he called for artillery fire against the Germans.

But the artillery fire did not come because ''the artillery was not altogether sure of the batallion's position,'' according to Army historical records.

When the Germans kept coming, there was ''not much, if any, small arms fire'' from the batallion, Army historian Martin Blumenson wrote after the war.

The Germans captured almost 500 Americans. Only nine officers and 325 men made it back to American lines.

Desperate for reinforcements, Clark on Sept. 13 sent a fighter pilot to Sicily with a letter addressed to Maj. Gen. Matthew Ridgeway, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division.

''I realize the time normally needed to prepare for a drop,'' wrote Clark. ''But this is an exception. I want you to make a drop within our lines on the beachhead, and I want you to make it tonight. This is a must.''

The 82nd Airborne was technically under Clark's command. But on Eisenhower's orders it had been preparing instead for a parachute drop in Rome to rescue the Ialian royal family from the Germans.

At the last moment, that mission had been scrubbed by Eisenhower's headquarters. The 82nd was available.

Clark remembers receiving a reply later that day from Ridgeway: "Your message received. Can do. Matt." Late in he evening of Sept. 13, within 15 hours of Clark's request, 1,300 hardened paratroopers were drifting out of the sky to reinforce the American lines.

The paratroopers were almost too late. That afternoon, no more than a few thousand of Dawley's rear echelon soldiers stood between the Germans and the sea.

Two American artillery officers, Lt. Col. Hal L. Mulclow, Jr. and Lt. Col. Russell Funk, did as much as anyone to stave off a collapse.

As Clark wrote in his memoirs, the two colonels and their aides "went out on the nearby roads and began stopping trucks, jeeps and everything else that came along. Every soldier who got out of the vehicles was given a gun and put in the line."

Clark ordered the regimental band to take up rifles and defend a hill near the German tank positions. Afterward, he named it Piccolo Peak "because thre was nobody there but musicians."

Toward nightfall on Sept. 13, the artillerymen commanded by Mulclaw and Funk dumped 3,650 artillery rounds on the German tank column. The barrage was intense enough to block the German tanks for the moment.

That night, Clark directed his chief of staff to "take up with the Navy" the task of evacuating the American beachhead.

But German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring misread the situation. He had only about 100,000 troops in Italy, far fewer than the roughly 170,000 American and British troops. He did not realize he had the Allies in a trap.

On Sept. 14, Kesselring ordered Vietinghoff to withdraw gradually toward Rome after making one final stab at pushing Clark's Fifth Army off the beach.

When the German tanks hit the American lines again, it was a half-hearted effort. From Sept. 15 on, the American situation gradually improved.

"I often feel that this lapse on the part of Kesselring was all that saved us from disaster," Clark wrote in his memoirs.

In the Salerno landing, the Americans reported 3,500 casualties: 500 killed, 1,800 wounded and another 1,200 never found.

The British suffered another 5,500 dead, wounded and missing. German casualties totaled 3,500 more.

On Sept. 16, during a lull in the battle, Clark sent Eisenhower a secret message asking the supreme commander's backing for kicking Dawley out of Italy.

Dawley "should not be continued in his present job," Clark wrote. "He appears to go to pieces in emergencies."

Eisenhower and his top aides flew in to the beachhead for a briefing. Eisenhower asked Dawley at one point: "How did you ever get your troops in such a mess?"

Maj. Gen. Lyman Lemnitzer, one of Eisenhower's assistants, later wrote: "Obviously under great strain, and with his hands shaking like a leaf, Gen.

Dawley made a pitiful effort to explain the disposition of his troops and what he planned to do.''

On Sept. 20, Clark relieved Dawley and sent him back to the United States for reassignment.

After the war, Army military historian Blumenson was somewhat more sympathetic to Dawley.

''It was Clark who instructed Dawley to lighten his forces on the right in order to strengthen those on the left,'' wrote Blumenson. ''And it was Dawley who later suffered because his troop dispositions resembled a hodgepodge of units.''

Today, the only visible trace of the American landing is an immense field of 7,862 white gravestones surrounded by rows of Roman pines.

The graveyard, with its gently curving rows of crosses and a few stars of David, is in Nettuno 150 miles northwest of Salerno Beach.

It holds the remains of only about one-fourth of the American soldiers who died at Salerno and in later battles up the spine of Italy. Another 24,000 bodies were buried elsewhere or never found.

DAWLEY WAS SHAFTED

GENERAL DAWLEY

GENERAL CLARK

Flying Column No. 3

36th Recon Troop Journal

Flying Column #3, under command of 2nd Lt. Robert W. Body, was assigned the mission of reconnoitering routes to Albanelis, then Rocca D'Aspide, then west on highway north of and at the foot of Mt. Soprano, reporting strength, composition, and movement of any enemy forces.

This column boarded the USS Dickman (APA 12) on the afternoon of Sept. 2, 1943. On Sept. 5 our boat joined the convoy and headed out of sea.

During the four day voyage we had ample time to study the maps, photographs and details of the coming maneuver. At 0300 the morning of the 9th of Sept. our column debarked into 2 landing craft (LCM) after checking in at the Navy control boat we were organized in the 6th wave. At about 0700 it was daylight and we could see the beach. It was under terrific enemy artillery and small arms fire and a few LCM's were landing. We checked our vehicles, the battery in the ¼ ton amphibian was dead. We made an arrangement with the landing craft that had a bulldozer on it to hit the beach alongside us so that they might give us a lift.

There was a cessation in the fire and we hit the beach. This was at 0900 hours. The other LCM with Sgt. Alsbury in charge, we found out, had missed the Naval control road and had gone directly to the beach. They hit just after the 2nd wave when the beach was under terrific fire. The Sgt.'s boat had picked up the crew of a sinking LCM.

As soon as their craft hit, the entire crew immediately deployed and dug in until they could take stock of their immediate situation. Snipers opened up on Sgt. Alsbury but he snatched a LMG from its mount and holding it in his arms, soon silenced that German.

When the fire had lifted somewhat, Sgt. Alsbury, in his ¼ ton P&D truck under Cpl. Good, went to an orchard approximately ½ mile inland; Cpl. Christ's ¼ ton had become separated during the Melee and had proceeded to Paestum which was the predesignated rendezvous area. He joined column #4 there.

Lt. Body led the vehicles from the landing craft to the same orchard that Sgt. Alsbury had selected and they joined forces at this point. A German mortar opened fire on some of our artillery positions about 200 yards from us. The shrapnel became uncomfortably close so we moved about 200 yards further away. We then contacted column #4 by SCR-193 radio and made arrangements to meet in Paestum.

We started for Paestum but before we had gotten underway, a mortar opened up on us. We took cover near a farm house. Sgt. Garner's column just then radioed to come to Paestum because of a German tank attack. So we returned to the orchard where we contacted Capt. Wells, who had landed by then. This was at 1155 hours. He sent our column to division CP (86.0-05.1) to contact Sgt. Garner's unit, which we did. Then the enemy tank attack had

been broken up before we arrived. From this point we operated as a platoon.

Flying Column #4

This column under the command of S/Sgt. Levi W. Garner, was assigned to the mission of attempting to reach the bridge over the Sele River on Route #18, check it and then continue upstream to the next bridge which we were to seize and hold until relieved by "L" company, 142nd Infantry.

Our column boarded the USS Barnett at Mars-El-Kabir, the afternoon of Sept. 2nd and sailed 2 days later. After our ship left the harbor we were given our immediate mission, sufficient maps and aerial photographs which we studied carefully. Capt. Frank W. Hamby, 142nd Infantry, formerly an officer in our troop came to our assistance and helped us with innumerable valuable suggestions.

At 0200 on the morning of the 9th, we debarked into 3 landing craft - 2 LCM's and 1 LCVP. We hit the beach at 0600 hours just at dawn. We were under machine gun fire but suffered no casualties. Immediately on landing, our vehicles became bogged down in the sand so we were compelled to dig in. The artillery and machine gun fire was particularly heavy; about 20 minutes after we had dug in, Sgt. Garner found Pfc. Frank DeMello calmly sitting in the ¼ ton amphibian working with his SCR-193 radio. Sgt. Garner ordered him to leave his set and dig in but he replied, "I've got to get into contact with division." Sgt. Garner got him out and into a foxhole only to find him back on the set a few minutes later.

At about 0900 hours Cpl. Christ in his ¼ ton joined us on Red Beach. At about 1000 hours we were finally pulled out by an engineer bulldozer and moved inland to accomplish our mission. We had just reached highway 18 when we contacted Major Screnson, S-3 of the 142nd Infantry. He gave us the mission to reconnoiter north on Highway 18 to investigate a report of 60 enemy tanks somewhere in that vicinity. We moved out immediately and had gotten about 3 miles up Highway 18 when Sgt. Carvajal, Point Commander, pointed a dust cloud moving toward Route 18, from the east. He determined that the vehicles were enemy but could not identify the type or number. We turned and moved back about ½ miles when Sgt. Garner and Cpl. Christ dismounted and moved across a field to the left to observe. They soon determined that the dust cloud was made by enemy MK-IV tanks.

We started back to division CP to report but Cpl. Pearson's ¼ ton would not start and although the enemy tanks were very close, Sgt. Carvajal and his crew returned and pushed him. After reporting the information to General Walker, we were directed to help protect the division CP.

While the tank's attack was in progress our 37 mm gun, commanded by T/5 Bernard Jasin and fired by Jesus Gonzalez bagged 2 MK-IV's at a range of 170 yards. (We later paced it off). One of the tank crew was captured by Sgt. Carvajal and an unidentified Lieutenant. Our mortar crew did some excellent work in keeping the tanks out in the open, enabling the artillery and our 37 mm to pound away at them. After the attack was repulsed, we remained at Division CP until rejoined by column #3.

Action of the Third Platoon
1700 - 9 Sept., 1943 to 2400 - 21st of Sept. , 1943

The platoon, less half track, was sent on a reconnaissance mission generally north on Route 18. We arrived at CP 2 miles north of Division CP. The first 4 vehicles passed this point and the column was stopped while the point observed the road ahead. While the column was stopped, Sgt. Garner saw 2 German soldiers crawl from a ditch and move toward a thicket, 375 yards west of Route 18. He opened fire upon them with a rifle and received fire from a German LMG concealed somewhere in the brush. Our men took cover behind a stone building where Sgt. Alsbury dismounted a LMG and opened fire on the enemy who could then be seen moving about in the brush. At this time, Capt. Wells, CO, arrived with his driver, Pfc. Henry Goodson, with a new mission for our platoon. They were also fired on by the enemy LMG; about the time the captain reached cover of the building, the Germans opened up with an 88 mm gun and fired 2 rounds over our heads, without any damaging effects. A 20 mm gun, from the same position, opened up on some friendly tanks which were moving north along Route 18. Thanks to the quick thinking of Capt. Wells, our mortar crew, Pvt. Hyatt in command, we ordered into action and were targeted in on the enemy positions by the second shot. They then fired several more rounds for effect. Upon surveying the effects of our fire, we found that we had neutralized the following, 1 - 88 mm gun, 3 reconnaissance cars, 1 - 20 mm gun, some personnel and a small ammunition dump.

At about 0600 hours, Sept. 10, we were sent to reconnoiter the area about the bridge over the Sele River on Route 18. The 191st tank battalion was in position 300-500 yards south of the bridge. We reported this to troop headquarters by Pvt. Les Terry, messenger, and continued our reconnaissance to the east.

About 1½ miles east of the bridge, (N86-211-0), we observed a small settlement in the valley about 3 miles further up. Capt. Wells joined us at this time with our 2 half tracks. (Driver Justin, Ballenger and Radio Operators Duenskie and McCauley, as did Lt. Gutterman in a ½ ton).

We continued in observation at this point after sending Sgt. Garner with a 4-¼ ton patrol to reconnoiter for a ford across the calore north of our position.

A platoon of the 45th reconnaissance troop joined us and minus Sgt. Garner's patrol and the 2 half track moved aggressively toward the settlement. Sgt. Garner's patrol later joined us and reported a bridge (N87-6-12-8), over the river blown and in flames. He had also located a ford about 500 yards west of the bridge. We proceeded to the bridge and from there Lt. Body left with a 3-½ ton patrol to reconnoiter toward Altavilla.

The patrol reached the hill just past the settlement when it was advised that a bridge ahead had been blown and that the bridge was covered by MG fire. The patrol contacted the fire direction center for two battalions of artillery from the 45th division. They were firing on Altavilla. The patrol advanced to within 1-½ miles of Altanella without event. The remainder of the platoon

remained at blown bridge over the Calors. When the Lieutenant's patrol returned, the entire platoon withdrew to bivouac at the troop CP.

During Sept. 11, we organized, maintenanced and provisioned our vehicles and moved to the new troop bivouac at 1700 hours, 3 miles northwest of Capaccop.

At 0700 hours on the 12th we were sent out to reconoiter the road to Magliano Vertere. At that time we set up a defensive position and dispatched a 3-¼ ton patrol under Sgt. Garner to push on to Stio to Laurino and then to Piagoine near. From the vicinity of Piegoine the patrol observed a blown bridge near Sacco and while at this, OP was taken under artillery fire. The patrol suffered no casualties but captured 2 Germans.

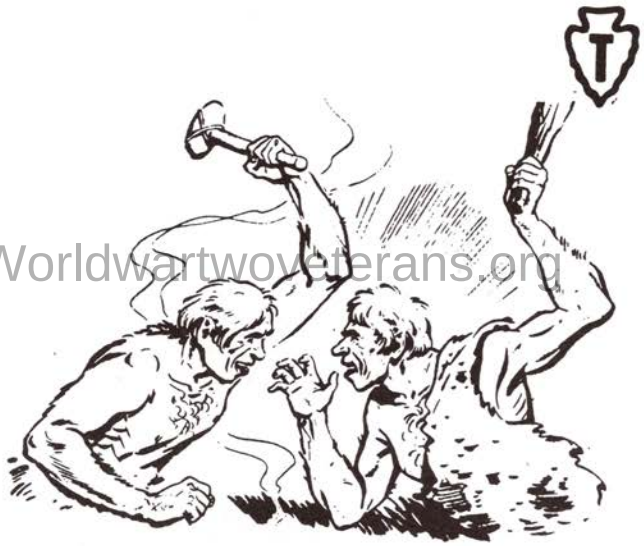
That evening at 2000 hours the platoon moved to Stio and set up defensive position covering approaches from the north and south. Small patrols were dispatched during the night.

The following morning at 0700 hours we dispatched two 3-¼ ton patrols, one under Cpl. Christ to observe any enemy movement near the blown bridge at Sacco.

The second under Sgt. Carvajal was sent to reconnoiter the road to Fellitto and to Castel S. Lorenzo. Neither patrol encountered enemy but Sgt. Carvajal observed the bridge blown east of Rocca D'Aspide.

That evening at 2030 the platoon was withdrawn to set up outpost at Trentinara. During the night 4 bridges between Trentinara and Monte Forte were blown by our engineers. We remained at this location all the next day (Sept. 14) improving our security and orienting CO of the shore engineers regiment, which had come up in support.

We were still in that position during the 15th, although at 1900 we were attached to the 505th Air Borne Infantry.



On To Altavilla

by Henry Gunlock
Co. L - 142nd. Infantry

The first Battalion took Altavilla on the 12th, but were driven out that evening suffering severe losses.

We were ordred to take Altavilla with its high hills on the 13th. Coming under heavy fire, we were pinned down and couldn't move. Known to headquarters but not us, was that the Germans had strongly reinforced their numbers during the night of the 12th and now was about to encircle us on the flanks. We withdrew under heavy fire, losing some men, but most got out. I remember 5 of us in a group were running across an open area. Robert Brewley was with me. The 88's opened up on us as we ran. One shell went over us about 100 yards. The next one hit behind us. We came to a narrow ravine about 4 ft. deep and 10 ft. across. We dove into it and were saved as the next shell hit about 25 yards away.

After the licking at Altavilla, we reformed our defenses, on La Costa creek and the 82 airborne troops, who were fresh, tried their luck at taking it, which they were able to do.

On about the 14th or 15th, the enemy massed his forces, for a big push into our area and the Sele-Calore River area. The most fierce tank, artillery, and antitank battle took place. After suffering heavy losses, the enemy withdrew.

The next day, I was ordered to take about 10 men and go back into the Altavilla area on a scout and combat patrol. No officer was sent with us. I did have Mike Galtero, who could speak Italian and Joe Schiender who could speak German.

We moved out and after going about 1½ miles an Italian man came out of a house in the distance waving at us. I asked Galtero to see what he wanted. After talking, Galtero said that there was a wounded German in the house and for us to come and get him. I told Mike to tell him that we had no medic with us but that help would come later.

Having no means to help the wounded and also remembering the day we landed, some Italians firing on us - I was suspicious of a trap. So we moved on towards the hills where Altavilla lay. I must say that I had severe forbidden thoughts about what we could expect to receive upon our arrival.

Receiving no fire, I expected an ambush at any time. But, we kept on until we reached the top. There, amid the rock fences and draws were numerous bodies of friend and foe.

We took up a position with a wide field of fire in front, and a rock fence in our rear, with gaps in it, that we might use to escape if need be.

As we had been there about an hour, and with night approaching, I sent two men back with word about what the situation was. After dark settled in, there we sat listening and watching any sound that might be the enemy.

I remember the stench from the bodies. It was near unbearable, as they had been laying for 2 days or more, in the hot sun. I had seen body fluids coming out of the body openings, eyes, mouth, rectum, ears. I saw some enemies that still had their helmet straps under their chins and their faces so swollen the straps had cut an inch into their chins and jaws. One of them had his eyeballs blown out and laying on his cheeks. From the look of the bodies, I believe those Navy ships' large shells had killed them from concussion.

About 9 p.m., down below us, the enemy started shooting off flares. I thought, "Oh Boy." "Here they come in an attack." You could hear engines being started up, but otherwise, it was quiet. Sometime later, we heard movement in front of us, just below, so we opened fire. Then was heard the sound of a falling body, sliding down the slope, dislodging rocks as they fell. Quietness fell over our area, but you could hear the enemy engines in the distance and see more flares. What we did not know was that the enemy was withdrawing. Our firing might have hastened his movement. All was quiet for us the rest of the night.

Daylight came, no enemy being in sight, I went to see what our target had been. As there were several dead below, you couldn't tell, but I did find a dead mule. I'll never know if it had wandered into our position or if some enemy was leading it to retrieve dead comrades. We held our positions until portions of our troops arrived, at which time I lay back to get some much needed sleep.

A short time later, a war correspondent walked up and said, "Sgt., where are all those bodies?" Pointing him in the right direction, he departed.

Later in December 13-14, 1943

After taking Mt. Maggiore, an emeny patrol tried to infiltrate our positions at night and 4 or 5 of them were killed. The next day, Wayne Bullock and I went down the slope where they lay and searched the bodies. I got several pictures of one and a little money which I still have. We started to take their boots off, but having blood on them, we didn't. Our boots had rotted out so bad from the rain and mud that our feet were wet and cold most of the time.

To help matters, we had taken the blankets of our fallen comrades and cut strips to wrap our feet and legs.

On the 15th, our 2nd Battalion attacked Mt. Lungo. A low lying rugged ridge valley to our right - being between Mt. Maggiore and Mt. Sammucro with the town of San Pietro near. As we held our positions, on the northeast slopes of Mt. Maggiore, we could watch the fire fight between the enemy who were in fortified dugouts against our comrades out in the open. There was a continuous stream of tracers back and forth and it soon became apparent our buddies were putting them on the run.

By daylight haze and smoke hung heavy over Lungo, but the enemy had had enough and retreated. During the day of the 16th, light rain fell and late in the evening, word came down from Gunlock to take a patrol out into the valley toward Lungo to make contact with the 2nd Battalion.

We moved out and taking advantage of cover as best we could, we moved into a ravine that went in the direction that we must go. Closing to within sight of our troops, who were digging in, we waved at them and started back.

I remember thinking at the time, of the enemy on that high ground beyond the Rapido River, who were watching our every move. When we get back into position, we are going to get a good shelling.

The enemy, if possible, always held the high ground - they would hardly ever battle us if otherwise. In the far distance behind their lines, could be heard the sound of jack-hammers, digging new holes for their guns. As I lay on that wet, cold ground behind a rock about 8 inches thick - 10 inches high - 4 ft. long; it started to rain harder. I looked at my watch, it was 9:15 p.m. As it was raining in my face, I turned around and about five minutes later, the sound of those "screaming meamies" Nebelwefer rocket mortars were heading our way. You learned the sound of shells and bullets or you didn't last long. Bullets fired at you and close, sound like the crack of a whip. The closer to you, the sharper the crack. Those shells going over you have a longer whine to them. Those right on you have a very short sound and Bang-o. I could tell those boogers were going to be close, as 3 or 4 flew over and fell into our troops behind me. But the last shell had a short sound and I knew that it was on me. The next moment the ground shook and I was bounced into the air. I felt as if a truck had hit me. I could see stars and skyrockets in my mind's eye. I could smell gun powder. I must have been in a state of shock. I tried to stand up, but fell as my right leg was broken with the bones coming through the skin above my shoe. I called out to my nearest comrade who was Martin Napierkowski. He came over and I asked him if anyone else was hit. He thought not - so I told him to go get Seabiscuit Sikes to help me. Seabiscuit came and I climbed on his back and he carried me back to a small depression about 50 yards to the rear. He sent word to Capt. Stone of my condition, who sent a medic to bind my rifle stock to my leg and gave me a shot of morphine. The pain had begun in earnest and boy, did that shot stop the suffering. As we were expecting a counter-attack, no one could be spared to carry me out of there on a litter, so I lay there the whole night clutching my stockless rifle.

I know that I drifted in and out of conscious all night long. I remember cursing the enemy for what he had done to me. Still drizzling the next morning, litter bearers came for me. They had to carry me over rocks, ledges, around trees - down canyons for 1½ to 2 miles to an aid station. I remember thanking God! My war was over.

You can see that if I had not turned around the rock would have hit me in the head and chest. As it was night and couldn't see, I did not know until some of my buddies got back that the 55 lb. shell that hit the rock I was behind was a "Dud."

Someone was watching over me and had future plans for me.

SOME OBSERVATIONS OF MYSELF AND OTHERS IN LIFE-DEATH SITUATIONS

It has been said that "Discretion is the better part of valor" - meaning using good judgement at the right moment to save your life and others - such as in combat.

The person who says that he is not fearful at certain times in combat is not mentally normal. I have experienced the whole range of emotions from fear-rage-anger-despair-love of fellowman and hope.

Any man who has to face many (not one) death threatening situations has had to choose flight or fight-live or die - these are the nerve breaking decisions while piled one after another, day after day, that takes its toll on the human nervous system.

We know, and I have seen those who can stand more than others. How this can be may be more understood if we knew the family upbringing and inherited traits in each individual.

So each man going into combat is carrying within himself more things than he is aware or dreamed of.

As for my way of thinking: They were all heroes, Just some more than others.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Battle of Forest Farm

(October 27 1918)

by Brig. Gen. William A. Mitchell
United States Military Academy, West Point, N.Y.

This article submitted by: John D. Goode

It is not practicable to describe in this book all of the operations in which American troops fought during the World War. One infantry regiment and one engineer battalion were in the force invading North Russia, two infantry regiments went to Vladivostok, one infantry regiment was in Italy, two divisions (27th and 30th) broke the Hindenburg line east of Amiens with the British, and two divisions (37th and 91st) assisted the French in their October drive to the Scheldt.

In addition, the French asked for an American division to assist them in capturing Blanc Mont, a very strong position west of the Argonne Forest (Fig. 1781A). The American 2nd Division was sent. It attacked at daylight October 2nd, and continued to advance slowly but surely for seven days. It suffered such severe losses that it was relieved by the American 36th Division. This division was not at full strength, as it had sent 2,000 of its best men as replacements to the 2nd Division; and it had not yet been fully equipped; but in this, its first battle, it drove back a last desperate attack of the Germans and then pursued them 13 miles until they crossed the Aisne River.

In retiring to the north bank of the Aisne, the Germans fortified and continued to hold the bend on the south bank containing Forest Farm and Rilly-aux-Oies. This gave them a bridge-head in which they could assemble troops and attack the Allies without having to cross the river in the face of opposition. The bridge-head was a constant menace to the Allies; and, although the Germans were being driven back generally along the whole western front so that no general offensive was expected from them, it was decided to drive them out of the bend and make it impracticable for them to assume the offensive in the Attigny sector. Consequently, after two attempts by French troops had failed, the 36th Division on October 24th, 1918, received orders to take the

bend. This action is one of the few battles in which the operations of the troops engaged and the results obtained were not dependent upon results in adjacent sectors. The Forest Farm operation is complete in itself. It is therefore selected for description in great detail in order to show the accurate coordination of infantry and artillery.

The Enemy. The fortifications of the Germans are shown in Figure 1782A. These fortifications extended across the neck from the canal and river on the northwest to the canal and river on the southeast. The terrain on both sides of the river at the two ends of the line was marshy and impracticable for the passage of troops. The German position could therefore be taken only by a frontal attack.

German infantry and machine guns at Semuy and Voncq, and German batteries on the high ground to the northwest, north, and east, were in position to protect their own troops in the bend and to fire on our troops in making the attack.

Our Own Troops. The troops selected for the attack were as follows:

71st Infantry Brigade
- 141st Infantry
- 142nd Infantry
- 132nd Machine Gun Battalion (4 Companies)

2nd Field Artillery Brigade
- 12th Field Artillery, 75mm (2 battalions of 3 batteries each)
- 15th Field Artillery, 75mm (2 battalions of 3 batteries each)
- 17th Field Artillery, 155mm (3 battalions of 2 batteries each)

Detachment of 2nd Engineers

One Company, 131st Machine Gun Battalion

These troops were assisted by fire from the French 61st Divisional Artillery, French 53rd Divisional Artillery, and 2 Battalions of 341st Artillery of the French XI Army Corps. The troops on the right (French 53rd Division) and on the left (American 72nd Infantry Brigade) did not advance, but concentrated fire on the German batteries in their front to prevent them firing on the attacking troops.

Plan. Voncq and the hills to the north and northwest are about 140 feet higher than Forest Farm. It was evident that the attackers, if successful in driving the enemy from Forest Farm, would be exposed to the fire of the German batteries at Voncq and the hills to the north and northwest. It was impracticable to take these batteries, as they were on the other side of the Aisne River. The attack was, therefore, ordered for 4:30 P.M., so that the Germans would not fire during the darkness, which came soon thereafter, for fear of hitting their own troops. The Americans would be able to prepare suitable fortifications for protection against this fire by the next morning. To distract the attention of the Germans, a diversion was made by artillery fire on points north and west of Attigny to make the Germans believe that an attempt was being made to cross the river in that sector.

Infantry. The infantry attacked with regiments abreast, one battalion of each regiment forming the attacking unit. Each battalion was in two lines at suitable distance. Four grenades were issued to each man. The battalions took their position on the line for attack thirty minutes before H-hour, as shown in the figure. The road Briquet-Roche, being suitably situated and clearly defined, was selected as the line of departure, although the troops near Briquet had a greater distance to go in order to reach the German line. Liaison between the two regiments was maintained by a platoon of infantry and a section of machine guns. Liaison between the right of the Americans and the French 53rd Division was maintained by one company of Infantry and one platoon of machine guns from the right American regiment; similar liaison was maintained on the left with the 72nd Brigade.

Machine Guns. One platoon of machine guns was assigned from the 132nd Machine Gun Battalion to the first wave of each regimental sector for flank protection during the consolidation of trenches. Two machine gun platoons of the 132nd Machine Gun Battalion fired on German machine guns near Voncq. The remaining machine guns of this battalion were ordered to assist the attack by overhead fire and to repulse any counter attack.

Artillery. The artillery divided the sector into four parts and a battalion of 755mm guns was assigned barrages covering each part. (See Figure 1782A). Each battery covered a sector from 150 to 200 yards in width by about 100 yards in depth. At three minutes before H-hour the barrage was placed on the front line as shown and advanced at the rate of 100 meters in three minutes until H plus 38 minutes. The 155mm guns of the 17th Field Artillery, on account of the greater spread of burst of its shells, carried its rolling barrage 300 meters in front of the rolling barrages of the 75mm guns. The French Army Corps Artillery was likewise given the same mission during the rolling barrage. Enough smoke shells were fired to mask the attack from enemy observation.

Concentrations were as follows:

1st battalion, 12th Field Artillery on Zone A before the barrage.

2nd battalion, 12th Field Artillery on Zone B before the barrage.

1st battalion, 15th Field Artillery on Zone B before the barrage; raking rear area with shrapnel after the barrage, if infantry did not continue to advance.

2nd battalion, 15th Field Artillery on Zone C befoe the barrage; raking rear area with shrapnel after the barrage, if infantry did not continue to advance.

1st battalion, 17th Field Artillery on Zone E before the barrage, and on same zone 300 meters in front of barrage; on Zone I after lifting.

2nd battalion, 17th Field Artillery on Zone E before the barrage, and on same zone 300 meters in front of barrage; and Zones I and J after lifting.

3rd battalion, 17th Field Artillery, on Zones F and D before the barrage, and on some zones 300 meters in front of barrage; on Zones K, L, and M after lifting.

1st battalion, 341st Artillery on Zone D before the barrage, and on same zone 300 meters in front of barrage; on Zone H after lifting.

3rd battalion, 341st Artillery on Zone P during the entire attack.

2 Trench Mortar Batteries on Zone C before the barrage.

Concentration fire was to cease after H plus 38 minutes.

Artillery liaison parties accompanied the attacking battalions, prepared to transmit signals from infantry to artillery as follows:

I am here.....One white star
Request for artillery fire.....Red star
Artillery firing too short.....Three white stars
We are going to advance; increase the range.....White caterpillar
I am ready (or, objective reached).....Green stars
Counter-attack started on us.....Six white stars

The artillery was ordered to continue its barrage through the rest of the bend, if the infantry showed the white caterpillar signal after H plus 38 minutes.

Engineers. Three wire cutters from the 2nd Engineers were assigned to each platoon of the attacking infantry battalions.

Reserve. The reserve consisted of the following troops, placed behind the center of the line:

1st. Bn, 142nd Infantry.

3rd Bn, 141st Infantry.

131st Machine Gun Battalion (less 1 platoon).

1783. The attack proceeded as planned. The diversion by artillery fire north and west of Attigny confused the Germans, as shown by their activity there. H-hour was designated as 4:30 P.M., October 27th. At 4:00 P.M. artillery fire was concentrated on the zones as shown. It was shifted to a rolling barrage beginning on the first barrage area at 3 minutes before 4:30 P.M. The smoke shells obscured the attacking Americans, and a fog fortunately arose just at this time and made it still more difficult for the Germans to see them. The infantry hurried forward to within 100 yards of the rolling barrage and followed it so closely that the Germans lying in the trenches to avoid the barrage could not rise and begin firing before the American infantry was upon them. Some Americans followed the barrage so closely that they were wounded by fragments from their own bursting shells. The wire cutters advanced ahead of each platoon and cut the wire where necessary. They found, in a few cases, that the artillery had destroyed enough wire to make cutting it unnecessary.

The Germans were overwhelmed by the artillery fire and the infantry advance and nearly all were captured in their trenches. They could not pass through the standing barrage maintained back of them until H plus 38 minutes as shown on the map. The Americans promptly altered the trenches so as to protect themselves against fire from the Germans on the flanks at Voncq, Semuy, and the hills north of Attigny.

The standing barrage remained on the last barrage line until H plus 38 minutes, when the white caterpillar signal was seen. The barrage then continued to the end of the bend at the rate of 100 meters in 3 minutes. Exploiting

American detachments promptly advanced into the bend, captured Rilly-aux-Oies, and cleared the bend of enemy troops. The Germans beyond the river could not learn the situation on account of the darkness. They withheld their fire for fear of killing their own soldiers. By 5:30 P.M., 60 minutes after H-hour, the area had been cleared, and 500 Germans had been captured. The American attack had been very successful. It was reported that every German in the bend was captured or killed. The American loss was 12 killed and 34 wounded.

How Not to Clean a B.A.R.

by Pete Opengari

Company K, 142nd Infantry Regiment

We moved into the little town of Oberhotten and dug in at the top of the railroad tracks. Some of the other platoons below us, down the hill, dug in by a stream near a large building that looked like it might have been a factory. My buddy and I had a nice hole dug and we were sitting there resting when we spotted two Germans coming out of a building. We fired several shots from our rifles when one of the guys below us began yelling, "You sons-of-bitches stop that. You're going to call in German mortars." I kept looking and saw one of the Germans appeared to be calling to someone. We kept firing when we spotted a German, paying no attention to the men below. In about fifteen minutes all hell broke loose. The soldier who was trying to get us to stop shooting yelled, "I told you bastards what was going to happen." Things got quiet pretty fast, but that night the Germans tried to move back into Oberhotten.

We got into our holes and we could see them coming across the tracks. Our machine gunners set up the machine gun to fire straight down the track and caught the Germans as they crossed. We had a B.A.R. that wouldn't fire. It had sand or dirt in the chamber. One of our men said to me, "Give me that gun, quick." I handed it to him and he took a leak right into the chamber. That gun went to work and did its duty that night.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

World War II Tank Destroyers

By Voyageur Militaire Francis S. Quinn, Staff Writer

BLITZKRIEG!

That's what they tagged it in World War II when Hitler's hordes ran roughshod over the mainland of Europe and arrogantly pushed the British into the sea at Dunkirk.

Blitzkrieg was war conducted with great speed and force; violent surprise offensive by massed air forces and waves of mechanized ground forces were 88mm guns mounted on tanks. Some of these tanks weighed up to 70 tons! What defense could possibly be put up against a blitzkrieg?

The United States Army came up with the tank destroyer concept, initiated by General George C. Marshall. It prescribed massed antitank elements to defeat massed attacking tanks and thus the concept was basically defensive in nature.

That was great — if the Germans had only cooperated. Beginning with the 37mm antitank gun (towed), the development of the tank destroyer proceeded through many and various experiments resulting in tracked, mobile, self-propelled models.

With the same approximate weight (30 tons plus) as the M4 Sherman tank (which was outgunned by the German 88s), the M10 Tank Destroyer had a 3-inch naval gun which was deadly accurate. The M10 first saw combat in North Africa. It was also used in the Pacific.

The M10 was not always a match for some German armor, so two more advanced models were developed: the M36 with its improved 90mm gun and the M18. The M18 was capable of a speed of 45 mph and was the fastest American armored vehicle in W W II. However, by the time it entered combat in 1944, its gun was found to be inadequate to take care on Panzer and Tiger tanks.

The workhorse on the battlefield was the M10 until it was replaced by the M36 not too long before V-E Day. The M10 was first self-propelled tank destroyer to enter combat in large numbers...and what beautiful numbers they were: a typical self-propelled tank destroyer battalion of W W II had 35 officers and 634 men. By the last months of the war, all tow-

ed battalions were being converted to self-propelled vehicles. As many as 78 TD Battalions had been organized!

As the Allies landed in Europe, the importance and worth of the tank destroyer units became evident. Their motto was "Seek, Strike, and Destroy." This implied an aggressive spirit that would seize the initiative and take the battle to the enemy.

The TDs did not wait ...as it turned out they moved...forward! The tank destroyer shoulder patch, depicting a black panther crushing a tank in its jaws, symbolized the "TD" spirit. The Germans were now on the defensive and the Americans, instead of defending against massed armor attacks, reversed the situation. American ingenuity had come to the fore along with the individual courage of each American TD soldier.

Let's take a closer look at the TD battalions of World War II. A self-propelled battalion in 1944 was one of the most mechanized units in the Army. But look at the power it had! A single battalion packed 36 3-inch or 90mm guns; that's the same number of light field pieces that three light artillery battalions totaled in a division!

The first tank destroyer battalion to set foot on the European mainland was the 636th. We landed at Salerno, Italy, with the 36th Infantry Division, and later participated in two other landings at Anzio and in Southern France.

From time to time elements of the 636th were attached in support of other divisions, mainly the 3rd Infantry Division. There were also others, including the 14th Armored Division and all the divisions that fought in Italy.

This was because of the unique and diverse roles played by the TD units. They were used as the combat situation warranted and firepower was desperately needed. The 3rd, 45th and 36th Infantry Divisions, by the way, had the highest combat casualties of WW II, and the casualties in the 636th reflect this.

The only time (from D-Day at Salerno) the 636th did not have elements at the front were when its units assembled for invasions at Anzio, one company leading the attack was attached to different units of the 3rd, 34th and 36th Divisions and the First Special Forces.

Most of the time, the only things between the tank destroyers and the Germans were the projectiles they were throwing at each other.

Entitled "Seek, Strike, Destroy: The History of the 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion", a remarkable book has been written by Tom Sherman, a reconnaissance sergeant with one of the destroyer companies. He was with the battalion through its entire existance. Copies can be obtained @ $27 by writing Tom Sherman, Rte. 1, Box 129, Marquette, NE 68854.

Because the American troops were on the move forward, the destroyers were used in many ways entirely different from those originally imagined. In mountainous Italy and in the Vosges mountains of

France, platoons would be alined in batteries, sometimes combined with as many as eight guns per battery, all hurling high explosive projectiles toward enemy targets spotted by division forward observers.

At other times the TD units would advance with the leading infantry, wiping out road blocks, slugging it out with 88s and destroying enemy tanks fortification and other vehicles and equipment. The TDs were with the infantry, fighting house-house, knocking out machine gun nests, pillboxes and snipers.

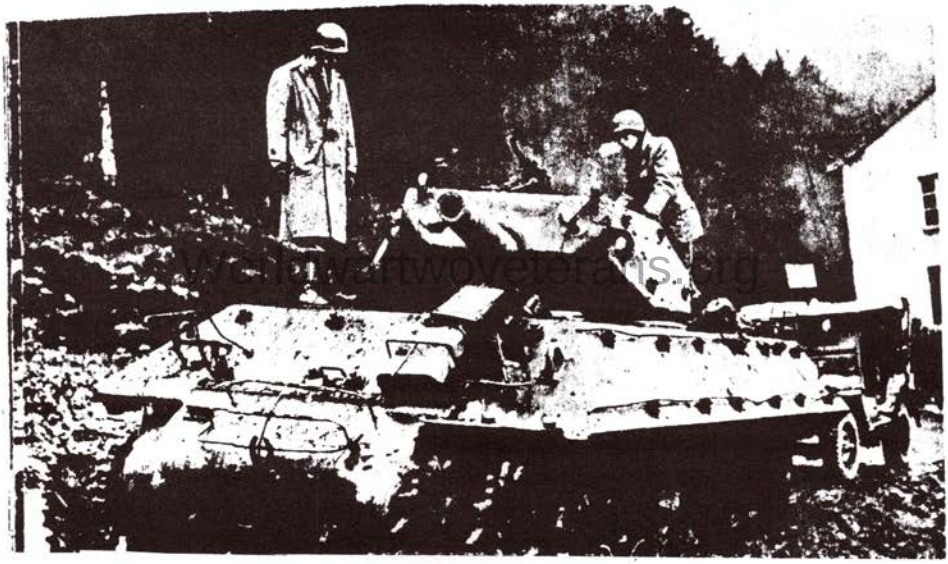
The 636th had the M10s until March 1945, when for the final push, the battalion was given the new M36s which were able to destroy the heaviest German Panther and Tiger tank — even at long range. It was almost impossible, however, to knock out a Tiger tank from the front.

But GIs come up with something...one of our tanks, after hitting a Tiger eight times without effect, tried skipping a round of armor piercing ammunition just in front of the Tiger, so it would richochet into the transmission and stop the Tiger cold.

TDs were sometimes used as road blocks, but mostly were up against roadblocks, since we were on the move attacking. I'll never forget a time we slugged it out with an 88 at a road block just before we broke out into the Rhine Valley.

We were in the Vosges Mountains in France. We had been hit three times; once on the right fender, once on the left track, and the third time the machine gun on the counter balance got it...I was awarded a Purple Heart.

But do you know what? We knocked that 88 out a little later...We went back up there again and on the fifth round we hit what I believe was their ammunition, because everything went up in one big explosion!



GERMAN BAZOOKA FIRE KNOCKED OUT THIS TD IN VALLEY BATTLE.

North of Rome, June 1944

by Bob Hunter
Col. 141st. Infantry

After our triumphant march through Rome, it was time to get back to the business at hand; driving the Germans out of Italy. Moving north along one of the smaller highways, our squad of ten men, led by. Sgt. Ianella, was selected to act as the point for our company. We didn't meet any resistance so we moved rapidly, which we discovered later was quite a bit faster than the company.

In late afternoon we came upon a small town. Sgt. Ianella attempted to reach the company by radio but we were out of range. He then decided to move through the town and secure it. As we started moving, the absence of civilians was very suspicious. All doors were locked and the windows shuttered. Sgt. Ianella, who spoke and understood Italian, began knocking on doors and asking where the Germans were and receiving the same answer several times, "They left two days ago."

We began a slow and deliberate move through the town. As we neared the north end of town we spotted two German soldiers filling canteens from a water fountain. Surprised, they ran for the building as we opened fire. We then started to receive fire from the last two buildings. Half the squad worked their way to the front of the buildings while the rest went around the rear. After a fierce firefight with small arms and grenades that lasted about thirty minutes, the firing from the buildings stopped. We then heard the sound of motors starting up from about two hundred yards to the north. Thinking we were about to receive a counter attack, we prepared for them. To our amazement we saw them retreating in trucks and on motorcycles with sidecars. We estimated their strength to be two platoons. Evidently they thought the main body was right behind us.

We then set up positions on the north edge of town in case they returned. Needless to say, no one got any sleep that night. Fortunately we had no casualties but we did account for several of the enemy.

Bright and early the next morning the company came into the town to be welcomed with the usual "Bravo Americano" and the handing out of "Goodies."

(CSM Robert Hunter retired from the Army in 1973 after thirty years of service, seeing combat again in Korea and two tours in Vietnam. He presently resides with his wife of fourty-five years in Fairfield, California.)

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

War - Tea - Rapido River

by Bee T. Marchbanks

36th MP Platoon

Reprinted from the "Cross T Pistols"

Bill Wade, Editor

36th MP Platoon

It was a partly cloudy morning just a day break, in Italy, near the Rapido River.

I was guarding a bridge to see the troops, or vehicles, did not bunch-up and to advise any Convoy to keep the trucks disbursed.

The Germans had blown up the bridge and 111th Engineers had replaced the bridge for us to cross a Creek.

It was about one and a half miles east of the Rapido River. The location was in plain sight of the river and a high building, where the Germans had the 88's behind a hill and under a mountain.

Charles Arlen, was the other MP that was stationed with me on this post.

Charles came and woke me up and told me it was time for me to go on duty! I got up from my bed sack and armed myself. When I walked outside and looked across the highway I immediately saw that there were several trucks, and at least a Platoon of British troops camped there. They had built two big fires, and several soldiers were standing around the fires. At least fifteen or twenty soldiers around the Camp drinking **TEA!**

I walked back inside the building, and I was really upset knowing what we were in for as soon as the sun came up! I asked Arlen, "WHAT IS GOING ON?? WHAT IN THE WORLD WERE THOSE TROOPS AND TRUCKS DOING OVER THERE? WHY IN THE WORLD DID YOU LET THEM STOP THERE?" His reply - "LIL' BEAS, I TOLD THEM THEY COULD NOT STAY THERE." I said, "WHY IN THE WORLD DIDN'T YOU GO DOWN TO THE CREEK AND WIND UP THAT PHONE AND CALL DIVISION HEADQUARTERS AND TELL THEM THE STORY?" Arlen's reply was - "WELL, LIL' BEAS, I JUST DIDN'T THINK."

I walked across to the highway where the Soldiers were - I was very excited and upset - I asked in a very LOUD TONE OF VOICE - "WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THIS OUTFIT?"

**(Lil' Beas was a nickname given to Marchbanks by some of his comrades during the war).

One British soldier replied, ''CAPTAIN SOESO,'' WHERE IS HE, I asked? I recognized one of the officers uniforms and said, ''CAPTAIN ARE YOU IN CHARGE OF THIS OUTFIT?''

The Captain did not like my tone of voice and became upset!! He replied, ''I WILL HAVE YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE TALKING TO A CAPTAIN IN THE ROYAL BRITISH ARMY!''

I placed my finger on his chest and said - ''CAPTAIN I DON'T CARE IF YOU ARE A ''FOUR STAR GENERAL IN THE AMERICAN ARMY.'' I am telling you now to GET THOSE FIRES OUT, AND GET THOSE TRUCKS OUT OF HERE NOW, OR I AM GOING TO GO DOWN TO THAT CREEK AND CALL DIVISION HQ, AND THEY WILL SEND A BULLDOZER OUT HERE AND WE WILL PUSH THOSE TRUCKS IN THE CREEK!''

The Captain agreed to follow my instructions and ordered his men to put out the fires and to move out!

I had turned to walk back to duty at my post and had only walked about seventy-five feet when an 88 Artillery shell went over!

I heard more coming as I hit the dirt! They must have had fifteen to twenty guns firing on us! Many of the British Soldiers were killed. My HELMET HAD BLOWN OFF!

I think I must have been knocked out momentarily and when I came to I felt something pulling at my feet. Suddenly I heard a voice - ''HELP ME, OLE' CHAP! HELP ME OLE' CHAP!

I was laying as flat as I could get but when I heard this voice I scooted around and saw a British soldier sitting with his back to me. He was holding his left leg just below the knee, and it looked as if it has been severed. It was covered with blood!

The shells were falling within ten feet of me and I was being hit with dirt clods each time one hit close. I told the Britich soldier to get down, I can't even help myself.

I reached with my left arm and pulled him to the ground.

After it was over I did not hear another word out of him. There were dead and wounded soldiers everywhere!

I got up, stepping over the dead and wounded, and returned to the small rock building, where we had slept the night before. After the Artillery had stopped, I wanted to check on Arlen.

We had four (4) bed sacks in the building and I looked on all of them and did not see Arlen anywhere. I laid down on my bed sack for a moment thinking - ''OH LORD WHERE IS ARLEN?'' I HAVE TO GO OUTSIDE AND FIND HIM. HE MAY BE DEAD OR WOUNDED!

I raised up from my bed sack when I heard a voice ' ''WHAT IS THE MATTER LIL' BEAS?'' I saw Arlen standing about fifteen feet from me. HE WAS STANDING IN FRONT OF A MIRROR SHAVING WITH A STRAIGHT RAZOR! My reply to that was - ''MAN DON'T YOU KNOW THAT THERE

IS A WAR GOING ON?''

In a soft gentle voice Arlen's reply was - ''WELL THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT!''

There had been a piece of rock about two feet long knocked off the southwest corner of that rock building, where we had slept, craters everywhere AND ARLEN WAS SHAVING!

Arlen asked me what was wrong with my face and when I reached up to wipe it off I discovered both sides of my face was covered with blood! I had been shot at so many times, and during all the excitement I had not realized that I had been hurt. I took time to praise GOD that I was still alive!

When I went to the Medic's Station, I was asked if I wanted the ''PURPLE HEART'' - I refused it as I thought one should be crippled with a lifetime injury before receiving the ''Purple Heart.'' I guess we Americans just couldn't admit that we could be injured by the Germans!

My main concern at the time was to GET THE WAR OVER - RETURN TO MY FAMILY AT SNYDER, TEXAS!

Later during the war I learned that my good friend, Charles Arlen, has been killed in action. Sgt. Jack Hoover told me that they were on a traffic post when the Germans began to throw the 88's into a convoy of trucks and jeeps. The troops jumped out of the vehicles, as trained, and hit the dirt for cover when the shelling began.

Sgt. Hoover told me that he repeatedly told Arlen to take cover but he refused to do so.

An 88 hit the road just behind Arlen and it went into his back and came out of his chest. He lived for several hours.

Charles Arlen was a dedicated MP and a Prince of a Gentleman.

Before entering the service he was a Department Store Manager in New York City. We talked about our lives before the war many times. I think of him often and miss him!

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Bazooka Men

by Richard M. Manton

I joined the 36th Infantry Division as a replacement officer in early August, 1943 when they were located near Oran, Algeria, in North Africa. I was assigned to Company "H" of the 141st Regiment. The Company Commander was Captain James Glenn and he assigned me to a machine gun platoon. Most of my military training had been with heavy 30. caliber, water cooled machine guns so I was familiar with the weapon and the operating procedure, but of course, I didn't know any of the men in my platoon or company.

While in North Africa we were given intensive training in amphibious landings. We were loaded aboard an Army ship, I believe the name was the James O'Hara, and they would take us out about ten miles out in the Mediterranean Sea and then with full battle gear we would climb over the side on rope nets into the small L.S.V.P. which was pulled up alongside the ship. Our landing craft would then make a rendezvous with the other landing crafts which were involved in the mock invasion. We did this by going around in large circles and each craft falling in line behind one another until all were in place. The small landing craft would be pitching over the waves one moment and washing in the swells the next. During these exercises was the only time I ever became seasick. When all the craft were in line they would line up abreast of one another and we would "assault" the beaches of Algeria. We made these practice runs quite a number of times but then one night the 5th or 6th of September it was no longer a drill but the real thing and we sailed across the Mediterranean Sea.

I recall sailing through the Strait of Messina, between Italy and Sicily. The volcano of Mount Etna was in eruption and the whole sky was lit up by the glow. On the night of September 8th we were briefed and told where we were going to land and that Italy had capitulated and for a brief time we celebrated until we were told that the German forces were still there and they would fight. In fact the capitulation of Italy only made matters worse for us because the beaches could not be prepared by shelling from naval guns or bombing by our aircraft until we met resistance from an enemy. So on that night our nets were dropped over the side and we climbed down into the landing craft which would take us into the invasion of the mainland of Europe. The landing craft that my platoon climbed into was a British craft run by a small British crew. We all sat in the bottom of the craft and the boat headed for shore. As we drew near the shoreline machine gun bullets rattled off the metal sides of the craft. Our crew was excellent and they ran the craft right up to the beach and dropped their ramp. I don't think I even got my feet wet; we stepped right out on dry sand.

On going ashore we soon realized that the invasion was not going along as easily as our North African practice sessions had gone. We had landed on the beaches of Paestum and many of the riflemen were still on the beach taking shelter among the sand dunes. I led my platoon on ahead of the riflemen where we soon encountered enemy tanks. The field ahead was lined with stone walls so we set up our machine guns with their tripods straddling the wall and we began firing alternating fire on one of the tanks with two of our guns. It seems that when machine guns fired on tanks they closed up all of their openings for fear of one of our slugs getting through and ricocheting around inside. Then while they were all "buttoned up" we sent a Bazooka man around to their flank and he fired at the tank. Using this method we knocked our three tanks from their line and that opened up a gap that allowed our riflemen to break through. In our first day of fighting our Platoon suffered no deaths and very few casualties. Our Bazooka men had taken a beating on their faces, however. The bazooka was a new weapon at the time and its use was not yet perfected. When the rocket left the muzzle of the launcher it was still burning and blowing back fiery sparks that struck the operator in the face. They did not yet have the clear plastic face shields that came along later and the operator's faces looked like pieces of raw beefsteak after a day of firing their weapon. They were, never-the-less, a highly effective weapon and one that the Germans had not encountered before. Our brave men continued to fire them as needed in spite of the fact that their faces were burned every time they fired.

The Bronze Star Medal award that I received that day reads:

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

"For gallantry in action on 9 September 1943, in Italy. In the amphibious invasion of Italy, Lieutenant Manton quickly led the first platoon of Company H, with their heavy guns, across the beach in the face of intense enemy fire. He advanced the platoon ahead of the rifle companies and knocked out two machine gun nests. Moving forward he located three enemy tanks, directed the platoon to open fire, and caused the tanks to withdraw."

Actually the tanks were disabled by the work of the brave bazooka men who worked around to their flank and fired a rocket at them, knocking them out. If any people were alive inside the tanks after that, they were dispatched when they tried to escape. I am proud to have been a platoon leader of such valiant men who were actually responsible in a large part for the success of the amphibious beach-head at Salerno. It wasn't until about September 14, 1943 that the beach-head was actually secured.

Later on I was reassigned to the weapons platoons of, first Company F and later Company E. In every instance I found the men of the Fighting 36th Division, The Texas Division, to be the best of soldiers, of whom I am proud to have been their platoon leader. Subsequently, while platoon leader of Company E, I was captured after crossing the Rapido River and was held as a prisoner of war for one year, but that is another story for another time.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Battalion Commander

By Ray Wells

141st Infantry Regiment

Part II - Conclusion
Part I in Vol. XII, No. 1, Spring, 1992

Military decorations of Ray Wells

Major Landry on his return to stateside

Editors Note: Ray Wells has contributed an outstanding story of the courage and dedication of an infantry officer of our 36th Division, Major Milton J. Landry.

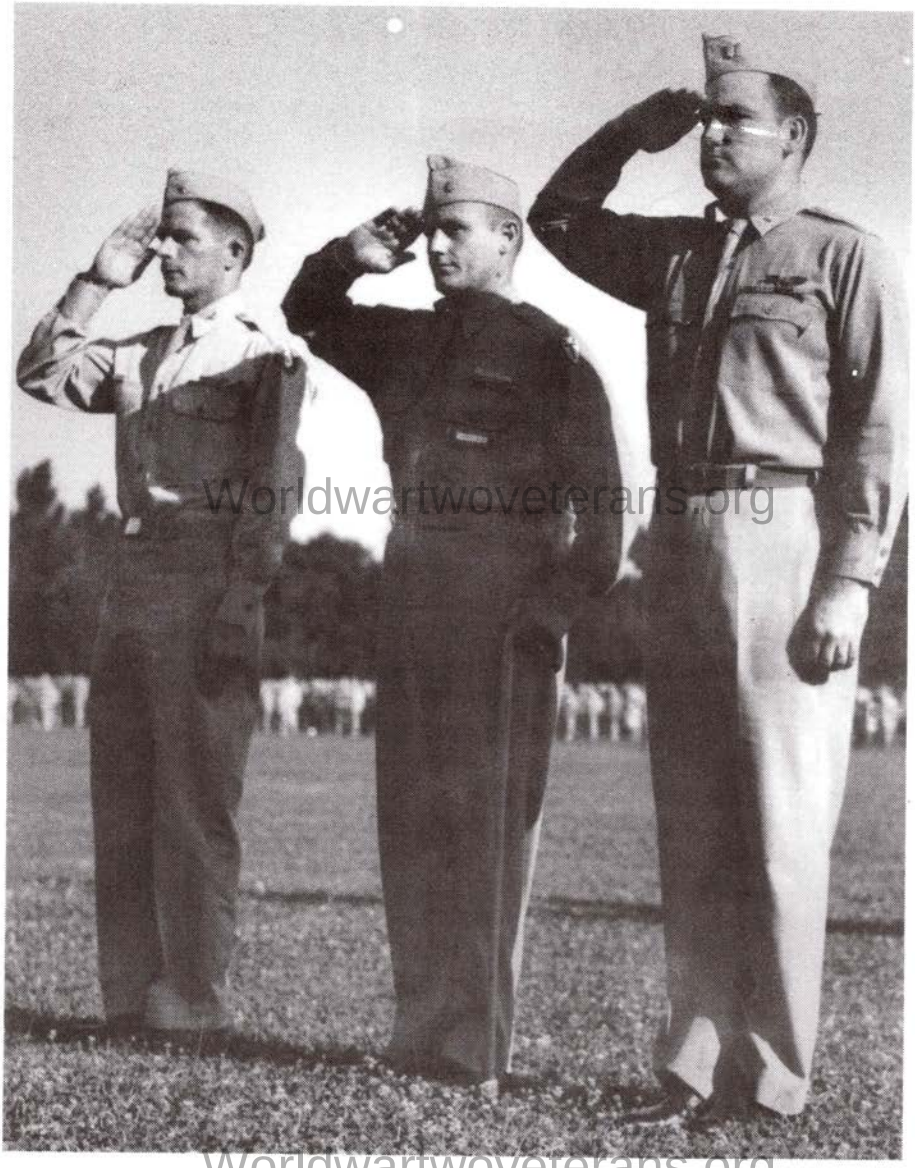
After the Division to San Pietro I received a call from Colonel Price saying that the first issue of liquor had been received for the officers of the Regiment and to send someone to pick up our four bottles. I told Col. Price that I would send Captain Lehman and when I told the Captain that he was to go on this important mission and what he was to bring back with him, he was reluctant to do this for some reason and said his jeep was broken down. I told him to take my jeep and driver, Edward Fuentes. He of course said that he would but added that if an 88 hit him when he crossed the bridge; tomorrow morning's **San Antonio Express** would print headlines that read "Capt. Henry Lehman killed while going after a bottle of whiskey." He said everyone in San Antonio would read that and everyone without exception would say, "That's old Red, alright." As it happened after accepting this valuable cargo from Regiment and on the return to San Pietro, Captain Lehman and Fuentes got in back of General Clark in his jeep with three stars, followed by a recon car with three stars and the General's Packard with three stars. The General's convoy got across the bridge OK, but when my jeep with the Captain and driver started across, the Germans laid down a barrage. The first shell fired by the 88's landed under the front wheels of my jeep and completely totaled it. Capt.

Lehman and Fuentes were cut up pretty bad from shattered windshield glass. When they both came back to the Battalion they looked like porcupines with all the glass sticking out all over them. Captain Lehman had accomplished his mission without losing a drop of his precious cargo.

A few days later we were relieved and ordered to the rear near San Angelo Eliefe where we received replacements of Officers and enlisted men but still not enough to bring us back to full strength. Captain Chapin reported back to the Battalion from the hospital. He had gone AWOL to be with his beloved "E" Company troops. I was certainly glad to get him back. He was my most experienced Company Commander and I needed him badly. A few days later we were back to San Vittori and our mission was to take and hold the river line until other troops could be readied to cross the river. We sent patrols across the river almost every night. Lt. Naverette from "E Company" led several patrols across the river with the mission to find out what German units were there and how strongly they were dug in. We found through every one of these patrols that the enemy were dug in and planned to stay in those positions and they had more troops on their side of the river than we had on our side.

So now begins the battle to cross the Rapido, a battle that should not have happened at least in the way we had to try to accomplish the crossing. The bridges and boats and replacements that had been promised us never arrived until almost dark and in some cases after dark. Some of the replacements never found their Companies and died without ever knowing one person in their Company.

On the 21st I was ordered to move the 2nd Battalion across the river. I asked about replacement troops because we were getting pretty destitute as far as manpower was concerned. I was told that plenty of replacements would be furnished us before dark and also boats and bridges were on their way. That sounded pretty good but at the same time I still had it in mind the reports of our patrols who had been across the river on several occassions and reported that it was almost impossible to dislodge the heavily armed German troops. We were to move across at a certain time but it was about a half hour after dark when we finally got started. We followed the white tapes that the Combat Engineers had laid down where they had cleared the mines but the German artillery had shelled the area and the blast had either moved the tapes or had cut them and we would find ourselves out in the middle of a mine field where a great number of the men had their legs blown off. We, of course as I expected, received the boats and bridges after dark and what was even worse, we received the replacements after dark. These were young men, many just out of basic training. It's hard to imagine the thoughts that went through these young people's minds (many were no more than boys) to be placed in this kind of situation, completely pitch dark, shells bursting, bullets flying and then to be told that his Company was E, F, G, or H and to find the Company and report in.



Worldwartwoveterans.org

Parade ceremony, Major Landry, center

Many of these bewildered men died or were seriously wounded without ever knowing anyone in their company or even seeing their Squad Leader. The smoke from burning brush and haystacks and the noise of the artillary added to this confusion. When I found one of these men and would ask him his name and unit, he would answer but added, "I can't find anyone in my Company," so we would try to point him in the right direction. We finally got one bridge across but didn't know it at the time, this was the horseshoe bend of the river and we were receiving fire - it seemed like from three sides at the same time. When the troops got across the river we ran into a barbwire. Barbwire strands had been placed layer after layer, when one strand was cut, two more would take its place. "E Company" had penetrated the furthest and that's where I found Captain Chapin, the Commander, lying on his stomach cutting barbwire, with machine gun fire just above his body. I made several trips back and forth from the river bank where I had established my forward Command Post to where Captain Chapin was and on one trip I had to dive under a burst of machine gun fire and when I hit the ground, it felt that I had hit a large rock against my left breast. After returning to the river bank command post, a medic said, "Major you must have been hit," and I asked him why he thought that and he said that just as I hit the ground a shell burst right beside me, so I said, "Well, take a look." Sure enough he found a hole in my combat jacket above my heart, looking further he found a hole in my undershirt and a hole in my chest. I had a lifetime parker pen set in my pocket and the piece of shrapnel had cut the pen in two and the clip off the pencil. When I was finally operated on a few days later, the doctor had to cut a six inch groove in my chest to follow the path of the shrapnel and found it on my right side. The pen and pencil set had turned the shrapnel and saved my life, so I guess it was as the guarantee said, lifetime. I was wounded several times that day on different occassions. As you can imagine, I did not return the pen and pencil set to the company for a replacement. How could I? I owed my very life to them.

I kept going back and forth between my Command Post and the forward Companies and about 11:00 AM I received a call from General Wilbur telling me to prepare my Battalion to move forward because the Germans would be pulling back. I told him that under the present conditions there wasn't anything that I could do to force them to withdraw and what information did he have that this would happen. I was then informed that a successful landing had been made at Anzio which would cause a withdrawal. I respectfully requested that he inform the Germans so that they could oblige us because with all the fire we were getting from them, they must not have been properly informed. As history has recorded, the Germans stayed in their well-prepared positions and it took about 15 full Divisions to finally dislodge them and then only after great loss of life on both sides. The next time I returned to my Command Post, just as I started to jump into my hole, the first round of a six-round barrage from a 170 MM Howitzer (Old Italian manufacture) exploded under me and a huge slab that hadn't fragmented and was as large as a dinner plate hit my

hip, knocked the hip out of joint and made a large blister where it burned through my clothes. The next five rounds actually knocked me back to the river bank which was about 50 yards away. The aid men and a couple of others began cutting my clothes away so that they could dress the wounds. The aid man told me that he thought I could walk, so I said let's try it. The aid man helped me on my feet but my legs were too weak to support me. The men found two boat oars and I used these for crutches. So using these makeshift crutches, I attempted to get to where Captain Chapin was so that I could tell him that I was becoming very weak from loss of blood and that I would have to turn the Battalion over to him. Just before I arrived at his position or the position I last saw him, the Germans cut loose a burst of machine gun fire and before I could hit the ground, I was hit by several rounds through my legs and hips. The syatic nerve was cut in my left leg, went through and nicked the artery and then in my groin and finally the 9MM bullet lodged in my scrotum. The brave medic crawled out to me under intense fire and when he attempted to turn me over, I asked him to see if I had all my legs because it felt to me that one of them was gone. He told me that he could see both boots and they were still on my feet and attached to my legs. He then began to drag me out from under the machine gun fire to a place where there was a hint of cover and he could look me over. After a quick inspection he said, "Major, I don't believe there are enough bandages this side of the Rapido to cover all the holes in you." I'm going to take a moment to express my admiration for the many brave deeds that were done by these brave and heroic Aid Men. There aren't enough words in the English language to express my appreciation for what these men did for us. They have never received the recognition that they deserve and I'm sure that every combat man will express this same opinion. Ray Wells who was in on the attack on San Pietro told me that he saw an Aid Man who had been shot through the head and the bullet had gone right through the red cross insignia on his helmet. This had to be an intentional shot. I was then dragged to the river bank and couldn't be taken across the bridge because the only thing left to the bridge were the two ropes that were used as hand holds. The men tied ropes to me and pulled me across the river where a stretcher was found and I was placed on that. The two men then made their way back across the river to almost certain doom. I never heard what happened to them if they were killed, captured, wounded or escaped unscathed. I hope that if these men who helped me read this, I would like to thank them personally. We must remember the troops that were unable to cross with us and those that had a mission to accomplish on their side of the river. They were under constant fire and many died including the Officers and most of the Non-Coms in my Battalion Headquarters. Names fade in my mind, but I will never forget those young men who died so bravely, their faces or the deeds that they accomplished.

Coast Artillery Observers had volunteered to be litter bearers and I told them before they took me back, to first uncover my Executive Officer, Red Lehman, who was on the bottom of a pile of men who had been killed by an artillery

shell. These were the officers and men of my rear battalion headquarters whose job it was prevented them to cross the river. On top of the bodies was the forward artillary observer and he had half his face blown off. When Red was finally uncovered he was placed on a stretcher and I told the bearers to take him back to the aid station then come back and get me. Red refused to be taken any further than the aid station until I was brought up so that we could be evacuated together. I was carried across the mine field to the while rock road around the corner of Mt. Troccio. About that time I heard screaming meamies coming in and told the bearers to hit the side of the road in the ditch because it sounded like those rockets were coming right down on top of us. The litter bearers set me down in the middle of the road and they hit the ditch as they were ordered to do. I didn't mean for them to act in this way, I had meant for them to take me with them to the ditch where we might escape the shrapnel. Not being combat soldiers I guess they can be excused. The rockets hit all around me and covered me with pulverized white dust. A rock hit me in the throat and went in and damaged my voice box. This wound continues to trouble me to this day. On the way back to the field hospital I was losing so much blood, I was passing out, so the ambulance would stop at a Surgical Service Unit and blood plasma would be administered. This was done several times before I could be finally delivered to, I believe, the 17th Evacuation Hospital. I was taken to the operating room as soon as they could possibly get me in there and the Surgeons began working on me. The next morning the Surgeon came to see me and said that they had taken a ton of metal out of my body and the x-ray showed that I still had a bullet lodged in my leg somewhere and that I would have to return to the operating room for further x-rays. Back to the operating room where further search found the bullet in my scrotum. That's why on the x-rays it looked like the bullet was in my leg. After removing the bullet from my scrotum, I asked what they had found in my neck. They probed in my neck and sure enough found a rock. This wound was never recorded in my medical records, so I never received a purple heart for that wound. Who needs a seventh Purple Heart, I certainly didn't need another one. No! Thanks!

January 22, 1944 was my 30th birthday. My birthday had plenty of fireworks, thanks to the obliging Germans. At least they were responsible for furnishing me with the means of a ticket for a slow ride back home. I was happy to be going home but not really pleased to go in this way and I knew that I would miss my troops and I miss them to this very day. To me they were some of the finest young men that our country ever produced and I felt very proud and fortunate that I was able to serve them as their Battalion Commander.

A few days after I had been at the 17th Evacuation Hospital, Red Lehman was well enough to get out of bed and came to see me and I must have looked worried to him so he asked what was wrong and I told him that I hadn't received a report on the condition of the Companies and men. He looked at me and said, "Major, they aren't your men any more; they are someone else's respon-

siblity.'' That is when I finally realized, it is all over, they aren't my men any more and the thought came to me of the awesome responsibility of a Commander of troops. He is responsible for the feeding, supplying clothing, ammunition, in fact he is responsible for their very lives. He has to do whatever possible to get the job done and at the same time to prevent as many casualties at the same time. When these brave soldiers are given an order he must obey without question and those orders must be justified. Many of these men I did not know personally but I cared for them and I will always remember them as if they were my own family. They were and are yet very dear to me. The responsibility is always there and if a Commander accepts that responsibility as he should and takes care of his men, they will damn sure take care of their Commander. Many years ago at a meeting of 36 Division Veterans at Beethoven Hall in San Antonio, I asked Freddy Garcia if any other 2nd Battalion Commanders ever attended any of the meetings. He looked at me and said, ''What 2nd Battalion Commanders?'' I replied that I wasn't the only one and he came back with the remark, ''You took care of us and we took care of you.'' I suppose he was referring to the two troops who tied ropes to me and dragged me back across the river to safety and saved my life. So, when the responsibility is no longer there, a person misses it. You just can't dismiss it, it doesn't come to a person instantaneously and you can't dismiss the feeling instantaneously. It is an inherent responsibility of a leader to his men.

I was transported by ambulance from the 17th Evacuation Hospital to the 45th General Hospital which was located in the Colosium building in Naples. Since my syatic nerve had been severed any vibration would cause the two ends of the nerve to touch each other and the pain was such that I couldn't hardly stand it and is hard to describe. The best way I know to describe it is it felt like someone was using a wood rasp on my toes. A shot of morphine helped but would only last a short while and it would be another hour and a half before another shot could be administered to me. I was flown to North Africa to the 70th General Hospital but instead of taking me to the airfield, I was taken under protest to the dock for transportation by boat.

After finally convincing the authorities that I was to be flown to North Africa because of the nerve condition and I couldn't stand the vibration, a call was made to the airfield and of course the plane had already taken off minus one Major. There I laid on a stretcher on the dock alone, everyone else had been loaded on the ship. Where to put me was the question, so the ship's Captain ordered that a place be rigged for me in the engine room of the ship. Talk about vibration, that's where the vibration was, in the engine room. After a terrible trip to North Africa, this torture was not over. I was placed in an ambulance that seemed to have solid rubber tires and on those brick streets I was ready to call it quits. After arriving at the 70th General Hospital, General Wilbur came to see me and told me that the Regiment was waiting for me back in Italy, that they really needed me. I replied that they may want me and need me but they weren't going to get me. The General asked me why and I told

him that I had been informed by the doctors that I would never nave full use of my legs and that I was on my way home. He then informed me that I had been recommended for promotion to Lt. Colonel but that the War Department had published a directive that no Major who was enroute to the States could be considered for a promotion. I was lucky to be alive and wondered if my luck was now changing for the worse. I missed my men, was in so much pain and I was feeling mighty low at this point.

When I arrived back stateside I landed at Charleston, N.C. and stayed there for a short time, then was loaded on a train enroute to Fort Sam Houston. When I finally arrived at Fort Sam, all I had to my name was a pair of Arab house shoes and my toilet article kit. When I finally looked in the kit I found an Italian Berreta that I had forgotten about. Against all regulations including the Geneva Conference, I had been in hospitals, ambulances and not to forget an engine room of a ship while I was fully armed.

While I was still in the hospital in North Africa I had asked the doctors to stop giving me anything to stop the pain because the pills and shots were doing no good whatsoever and I might as well get used to the constant pain. I requested this because not only were the shots and medication not doing me any good but I did not want to become dependent upon them. To this day I do not take any sort of pill, not even aspirin. I have learned to accept and live with the constant pain.

I hadn't been back in the United States very long when I received orders to report to Command and General Staff School at Fort Levenworth, Kansas. When I graduated from there I received orders as an Instructor for Military Intelligence at the same school. I was told that one reason I was selected for this assignment was because I was such a critic of the stupidity of our Intelligence Officers and their interpretation of maps and what the enemy was capable of. We were continually informed that the enemy facing us were old and weak, when we were actually facing some of the best there were as far as physical stature was concerned. Most of these units contained men between the ages of 18 and 25, stood 6'2'' and weighed 190 pounds. According to intelligence we were supposed to be fighting little old men who were stragglers they had managed to pick up from the country side. We were fighting anything but that, we were up against the prime fighting force of the whole German army. After my tour as an Instructor for Military Intelligence, I was assigned on temporary duty with the Canadian Government as an Instructor in Military Science, Tactics, organizational and equipment at the Royal Military College at Kingston, Ontario, Canada. My duties consisted of training the nucleus of Officers for the Canadian 6th Division. The Canadians had five Divisions in Europe and the 6th was to be formed from returning personnel from the Divisions in Europe. They would be sent to the Pacific furnished with American uniforms, equipment, supplies and be paid the same as American military. Before the Division could be sent to the Pacific the war was over and I was returned to The Command and General Staff School. I was declared essential so my tour was extended for one more year for the purpose of re-

writing the training manuals which extended the training period for Intelligence Officers.

The following recommendations for awards, I feel are worth quoting. I had sent them through channels to Division and they were returned to me with a cover letter which stated that the actions were not above and beyond the call of duty. I still feel that these brave men earned an award and should have been given the appropriate award for their deeds. These papers had been placed in my footlocker and together with my personal belongings finally caught up with me towards the end of the war. The footlocker had been steamed during the typhus epidemic in Naples and all my clothes were completely ruined. These recommendations were also damaged so some parts are unreadable but I will quote them as best I can. They were all handwritten with pencil soon after the battle for San Pietro.

"Lt. James Humphries, Commanding Co. E, 141st Inf., on the morning of Dec. 16, 1943 near San Pietro, Italy which under heavy mortar and machine gun fire, he moved to the extreme front to take personal charge. While there he was seriously wounded. He continued to give his orders. When the Company withdrew he refused aid although he had to remain in the field seriously wounded for two days.

Witness: **Sgt. S. Frausto**
PFC J.D. Saucedo
PFC Roque Seguro

"PFC Rogue Seguro, Company "E", 141st Inf. "While under heavy mortar and machine gun fire, he saw his Platoon Sgt. seriously wounded. Going to his side he rendered first aid and undoubtedly saved the Sgt.'s life. This was done with utter disregard for his own safety.

Witness **Sgt. S. Frausto**
Sgt. G. Martinz
PFC J.D. Saucedo

"(Posthumous) Simon C. Jimenez, PFC, Co. "E", 141st Inf. On the morning of Dec. 16 near San Pietro, Italy, when the head of his Company was pinned down by machine gun fire. Meanwhile being under heavy machine gun fire, without regard for his life, arose and rushed the gun. He would have succeeded but for being blown up by a mine. His last words express anxiety for his comrades.

Witness: **Sgt. F. Fruasto**
Sgt. G. Martinez
PFC R. Seguro

"Major Milton J. Landry on the morning of Dec. 16 in vicinity of San Pietro, Italy for gallantry in action. Major Landry led his Battalion in the attack against San Pietro, Italy. Three times the Major made an attempt at the enemy with his Battalion and three times the attempt was repulsed. The fourth attempt Landry led his Battalion (Here the damage caused by the steam were faded and unreadable.) Continued: The enemy began to fire on the Battalion with machine guns, mortars and artillery. The Major was forced to wirhdraw his Battalion to covered positions. The enemy had the Battalion pinned down. Then Major Landry, with cool, good judgement called for friendly smoke on the Battalion position. Under cover of the smoke he led his men to a good covred position. After a short time the Major was able to lead his men back to a position where he could reorganize the Battalion. Major Landry's good judgement and cool courage was an inspiration to his men.

Witnessed by: **Richard M. Mauton, 2nd Lt., 141st Inf.**

The citation continued: "When the Battalion was pinned down Major Landry directed the fire of his men against the enemy, exposing himself to heavy, machine gun, mortar and artillery fire." Unquote.

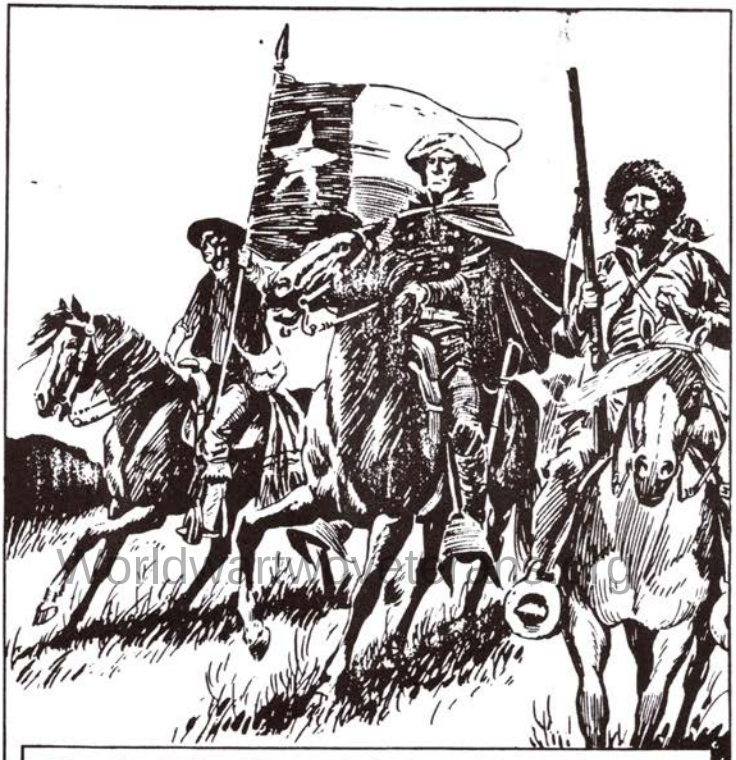
All of the above citations are quoted as best they could be made out by the writer, including abbreviations.

Writer's note: Due to damage which occurred at Naples and the natural deterioration of the papers during those many years, some names may be misspelled. Please forgive me and I hope it does not offend anyone.

As a conclusion to this story, I want to share the following with you. As any combat veteran knows, miracles do happen, especially on the battlefield. I'm sure each and every one of us consider it a miracle that we came out of the war alive. This is an event which I consider a true miracle. After I returned to the United States and still receiving treatments in an Army Hospital for my various wounds, I was approached by an Officer who called me by name and asked if I remembered him. I said that I remembered someone who looked exactly like hime but the last time I saw him he was in a pile of dead men at my Battalion Headquarters on the Rapido River in Italy and the man had half his face blown off by an artillery shell. He said, "That man is me." Then he told me his story. He remembered being lifted off the pile and placed on the ground so that Captain Lehman could be taken care of. He tried to say something or to move but it was impossible for him to do either. The next thing he remembered which seemed that days had passed, a truce had been declared and wounded were being removed from the field, men would take one look at him, shake their head and pass him by. Next he remembered another truce and the dead were being removed from the field. When the litter bearers came for him they noticed that even after several days rigor mortis had not set in and he was rushed to the hospital.

Back in the states he was given a glass eye that matched his good eye exactly and through the skill of plastic surgeons and a picture of him furnished by his sister, my Battalion Artillery Officer's face was rebuilt and except for some small scars, he looked the same as he did before he was so severely wounded. Now that is truly a MIRACLE.

I finally left the service on disability on 26 September 1946 just short of a few weeks of becoming automatically promoted to the grade of full Colonel. When the Surgeon General discovered that I had the time in grade for the promotion and my efficiency reports as a Lt. Colonel were outstanding he ordered my immediate release from the service. So on that sour note, my career in the military came to an end, but in my heart I will always remember and cherish the great friends whom I continue to see at our Reunions. As long as I am physically able, I will attend thse Reunions to be with these wonderful and splendid men and their families of our 36th Infantry Division. GOD BLESS THEM ALL.



"Remember the Alamo" became the battle cry of the little Texan army. Under General Sam Houston, this army at first retreated before the approach of Santa Anna, but at the San Jacinto River, on April 21, 1836, Houston suddenly attacked and annihilated the Mexican army, taking Santa Anna prisoner. Independence had been won!

Going In

By Henry Gunlock
Co. L - 142nd Infantry

September 9, 1943, 3:30 a.m., heading into the Salerno Beach in an assault craft, hunkering down as low as possible, with shells going overhead also splashing into the water. We could look up and see machine gun tracers overhead and I thought how pretty they looked, with a thousand stars in the backdrop.

The look-out in the front of the craft would call out to the helmsmen in the rear to steer this way or that, to miss some mines in the water. As the craft touched bottom, down came the ramp and we jumped out into knee to waist-deep water. Wading as fast as we could, we fell on the beach and started crawling forward, encountering barbed wire on the way. There was very heavy fire to the right, as the enemy was wide awake now and pouring it on towards the crafts still in the water.

Lucky for us, it was still dark enough that they could not see all of us even though they were sending up flares. I remember passing an unmanned armored scout car that was dug into the sand with just the top above ground, with a mounted machine pointing our way - as we had been shooting in that direction; I assumed the enemy had decided to depart quickly.

Our first objective was to make for the coastal highway, re-group and then turn west up the highway until we reached the bridge over the Sele River and hold it. A small party of us reached the highway and took cover in the ditch alongside. In just a few minutes the sound of a motorcycle was heard coming down the road. It had a small blue light up front. Capt. Coker hollered to let him have it. We turned all the weapons on the motorcycle and off it went into the ditch. The rider had a charmed life, for as I ran up on him, he had just one wound through his right leg, above the knee. He was a young man and seemed very cool under the situation as he asked for a cigarette. Even in his pain, he kept saying, "Cigarette, cigarette." A medic put a bandage on his leg and the dispatch pouch was taken off by him. I would say that at least 100 rounds were fired at him in the dark and how he escaped death was a miracle.

Leaving him with the medic, we moved out and proceeded toward the bridge, as we could hear firing in just every direction. We didn't know it at the time, but at the place where we got the dispatch rider - not over 100 yards away, was two truck loads of enemy with two concealed tanks. I now reason that they were awaiting orders as to what to do - waiting on that rider. Those of our comrades following behind said that the enemy jumped out of the trucks and took cover behind a rock wall on hearing our firing on the highway.

I remember hearing "Seabiscuit" Sikes telling that he started over the fence and was told by a news-reporter (named Bell) "Don't go over fence," as they had just shot him. I think that it is just a minor wound.

As daylight came, we were advancing toward our objective, the enemy zeroed in on us with mortars and 88's. We scattered and took cover as much as possible. Our position became too hot, so we decided that we had better get out of the area. Running as fast as we could, we found cover about 200 yards forward - in a small ditch covered with some vines and bushes. We stayed in there until the shelling quieted down and was getting ready to move again when I heard tanks starting their engines.

In just a few minutes, on the highway, just parallel to our hiding place, appeared five enemy tanks. I told my platoon officer that they were German, but he said, "No, they are British," for he had been told that the British would be on our left flank. I told him that I could see black crosses on them, as I was the only one who had raised my head up in the vines to see. The tanks moved up in the road even with us and we were about seventy five yards away. As they moved, they made a sound that I will never forget. The tracks and boogy wheels had sand in them and the sound was a schreeching ti-ti-ti-.

The target on the lead tank opened and an observer looked out trying to find us. As I was carrying a 45 Thompson, I was afraid that I might miss him, so I asked for a rifle. The Lt. asked what I was going to do - I said that I was going to shoot him. He begged me not to shoot, as we all might get killed. And he may well have been right. I then asked for a bazooka and word was passed back and forth and word came back - we have a bazooka but no ammunition. What a mess to be in. We had been so scattered by the shelling that no one knew where the ammunition carriers were.

I have often wondered what would have happened if we could have hit that tiger tank in the lead and that panther tank in the rear and bottled all 5 tanks on that road. Just about the time that we thought that they would discover our position, some good old comrades 200-300 yards behind us opened up on those tanks with machine guns. I've always believed that they were the M Company.

When the tanks turned around to go after those machine gunners, we took off forward at a run and covered a mile or more before we came under heavy fire again. This time we came close to the railroad tracks. An enemy machine gun opened up on us on our left front. I asked Frank Kolovitz to crawl forward with me and try to knock it out. After we had gone about 100 yards, I couldn't make out if it was next to the railroad tracks or in a small building beside the railroad tracks. Anyway, they were keeping down low and

phosphorus mortar shells starting landing near by. We knew that we could not stay there and live, so we made a break to a partial rock fence to the left. As we ran, the bullets fell all around us and just as we made it to the wall, another soldier, (Red McFadden in I Company) jumped up and ran with us.

He used to sing to us back in the states - had a good voice. In a second, he went down. I ran back and asked him where he was hit. He got shot above the wrist - I told him to get up and get behind the rocks with us, which he did and I wrapped a handkerchief around his wound. He was not bleeding very much.

I looked out to see a very large group of enemies following some tanks coming our way, so we departed to the rear at double time. After running a few hundred yards, I looked to my left and saw Capt. Stone and several men of L Company run behind a rock fence, so we made our way over to them. Capt. Stone told me to take a few men out on his left flank, as we would make a stand there. About five of us moved about 200 yards and got down in a low place. I think that it might have been an animal wallow at one time.

We could see the enemy coming, so we opened fire. They took cover and then those tanks with them opened up on us. After a period of time, those shells were tearing up the rock wall, so Capt. Stone and his men took off. I told the men with me to take off and I would shoot to cover for them. All of them took off except one, who was Eddie Shuff from Alabama. He wouldn't get up, so I told him that I was leaving. I think that he was captured here.

Right behind our position was a 2 or 3 strand fence - I hung my pants on the wire and thought that it was a lifetime for me to get loose. Getting loose from that fence, I ran and stumbled into a mud hole.

All of this time, I could hear those machine gun bullets, and I remember seeing them hitting the ground, to the right of me. I would run several yards and go down - after a few times of this, I knew that I was carrying too much equipment. I then discarded my pack and gas mask. As I retreated, I came across one of our men who had been run over by a tank. His helmet was mashed flat, and he had one arm off. As I was low on ammunition, I threw down my 45 Thompson, and took his rifle and 2 Bandoleers of .30 cal. rifle ammunition.

After running about ½ mile, I fell into a ditch to rest. I hadn't been in there long when I looked out and saw a comrade running in my direction. I called out to him and he fell in the ditch. I could tell who it was, while a long way off by the amount of equipment that was on him. It was Easy Kilpatrick. Stayed in ditch and watched. About one hour before dark as the enemy had enough and withdrew, comrades came out of hiding and we got together. At this time we could account for about 90 men out of a company of 192. Lt. Stone, Lt. Speck, Lustman, 2 Sgts., Easy and myself.

Lt. Stone assigned about 45 men to each Lt. and Sgt. and moved out in the direction of Albanella to occupy the hills.

Looking back at this day, I can reflect that we were very lucky to survive at all. We had no tank weapons. Weapons to fight tanks did not arrive until 2 o'clock p.m. A man armed with a rifle is no match for tanks. Who was responsible for this must go to Headquarters Management.

I remember when we went ashore - we were gung-ho. At last we were in action and our blood was flowing fast. We wanted to get with it, but as the day wore on, and as we saw the toll being taken, and the carnage, the idea of survival became our #1 priority.

Scattered -Survival

If the Navy ships had not given us support when they did, we would have been overwhelmed.

Italy, Sept. 9-10, 1943

After we had survived the onslaught of enemy armor within 2 or 3 miles of the beachhead - thanks to those Navy ships and what little anti-tank weapons we had ashore, the enemy withdrew leaving many tanks and trucks burning.

The night of the first day ashore, we moved out and proceeded into the hills near the town of Albanella some two or three miles away.

On the 10th as we worked our way forward there were some 88's raking us but we kept on. As we crossed over on high ridge we heard an airplane coming and before we could raise our weapons, it was upon us. As it passed overhead at about 100 yards, you could see the pilot looking and waving at us. It was a ME 109 with several patches on the wings and fuselage where it had been hit in previous fights. The pilot might have mistaken us for Germans as he did not fire on us or he might be returning from a bombing-strafing run at the beaches and was out of ammunition.

On about the 11th, while digging in, we could see and hear two P51 msutangs approaching. You could always tell them by their high RPM hum - sounded like a smooth running sewing machine. One of them was trailing smoke and the engine was sputtering.

Suddenly, the plane rose nose up and out came the pilot. As he floated to the ground, his comrade in the other plane circled him. We ran to him, waving at his buddy, who could tell that friendly troops were at hand - he took off. The pilot landed in a rocky place and his legs were hurt. As we got to him - he was fearful that we were Germans. He was much relieved to see who we were. He looked to be part Indian. I asked him where he was from and he said New Mexico. I told him he was in Texas hands now and we got the medic to him.

That evening or the next day, we went to his plane and I remember the word "Apache" written on the engine cowl.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

A Combat Engineer's Experience

By B.G. Pullen
Company B, 111th Engr. Bn.

The first part of this article appeared in Vol. XII, No. 1, Spring 1992, page 53. B.G. Pullen died Feb. 3, 1992 in Baton Rouge, LA.

Our advance continued past Louhans; past Arbois, where Louis Pasteur experimented; past Avenne, and swept to the Doubs River near Besancon. The 36th Reconnaissance Troop, feeling out the river bank found all bridges blown, but located one only half destroyed. Doughs were sent over to secure the far side, while 111th Engineers immediately went to work. In 22 hours, engineers fashioned a 120-foot span to the other bank as steady autumn rains began to fall. Troops and armor moved across the completed bridge, forging onto the natural retreat route of the Germans heading from southwestern France to Belfort Gap. Nearly a thousand prisoners were taken in the first day's action. In the Besancon area, the 143rd RCT captured a fuel dump containing 700.000 litres of 80-90 octane gasoline and 4,000 gallons of alcohol.

Pressing north to Vesoul, an enemy force of some strength was met first at Oiselay-et-Grachaux by the 143rd and then just beyond Fretigney on September 10. Fighting advance guard actions, by daylight of September 11 the 143rd had reached its objective, the high ground overlooking Vesoul. The 141st on the right launched a frontal assault at daybreak of September 12. The 143rd moved around its left flank, sending strong blocking parties toward Port-sur-Saone while one battalion seized the dominating heights overlooking Vesoul from its northern edge.

With the 1st and 3rd Battalions abreast, the 141st attacked the town in conjunction with 3rd Division elements on its right. The 1st Battalion on the left was hit by heavy artillery concentrations as it jumped off and the Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. William A. Bird, was wounded. Reorganization delayed its advance. The 3rd Battalion on the right pressed over a canal and into Vesoul to engage the enemy in house-to-house fighting. After nine hours of stubborn battling, resistance was overcome and the 141st moved into the town.

I got on the jeep and rode back over the mountain to go and get a dose of medicine and go back, I thought, but I stayed with the Medicos for a couple of days. I think they wanted to check and see if I had all my marbles. After I left my dozer, the man that helped me, took over. He went just across the highway to do some work for a lieutenant and men from my company, when a large shell hit right in front of the dozer, tearing it all up and wounding the driver, Andrew Mitro, badly. Also wounding the lieutenant and some of the men. It seems to me the lieutenant died of wounds. Andrew Mitro was born in Hungary and came to this country when a young boy. He was killed after the war—a boom on a dragline fell on him.

Our General Walker led the infantry into Velletri to give them the licking of their life. Many were captured and killed. General Walker's aid, Colonel Reese, was killed just a short ways from General Walker. They had fought together in World War I and were very close friends. During this time the Air Force had blocked a large convoy heading to Rome. They strafed and burned the whole convoy. There were miles and miles of burned vehicles, some with drivers still in them. My old buddy, Parks, ran the dozer all the way from Velletri to Rome knocking them off the road into the ditch. This knocked a big hole in the German defense and left Rome wide open. So we moved on into Rome without a lot of opposition. I was riding with the medicos on in and through Rome. I remember we were caught in a bad shelling as we were held up on the far side of Rome. Large crowds greeted the Americans. Some laughed and come cried, as we pulled through. The Germans fought hard with rear guards to slow the 36th, but the pressure was too great and they retreated north. In 29 days the 36th advanced 240 miles and captured 5,000 prisoners. I remember we made 20 to 40 miles a day at times. We seemed to stay along the coast. The 36th took the port town of Cevitovecchia. The port was in complete ruins. This was known as the port of Rome. In one small town north of Rome, the Italian underground working with the Allies, rounded up a large number of German sympathizers as soon as the front passed, marched them down to a cemetery and lined them up against a stone wall and killed them. I heard the guns and later walked over to see what was going on. Some few days later, I was called on to carry the dozer up to a place where the Germans had blown out a bridge across a deep dry ravine. When I arrived, I found the artillery banking up for quite a distance up the road. The Infantry had crossed on foot and were fanning out across the area. Our M.P.'s always helped with the traffic. The one there, came over and told me just as soon as I could do enough filling in on this gully, he would like to let some of the big 155's cross. When I made the temporary fill, I backed the dozer out across the ditch line on the back slope. I sat there a few minutes on the tractor to watch a few of them cross. There was a place that began to mire down. I stepped down and went across the ditch upon the shoulder of the road. I was just about to tell the M.P. to stop the traffic where I could blade back over it. All of a sudden a bright flash and I was blown down the edge of the road at least 20 feet. When I got to my feet, I really turned the fan on down

that dry gully. I ran just a short distance knowing I had to see what was wrong. I trotted back up to the road. The first thing I saw was the M.P. coming across the fill running and holding his head with his hands with blood all over him. What had happened I was told, a German tank threw a shell that hit a truck

ENGINEERS SYSTEMATICALLY DESTROYED . . .

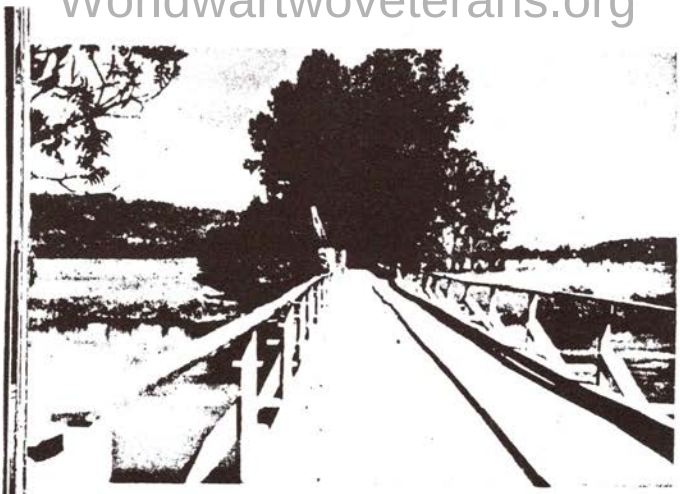
. . . EACH OF THE CAPTURED HEAVY FORTIFICATIONS.

loaded with 155 projectiles. This truck exploded. It cleaned the road of other trucks and men around it. Men were killed and wounded all around. I looked off in a field a half a mile away and could see tires and pieces of trucks burning. Now I had to work on the crater in the road. Walking back over to the dozer there were dents and scars all over it. On one of the dozer arms was a drive shaft out of one of the trucks wrapped around it. I noticed that I had a small place on my arm bleeding. I thought about getting a medico to bandage it, but I thought about all that happened and how busy they were at this time. So I went back to work. This would have been a purple heart and worth five points on discharge when the war ended, but I didn't need it anyway as 85 and over got out and I made this easy. My first sergeant asked about this. When I told him the situation the medicos were in, he said, "Don't believe I would have bothered them either."

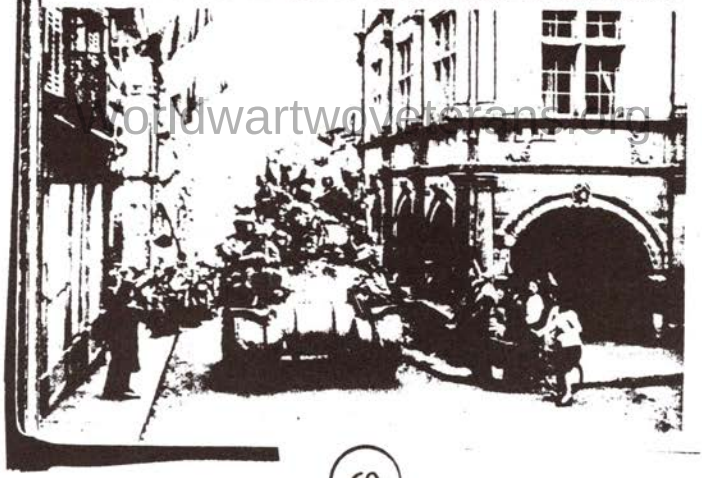
The front rolled on to the North. Sometimes at night we would run up and over the Germans. At times you could find yourself in bad situations. At times there might be as much fighting behind you as in front. I remember once driving nearly all night. We were over-running a German bicycle division. Around daylight we pulled off the side of the highway and tried to hide our equipment the best we could. There were bicycles lying around everywhere. Our boys began to ride some of them up and down the road. I was sitting on the side of the road with our radio operator. I was watching our artillery shells hitting in the distance on the Germans. A short distance away four of our planes came across the highway, out to the coast and turned back toward the highway. By this time, I told the operator I didn't like the looks of this much, as they were getting in formation to strafe the road. I had seen our marking on them, but sometimes that didn't mean they were ours. We made a dive for a stone fence that ran parallel to the road. By the time I made it over the fence and hit the ground, red bullets hit all around me. I almost pushed the stone fence over trying to get closer. The first and second plane strafed the road and the third made his dive and just bumped his machine guns and pulled back up. The fourth flew on across. They were our old P.40's. They thought our men on the bicycles were Germans. So to make sure if they came back, I would be in a better place, I ran out in a field and jumped in a shell hole. In just a second someone jumped in with me. It was our company commander. We sat a few minutes to make sure they were gone. He joked about piling it on me. Back on the road I remember some being wounded and one man was killed sitting in a truck. He wasn't in my company. It wasn't long before orders came in to get rid of the bicycles as they were what drew the fire from the planes.

Not too far from here on to the hills overlooking the town of Pisa, some of the men said they saw the leaning tower through binoculars. We were now having a little fun rolling the Germans back. But suddenly we were halted in our tracks and some new division that had never seen combat pulled through us and took the chase. In the highlights of the things that I have recalled there might have been days, weeks and sometimes months between them. Our orders now were to pull back around Rome and every man in the 36th was to have

two or three days sight-seeing there, as we missed lots of things as we came through. I saw many of the old historical sites, but I remember very little of them now. We had baths, haircuts, shaves, and clean clothes. I hadn't shaved since all this started back at Anzio. We soon began to move back to around Naples. I guess we thought we had the war made now. But as usual, rumors began to spread that the high brass had big things for us again. And they were right. Finally, the assault teams of the 36th began loading out in the Naples harbor. We had been in Italy just about a year now. My turn finally came around to load. I was with some rear elements of the Infantry. We were loaded on another L.S.T. for the trip across the Mediterranean Sea to the beaches of Southern France. I believe after a few days out, we were clobbered by another storm. Some of the trucks on the L.S.T. got loose. They were in ruin by the time the storm was over. When we arrived at the beachhead at St. Raphael, our troops had established the beachhead and had driven the Ger-



THE 111th ENGINEER BATTALION worked day and night to complete this timber trestle bridge across the Doubs in 22 hours. Then tanks and infantry poured across to continue the chase (below).



mans well back. The 36th extended its lines a hundred miles in a day trying to out run the German 19th Army. I remember the beautiful country from the beach heading north toward Grenoble. Through here we traveled the foothills and valleys. Most of the time you could see the Alps in the distance.

We began to see girls with their hair clipped clean on their heads. As soon as a French town was liberated, the French patriots would round up people that had collaborated with the Germans. The Germans took a beating from our 7th Army. The 36th Division had gone close to 250 miles in France. This put as around Grenoble. The Germans were beginning to be trapped in and our planes, as usual, destroyed large convoys all along. The roads were covered with all types of destroyed equipment, as I had seen before, lots of German soldiers trapped inside burned and killed by the planes. We moved on to the city of Lyons. The French partisans finished mopping up the Germans, while the 36th moved to try and cut more of the retreating Germans off before they reached prepared defenses. We passed through quite a few of the noted French towns, still driving North. There are many things that could be told. In every town the people were overwhelmed to be liberated from the Germans. There were many bridges blown out and many road blocks constructed. That's where the combat engineers would come in. We were to build crossings under extreme conditions, as the Germans would put all the fire power they could on this to delay as long as possible. The road blocks were most of the time felled trees. Maybe at times to be several hundred feet through. The trees would be heavily mined and booby trapped, plus machine guns and artillery trained on this. The bulldozers were used most of the time to remove the block. I always dreaded these. The front finally came to just about a halt in the Vosges Mountains. This was to be a hard winter and fighting the same. The road blocks became hard to move and our lines were stretched to where everybody was to be used to help hold our lines. I think of us as living in a big cow barn for a long period. I know that some of the fellows used to beat the Frenchman up and milk his cows. When he would come out, no milk. He liked to have gone crazy until the company commander gave orders to stop this. We were taking turns going up and taking positions in fox holes. In the daylight, you wouldn't dare get out. I had just pulled my turn and had returned to the barn when my 1st Sergeant came to me with orders from the C.O. that Mitro and I were to go to a tank training and this outfit was in combat. We were to learn to operate the tank and to use a 75 MM cannon and also machine guns. As we were to get a tank dozer, we were told we would teach this to someone else in the company, when we finished.

I was for anything that would get me out of the fox hole as snow and ice were plentiful. We arrived at this tank company and after two weeks we were pronounced tank men. So back to our company to the same ole cow barn. But things had eased somewhat. After a day or so, the 1st Sergeant again came to me and said orders from the company commander was for Mitro and I to go to headquarters company to pick up our tank and I was to stay on the tank as commander. This would give me a Staff Sergeant rating. I told him that

I wanted no part of the tank and the rating. This was somewhat a double cross as I was to learn to teach someone later. There was nothing he could do he said as it was orders from the C.O. This C.O. hadn't been with us but for a month or so. I had been doing my original job for four years now. On the way that night to Headquarters, I thought there wasn't but one thing left. This was to find Colonel Stovall, the battalion commander. I had known Colonel Stovall since about the first day I walked into the 36th at Camp Bowie in January, 1941. He was a 2nd Lieutenant then and I drove him a lot. I could talk a week about this man. He is one of the finest men I have ever known. I believe he is the best loved man by his men that could be found in the 36th Division. I see him each year for two or three days at our reunion. He has visited in my home. He retired a few years after the war for health reasons. He makes his home in Bowie, Texas. My company came from there. He took command of the combat engineers just after the Salerno Beach landing. The commander at the time of the landing was found very inefficient by General Fred Walker, and relieved.

As the truck pulled into the Headquarters area, everything was blacked out, but I could see a guard. I got off the truck and asked him if he knew where I could find Colonel Stovall. He took me in an old German trailer house and pointed to it. I walked over and knocked. With the word to come in, I stepped inside. He always greeted me and asked how I was getting along whenever I saw him, and this time as well. Then he asked what he could do for me. I told him my story, as how long I had been doing the job I was on, and I was to go on the tank against my will.

He turned to his radio man in the rear of the trailer, who was Sergeant Cecil Bloomer. When I first entered the service, we were privates in the same tent. He said to him to pick up B Company. In just a minute he had picked up B Company. The colonel, in very angry words, gave the order to take me off the tank, and be sure and leave me off, and he had not followed his orders as to the men to send to this tank company for training. We carried the tank back that night. I was almost afraid to go back, because there could have been reprisals, but there was never anything about this the rest of the war.

Mitro did stay on the tank as driver. These things proved useless as I believe we had about four in a row shot up and burned. We were lucky no one was killed, but some were wounded. I forget whether Mitro was wounded again. He was wounded back in Italy and was out of action quite a while. It really put more hardship back on the dozer, because the Germans began to put up road blocks that were almost suicide to move, but you could maneuver about a lot faster, and when being shot at, you could leave it in a hurry. As for a tank, it took men forever to get out.

The fighting now had become fierce from town to town. I can't think of all the smaller towns through this area of fighting. I guess the Germans now were going for broke. It seemed as if they fought with everything they had. I believe the casualties in my company were higher through this Vosges Mountain country than any place in the war. Along here we had a battalion of men cut off by the Germans and almost annihilated. The 442nd Japanese Regiment

attached to us, rescued what was left of it. Most of the towns through this area were just about all destroyed.

It was bitter cold with snow most all time. I remember it was getting along close to Christmas now. We were relieved from the front. My company had Christmas dinner in an old school building. This was just out of Strasbourg. The Germans by now were pulling desperate attacks.

The Battle of the Bulge was in the making, which was far to the north and west of us. The Germans began to make small breakthroughs along the edge of the Rhine Valley. When the 36th moved back into the front, we took positions from above Strasbourg to Merlebock, north of Metz. New Years' day the Germans made a powerful attack. I was never in but one retreat during the war. I don't remember the name of the small town I was in, but snow must have been waist deep. I was asleep in an old house on the floor. Suddenly someone began kicking me awake, saying the Germans were advancing on us from just down the street. I was not long grabbing up my junk. I beat it out in the snow to the truck. The dozer was loaded on the low-boy, but I was headed the wrong way and no place to turn around.

I kept working the truck trying to slide the trailer with the tractor on it. I had chains on the tandems and on front, too. They began to knock sparks everywhere. I was scared stiff. I finally got turned and headed out of the little village. Outside of town was a long, open stretch of country. The snow would build up in front of my trailer wheels and lock them. So I had to make the fire fly all the way through the opening. Another thing was, I had to guess where the road was and it was dark. I figured every minute I would miss the road and stick the rig and have to leave it. But I made eight miles before I stopped. The Germans never advanced much, but there was some bitter fighting took place for some time. We more or less went on the defensive. Night after night, my company was out all night. They were busy putting up barb wire entanglements, mine fields and so forth. We used the dozers just about every night digging big guns and tanks in. The Infantry used bed sheets to blend with the snow. High powered search lights were used to scan some areas. This part of the country was flat to shallow hills. It was some of the Rhine Valley.

I remember coming through the St. Marie pass up in the Vosges. There was one obstruction after another. The ditches and along the road were dotted with dead American and German soldiers. I remember breaking over the last ridge. You could see for miles and miles toward the Rhine. This was the first time in history that St. Marie pass had been forced through. I was with the 142nd Infantry Regiment of the 36th, of which I worked most of the time.

The 142nd received a Presidential Citation for the capture of St. Marie. This may have been where I received one of the two that I have. Down in the valley the language changed from French to German. This was the Alsace Plain but still very much in France. This was some of the rich country always disputed over. From one point back around St. Marie Pass, you could see to the Rhine River and the Black Forest beyond, inside Germany. It must have been many miles.

The fighting now would become more fierce, as when we began to take the offense once again. We would be days and days trying to take a small town. The fighting would almost be from house to house. The casualties in my company began to build up. As many times in the past when my company would go out on missions, some wouldn't return. One thing that was so hazardous was clearing mine fields in the midst of all types of fighting.

After many, many days, we were now along the Moder River. After many casualties, the division finally established a bridgehead across the Moder. We began the attacks that would bring us face to face with the Germans at the noted Siegfried line. I can look back from about the Siegfried line to St. Marie at the Vosges Mountains. There would be many, many towns of notable mention. Maybe something would come to my mind at the mention of some town. Such as, so and so was killed there, or some hair-raising ordeal that you narrowly got out of.

Through most of this area, the villages and towns were just a pile of rubble when they came behind our line. The people were frightened something terrible. Lots of them were killed because they refused to leave their town and home. Many were displaced people, hundreds of miles from home. Most town people were always hungry. Country people made it lots better. We began to make attack after attack. We would attack in what was called a task force. Sometimes to spear head great distances into the enemy lines.

We began to encounter large numbers of enemy concrete bunkers, pill boxes, silos and so forth. My company now had been in combat for a year in Italy and now months and months in France. When I talk of my company, this is approximately 190 men that you know real well. In the other two line companies and headquarters company in our battalion, you know some but not all. And throughout the division, you know scattered men all through. But reaching the outer fringes of the Siegfried, in my company this would sort of separate the men from the boys, again.

These bunkers were almost impossible to take. They would be occupied by a number of Germans that had just about everything in the book to fire at you with. So the only way they began to break them up, was the Infantry would advance as close as possible and concentrate all the fire power they could to make them button up, and when they were thought to be buttoned up, our company then would crawl for long distances with explosives. Most of the time, the type explosive used was called a bee hive. This threw all the concussion in one direction and this would blast holes through the thick concrete walls and very seldom very many Germans came out, if any. If there had been just a few to blow, but there were hundreds of these.

We began to have men's nerves come to the breaking point. The reaction of men are not all alike, some might scream, one might run, or one sit and cry. Some might shake with a chill, and so forth. But after many long hazardous missions, we pushed up to the main part of the Siegfried. This was made up of about fifteen or twenty rows of concrete piers. The first rows starting off two or three feet tall and out around the middle, six or eight feet tall. In

the middle the piers, expect, had tons and tons of concrete in them. They were large at the bottom and sharp at the top. This was, I guess, to be mostly a tank trap.

Parks and I carried the heavy dozer up as close as we thought possible and unloaded. We had to go over a short ridge, down a hillside and tie into the concrete. The short ones turned over easy, but the farther out, the harder they got. After long periods of digging, you could turn them over. I do remember then a hole was torn through it, tanks poured through like water.

For us it had been a long time since Salerno Beach. When we crossed over into Germany, it was not hard to tell as every house flew a white flag of some type. The 36th, in another sweep back to the Rhine, cut off escape routes of the Germans and we took thousands of prisoners before crossing the Rhine. It seems to me that they were pushed so rapid that we found a bridge over the Rhine still intact.

We began to roll across Germany with just a small amount of resistance. Most of the large towns were in rubble. All buildings except a few scattered ones were lying in the streets. I remember such cities as Stuttgart, Ulm, Landsberg, Kaufleuren and Munich, Kaiserslautern is where we entered Germany. I want to think I went through Frankfurt. We had to use dozers to work through the streets and get on through. Our Air Force had, in months before, done most of this. We used the German Autobahns and the best of these highways were used all along as jet air strips. The Germans had hundreds and hundreds of jets. I saw many of them along these roads hid under brush and trees. They would land on the highway and as quick as they could, cut off the engine, horses would pull them out into the woods.

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.

They had used jets for sometime but our Air Force made it so rough. When they came over us, they were always real high. Their jet fuel plants were bombed out and this grounded most of them. The highways were filled with people walking in all directions. I won't try to describe this, as it would take a long time. People were separated, long distances from home, hungry and frightened. I remember as I began to see people on the road wearing a striped type suit. Come to find out, these were Jews that were released or escaped. We finally overrun some of the concentration camps and saw the brutality first hand. We found railroad cars filled with dead bodies and camps with bodies littered everywhere. This is not something that someone else said he saw. This is what I saw. The worst I believe was around Landsberg. I believe I spent one or two nights in the prison at Landsberg where Hitler spent his fourteen months in prison. This is where he wrote his infamous Mein Kampf. This prison was built to accomodate 500, when it was overrun there were 1,400 of many nationalities inside.

Our fighting now was beginning to be a few slashes along with SS troopers. The German's regular army troops were easy to take prisoner, but sometimes these SS troops would stand and fight until death. The German people dreaded them about as much as we did. If given the opportunity, the German civilians would give us directions as to where they were hiding. The German people were very nice to us. But I would say for awhile, we were a little rough on them. They were more like the American people, as I saw in foreign countries.

We began to pick up important Nazi big wigs. Our number one catch was Hermann Goering. He was the number two man in Germany, when he gave up. With him was his wife and daughter. He was soon carried to the division C.P. where he was questioned by General Dahlquist. He talked of the quarrel with Hitler.

Others were Field Marshall Von Rundstedr, Dr. Hans Frank, Hugo Sperrle and Admiral Horthy. Some of the French leaders freed by the 36th were Frynaud, Gamelin, Daladier, Borotra and Weygand and also Mme. Alfred Carlliau, the sister of General Charles DeGaulle.

We always, in looking for spots to spend the night or day or so, looked for the best and ousted the Germans. This was a practice used till just after the war. It might have changed after a while. The war was drawing up to scattered pockets or resistance. We were now crossing into Austria. This was getting back into mountain valley fighting again. The Alps Mountain tops were filled with snow and the valleys were nice and warm. This was to be a beautiful sight through Austria, as far as we got. But as always, I was not much for sight-seeing.

I was looking for the end of the war. We all knew the end was very near. It seemed as if everyone became very cautions. Austria marked the 6th foreign country entered by the 36th Division. All fronts in Europe had folded up. The last pocket or resistance narrowed to inside Austria and the 36th was involved in this. I would say we heard the last shots fired in this war. This was somewhere between a hundred and a hundred and fifty miles inside Austria.

Everywhere you looked, all types of military hardware were being stacked. Most German regulars were turned loose to make it back to their homes. But we were always on guard for SS troops. Our trucks would haul as many as they could, helping the defeated men in all directions. Some were many hundreds of miles from home.

My company's last days in Austria were in a pretty small valley town. Tall peaks were all around us.

After a few days the orders came for us to pull back into Germany and the 36th would be an occupation division. I know the morning I left out of this town, I drove for hours pulling the dozer on the lowboy up this mountain. Looking down, I could see down into the same little town. We pulled back inside Germany and to an old German Army base. There I told the motor sergeant that this was all for me on trucks and dozers. I got my equipment out and walked away to never put my hand on this rig again. I went to my good friend, Staff Sergeant Alex Griffin, who was a platoon leader. I told him I was joining his bunch. He told me OK. I began to set up a place to sleep, when one man came by and told me that Alex was looking for me. When I found him, he told me to prepare to move out, that we had positions of occupation to take up. I was to take a corporal's place, as he had left for the United States.

We were to move out in three trucks. Alex was in a jeep leading. He dropped the first two trucks in different places. I was in the last truck. When we finally stopped, we were in front of a little hotel in this small town. We were to order the occupants out. There were two old ladies and an old man. The old man spoke good English and begged us to let them stay, as they didn't have any place to go. This was against the rule, but we let them stay. They were to do the cooking and keep the place clean. Alex went up and picked out a room for him and me.

We had an ammunition's train to guard and set up a road block, mostly to keep the French out of this sector. They would come over and steal things as big as cattle. The Germans had to keep their guard up, as the displaced Poles, Checzs, Hungarians and others would steal their chickens, eggs and pigs. Every time you looked up some Germans would run to us and say that someone had stolen his bicycle.

We lived like kings here, compared to the way we had lived in the past. The main thing, we were at ease. The last thing that a little force took place was after midnight one night. The old mayor came and woke us up and said there were two SS troopers at his house asleep in his attic. We soon nabbed them. I guarded them back to the detention camp. We were to live here for several weeks.

A German farmer sold us a dressed beef and one of the boys killed a nice fat deer. The deer were plentiful, but the Germans were not allowed to kill one. This was their law. We had eaten many deer in the past, when in combat.

One day the orders came to us to move back into the rest of the company. We were relieved by some other division. After moving back with the com-

pany, we were assembled in the street and the orders were, if your amount of points were in one category, you would go to the left end of the street and in another, you would go to the right where the trucks were waiting. Those on the left would start for the United States immediately and go by ship. Those that would go to the right would be transferred into the 63rd Division. Just reverse 36th. This one I fell in. The one's names that were not called, remained with the 36th for occupation. This meant everyone with 85 points and over would be leaving the 36th. I really felt low, as I liked one point of having enough to start for home with the other group, and I certainly didn't like the idea of going into another division.This division had never seen a day of combat.

The men began to move around shaking hands and telling each other farewell, as some would never see each other again. Some of these men had been together for five years. Our old buddy and friend, Slug Reasoner, who had been First Sergeant all the way in combat, except for some months back, made a field commission, was in charge of this. I knew him for nearly five years, and I never saw this man look upset at all. But this day, I saw him cry.

I moved out with the men going to the 63rd Division. Upon arriving there, we were met by the Company commander. When we unloaded out of our trucks, he put us on a jeep and drove down the streets of that town and told us to just pick out where we wanted to live. This we did. We picked a real nice place and the Germans were booted out. The captain had a line run down to us and put in a telephone. We were treated real nice by these people. They liked to hear us talk of our nearly two years in combat.

After a day or so, I thought I would visit the C.P. and try to find out if they had a list of men as to going home. The company clerk showed me the list and said they will go as listed. I turned to him and said, "I guess if anybody goes, I'll be it." He said to me, "Is that your name on top?" I said, "Yes."

I was lying in bed ond day having a nice rest and the telephone rang. The captain asked me if I would like to go home. I told him I had waited close to three years for this and I wouldn't turn him down. He said that I would fly back to the United States.

I started my slow journey across Germany back into France. It was just like the army had always been, hurry up and wait. After several days, I was in Marseilles, France. After a day or so, I got on a B17 bomber and headed across the Mediterranean for Case Blanca. I was in for a couple of days stay there. When we left from here, we were on a C54 four-motor transport. This plane flew across the Sahara Desert. The next stop would be Dakar, down in the southern part of Africa.

After a meal and refueling, the plane headed out for an eleven hour flight across the Atlantic, to Natal, Brazil. But the plane was out for a short time, when one of the motors quit. We turned back and flew around until the most of the fuel was burned to lighten the wings. Once we landed, we went to the mess hall for another meal. By the time we were through eating, the plane was ready again. This time we flew the eleven hours and landed in Natal, Brazil.

Everywhere you looked, all types of military hardware were being stacked. Most German regulars were turned loose to make it back to their homes. But we were always on guard for SS troops. Our trucks would haul as many as they could, helping the defeated men in all directions. Some were many hundreds of miles from home.

My company's last days in Austria were in a pretty small valley town. Tall peaks were all around us.

After a few days the orders came for us to pull back into Germany and the 36th would be an occupation division. I know the morning I left out of this town, I drove for hours pulling the dozer on the lowboy up this mountain. Looking down, I could see down into the same little town. We pulled back inside Germany and to an old German Army base. There I told the motor sergeant that this was all for me on trucks and dozers. I got my equipment out and walked away to never put my hand on this rig again. I went to my good friend, Staff Sergeant Alex Griffin, who was a platoon leader. I told him I was joining his bunch. He told me OK. I began to set up a place to sleep, when one man came by and told me that Alex was looking for me. When I found him, he told me to prepare to move out, that we had positions of occupation to take up. I was to take a corporal's place, as he had left for the United States.

We were to move out in three trucks. Alex was in a jeep leading. He dropped the first two trucks in different places. I was in the last truck. When we finally stopped, we were in front of a little hotel in this small town. We were to order the occupants out. There were two old ladies and an old man. The old man spoke good English and begged us to let them stay, as they didn't have any place to go. This was against the rule, but we let them stay. They were to do the cooking and keep the place clean. Alex went up and picked out a room for him and me.

We had an ammunition's train to guard and set up a road block, mostly to keep the French out of this sector. They would come over and steal things as big as cattle. The Germans had to keep their guard up, as the displaced Poles, Checzs, Hungarians and others would steal their chickens, eggs and pigs. Every time you looked up some Germans would run to us and say that someone had stolen his bicycle.

We lived like kings here, compared to the way we had lived in the past. The main thing, we were at ease. The last thing that a little force took place was after midnight one night. The old mayor came and woke us up and said there were two SS troopers at his house asleep in his attic. We soon nabbed them. I guarded them back to the detention camp. We were to live here for several weeks.

A German farmer sold us a dressed beef and one of the boys killed a nice fat deer. The deer were plentiful, but the Germans were not allowed to kill one. This was their law. We had eaten many deer in the past, when in combat.

One day the orders came to us to move back into the rest of the company. We were relieved by some other division. After moving back with the com-

pany, we were assembled in the street and the orders were, if your amount of points were in one category, you would go to the left end of the street and in another, you would go to the right where the trucks were waiting. Those on the left would start for the United States immediately and go by ship. Those that would go to the right would be transferred into the 63rd Division. Just reverse 36th. This one I fell in. The one's names that were not called, remained with the 36th for occupation. This meant everyone with 85 points and over would be leaving the 36th. I really felt low, as I liked one point of having enough to start for home with the other group, and I certainly didn't like the idea of going into another division.This division had never seen a day of combat.

The men began to move around shaking hands and telling each other farewell, as some would never see each other again. Some of these men had been together for five years. Our old buddy and friend, Slug Reasoner, who had been First Sergeant all the way in combat, except for some months back, made a field commission, was in charge of this. I knew him for nearly five years, and I never saw this man look upset at all. But this day, I saw him cry.

I moved out with the men going to the 63rd Division. Upon arriving there, we were met by the Company commander. When we unloaded out of our trucks, he put us on a jeep and drove down the streets of that town and told us to just pick out where we wanted to live. This we did. We picked a real nice place and the Germans were booted out. The captain had a line run down to us and put in a telephone. We were treated real nice by these people. They liked to hear us talk of our nearly two years in combat.

After a day or so, I thought I would visit the C.P. and try to find out if they had a list of men as to going home. The company clerk showed me the list and said they will go as listed. I turned to him and said, "I guess if anybody goes, I'll be it." He said to me, "Is that your name on top?" I said, "Yes."

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The weather became real bad just after we landed there and this stay here was to be several days. I remember one morning they called out my name to board a plane. It was real bad, raining and the wind was blowing. I was a little frightened to get on, but I certainly was not going to balk now. After the plane got up, it wasn't but a few minutes until we ran out into real nice weather. The plane I was on now was a C47 two-motor transport. Our next stop was in a small airport across the Amazon in the western tip of Brazil. We ate and rested a short while and were back up again. The next stop would be British Georgetown, Guiana and about the same procedure. This time changing planes, but still the same type. The next stop was in Puerto Rico. There I bought a bottle of rum and a suit of Khakis.

It was August now and I still had on the battle dress, the wool O.D.'s. I put the khakis on as I was about to burn up. After a while, back in the air, some of us were playing cards out in the aisle when all of a sudden the plane ran into a small storm and fell several hundred feet real quick and liked to have scared us to death. We sat back in our seats the rest of the way. After a while, the pilot notified us to start looking in the distance, as we could begin to see Miami, Florida.

We really began to look , as we had been gone just under three years. But to me it seemed like ten or twenty. The plane hit the runway perfect, as we were sweating this, as this was the end of the plane ride. And I have not been on one since. We were to be here for a few days and were treated well. We could order almost anything we wanted to eat. We found on our first trip to a mess hall that you could eat all the bananas you wanted, and drink all the milk you wanted. We didn't have any bananas or real good milk while we were gone. The men would get a load of milk and bananas and go outside in the shade and eat. It wasn't long before they looked like bullfrogs.

We left out of here on a train to go back up to Camp Blanding, Florida, where we stationed once. Just a short stay here and we were loaded on Pullman cars for the long trip to San Antonio, Texas for discharge. I will never forget how nice people up through the North Florida area were. I know when the train would pull into a town and stop, people were along the tracks by the hundreds with all types of food and drinks. They would say, "You name it and we will try to get it for you." On most of the cars was written, "Texas 36th Division." These people knew us when we were stationed in Florida. The train stopped in New Orleans for several hours and everybody was allowed to get off. Most were about drunk by the time the train left out. We pulled through Orange and Beaumont without hardly anyone noticing the train. I remember the train stopping in Houston. There were a few people that knew their boy or some lady had a husband on the train. That was about all the people around. We arrived in San Antonio and began the process of being discharged, which took about three days, I believe. I caught the tail end of the bunch that left out of Germany when I was transferred to the 63rd Division. I was discharged a day or so before the end of the Japanese War. My wife had been in Dallas for a week or so waiting for me to be discharged. I thought after

this war, we would have many years of peace. But this was of short duration.

A few short years later was the Korean conflict and now the Vietnam War. Looks like with the help the United States had given to the people of Vietnam, and now that South Vietnam has more troops in the field than the North and they are so dedicated to be free, looks like they are safe, most become interested in making money off the Americans in any way possible. I see no end to our wars, unless our government makes many changes.

I have a feeling for the combat soldier. He is underpaid for the hardships he endures. A man that is shot at day in and day out should be given more consideration than people that never see combat. In World War II, I believe the statistics were that for every front line soldier, there were about ten to twelve backing him up. So I could easily say that nine out of ten never see combat in war time. The combat man should draw twice the other and he would still be underpaid.

The 36th Infantry Division was around 14,000 men strong. It captured 175,806 enemy soldiers, had 15 Congressional Medals of Honor winners, 10 Presidential Unit Citations and suffered 27,343 casualties, killed and wounded. This would figure close to 200%. I look forward each year to attending the 36th annual reunion. Men come in from all parts of the State. Many come in from other states that served with us. We usually have it in one of the larger cities of Texas, rotating each year. This is more like a family reunion. The men in my company seem like brothers. Colonel Stovall seems like the father. He calls all of us his boys. He greets each man as he arrives with a big hug. He came by one year to visit me, seems as if he was on his way to Alabama. The reunion is on Friday, Saturday and Sunday before Labor Day on Monday. There are some big names that served in the 36th. General Earle Wheeler, for one. He attended the reunion two years ago. General Fred Walker attended most every year until his death in 1969. He wrote a book entitled "From Texas to Rome." This can be found in most school libraries in our area. There are lots of battles refought each year at the reunion.

Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

North African Reflections

by Henry Gunlock
Co. L - 142nd Infantry

Reflecting back to those days spent in North Africa, the following incidents stand out in my memory.

Walking down the ramp onto the street at Oran, Africa I was surprised to see sparrows just like the ones we have at home jumping about from one camel pile to another-scratching and pecking at their good fortune.

Marching out into the rolling plains and hills beyond the city we pitched our pup-tents and were warned to put out sentries as the Arabs were known to be notorious thieves.

Sure enough the next morning when we arose, you could look across the hills and see scattered barrack bags in every direction. Also in the days to come, you would see Arabs with bedsacks on with a hole cut out for their head and arms.

I also saw in the distance French police on motorcycles chasing them with their loot, shooting their pistols in the air. Arabs running and dodging like so many rabbits - it was an amusing sight.

We moved out and down the coast a few miles near to a small town of Arzew which was on the coast.

In the nights to follow, the air raid siren would come on and in just a few minutes the search lights pierced the night sky. The anti-aircraft guns opened up and in a short time shrapnel began to fall into our positions.

This was our initiation into practice of dodging hot metal. A skill that was to serve the survivors well in the days to come.

It has been said that, ''Wars usually kill the wrong people.''

While at Arzew a mock village was set up and my platoon put on a street-fighting demonstration after which other divisions - 34th - 45th and Patton's armored would then follow the example we set and participate. I remember one day General Patton showed up with his staff and as we stood at attention with our rifles with bayonets fixed, he walked up to me and said, ''Sgt., are

those bayonets sharp?'' I replied, ''Yes, Sir,'' at which time he proceeded to find out for himself. After moving his hand over my blade, he said,'' They damn sure are.'' They ought to have been, for we spent a lot of time with sandstones on them. In fact you could shave with them.

Marching down the road one day, we could see approaching us an Arab riding his donkey with switch in hand, moving at a brisk pace. Trailing behind him was his pregnant woman with a child on her back. As he came abreast of me I reached out and caught the rope and stopped him - pulling him off, we proceeded to set her astride the animal. Protesting very loudly, she did not want to be up there. All the time, no doubt the man was calling us every four-letter word in Arabic he knew. Turning the animal loose, they set off in a trot but they didn't go very far before he stopped the donkey and pulled her off. He then mounted himself, taking off in a lope.

One Sunday while at this camp site two of us decided we would like to have chicken instead of cold rations. As there was a French farm house in the distance where we could hear chickens cackling, we moved in and in no time with two well-placed shots with 30 cal. rifles, we had two plump ones in hand. Proceeding back to our unit, we were stopped by a Lt. and two Sgts. from the 1st Armored Division. He questioned us as to our outfit. He told us not to be shooting in that area as that was where they were camped, farther on. We said, ''OK.'' He told us that he would take no further action against us if we did so.

As we moved out and as we came into our camp, word came down. ''Gunlock, report to Company Headquarters.'' At Capt. Coker's tent was parked a jeep with two M.P.'s in it. Capt. Coker said, ''What have you two been into?'' I told him. He told us to get into the jeep with the M.P.'s. Also Lt. Barkowitz climbed on and we were driven to the barbed wire prison campground. Arriving there, we were led into the Provost Marshal's tent and standing in there was the 1st Armored Lt. who had stopped us, giving his account of the story. The Provost Colonel asked the Lt., ''Is that right?'' and the Lt. replied, ''Yes, sir.'' The Colonel said, ''Get these men back to their units and tell their C.O. to take what action he might.'' We left and after Capt. Coller heard the details, he said, ''Don't go chicken hunting and when you get that chicken cooked, bring me a piece of it.''

Another amusing thing that we did was every morning we would load up into 1½-ton trucks and ride to our street fighting area. While going thru a small town, the Arab children would run out to the edge of the street to beg. All we had to give them was some hard round candy. Which we did. As the days went on, the Arab men squatting against the buildings would jump up as we threw the candy and knock the children down to get to the goodies. When we saw this happen, I said, ''We will fix those rascals this evening when we come back through.'' Sure enough, as we rode by, some of the fellows threw out a small amount of candy and just as the Arab men got to it, I threw a yellow smoke grenade in their midst. As we went out of their sight, you could still see them running.

The Beaches

by Newton Fullbright

A woman came running from the house across the road, toward a small group of men talking about the dangers they had escaped on the beach. She approached them, yelling and pointing down the road. A private got excited and ran to Johnny Rogers, pointing at the big white house across from the orchard.

Rogers started yelling. He grabbed a squad and headed down the road, on the double. As they approached the white house on the corner, a door flew open and men in dark uniforms started coming out, hands in the air. "My God!" I said to Hand.

I had just passed the house, all alone. I could imagine a man squatting inside, a gun leveled at my head. The reason he hadn't pulled the trigger, I figured, was because somebody, from an upper window had spotted the fields full of advancing troops. Outflanked and outnumbered, they had decided, like prudent veteran soldiers, to lay low and see what happened.

As Rog and his L Company riflemen were rounding up the prisoners, about 45, black smoke blossomed suddenly above the Mt. Soprano crest. An air burst. Then another! Then two shells at once, exploding against the chalky, white face of the mountain.

It felt good to have artillery ashore. It was reassuring to feel that enemy observers on the mountain would be forced to keep their heads down if shells were exploding among them.

A jeep came racing up the road from the orchard. I recognized a major, an artillery observer, on the front seat with the driver. It went past us, racing north. Pretty soon it came speeding back. The major was standing, waving his helmet. "Tanks are coming!" he yelled. "Tanks are coming!" The jeep continued on, toward the orchard. Colonel Barnett, standing between the rails, shook his head. "Men!" he said, "lets get the hell out of here!" He turned and pointed at the Soprano crest. "That mountain top up there is our objective! Let's get to it! We haven't anything to stop tanks with. Let the artillery have them!"

Red dust hung in a cloud above the fields we had crossed, coming up from the beach. The enemy had spotted us--too late! We hoped they didn't find us now, among the olive trees. We were holding up here, on a gully-washed hillside, waiting for the Colonel to return from Regimental, back in the peach orchard. He had been called back there, for some damned fool reason. Rogers used the time to check for casualties. We had one--Private Hugh J. Tanksley, of Bloomington, Indiana, lying with a shoe off, a deep cut across the top of a swelling instep. "That damn barbed wire back there on the doddam beach!" he said. "Think you can make it to the aid station?" Rogers said. "It's back in that peach orchard, back there. "Sir," Tank said, I can damn sure try!" He hobbled off, carrying his shoe.

"One man missing!" Rogers said. "Bob Cat Staten. Anybody seen him?" We had given him up for lost when he came running up through the brush with his bazooka. "Sergeant Fulbright!" he said, "I got to get me some more of that bazooka ammunition!" His flushed red face was streaked with dirt. "Bob Cat," I said, "I don't want you getting killed!" "Don't worry about me none, Sergeant Fulbright!" he said. "Them tanks can't get to me. I got me a good position in a ditch up there! Every time them tanks start down that road I give them a round and you ought to see them turn tail and haul ass!" "Bob Cat," I said, "you know that damned bazooka is not worth a fart against a tank." "I know that, Sergeant Fulbright," he said, "but them fellows in them tanks don't know it!" I went off with him, looking for bazooka ammunition. We found some in I Company, and a private over there offered to go back with Bob Cat and help carry it. They took off on the run, back toward the beach, Bob Cat cradling his bazooka in his arms. "Bob Cat," I yelled, "I don't want you getting killed!" He turned and yelled back at me not to worry. "They can't get at me!" he said. "I got them buffaloed!"

Rogers and I strolled over to the Battalion CP in a clump of gnarled olive trees. We found company commanders and platoon sergeants assembling, waiting on the Colonel to return from Regimental CP. The talk was about the beach, but eyes were on the Soprano crest. If we meant to get up there before dark, we should be moving.

We suppressed our impatience but couldn't help being critical of Regimental for calling the Colonel back there, in the peach orchard. We had a problem to solve. From past experience we could expect little help from Regimental.

The Colonel had sent a patrol down in the little valley, between us and the foot of the mountain. It returned and a young second lieutenant flung himself on the ground with a groan. "God!" he said. "I hope I never see a sight like that again!" We looked at him, pressing his face against the ground. We looked to a sergeant coming up for explanation. "Machine gun fire," he said. "Against you guys?" "No," the sergeant said. "They caught some men from the 141st on a road." The lieutenant sat up and shook his head. "Whole company of them!" he said. "In a column of twos! Mowed them down!" The sergeant grinned and shook his head. "Looked like a patrol," he said. "Bout a dozen guys." We sat looking across the peaceful-looking little valley. Nobody spoke. Then Bowden said, "Well, one thing for sure! I hope nobody in this Battalion is stupid enough to be caught on a road, in a column of twos!"

Back at the M Company CP, an L Company man was there talking about Bob Cat's exploit with his bazooka. He was in the road with Bob Cat, he said, when the artillery major came along, yelling that tanks were coming.

"We had headed up that road," he said. "We just had time to hit a bar ditch! They were on us before we knew it! I was ducked down, far as I could get. I heard old Bob Cat rustling around and--wham! He fired that damn bazooka!" The L Company man laughed and shook his head. "Them damn tanks," he said, "turned tail and took off like a bunch of spotted ases! I started to get the hell out of there but old Bob Cat said, 'wait a minute.' The damn fool wanted to stay and fight them tanks with his damn bazooka!" "Before

I could get out, here they come again! Old Bob Cat let go a round and I saw a big ball of fire hit the lead tank. They all stopped and turned ass! I guess they thought it was a 105, or something. I had three rounds of bazooka ammunition I had been carrying for some damn fool reason, all the way up from that beach! I let Bob Cat have it and got the hell out of there!''

More reports came in, and I felt good about Bob Cat. He was my special rehabilitation project. He had come to us, a scrawny, red-headed kid from West Virginia. He had a speech impediment, he was tongue-tied and generally AWOL. None of the corporals and sergeants wanted him because his absence would leave them short a man, with more work for everybody. We were at Cape Cod when the FBI picked him up somewhere in the Midwest. After he had served his term in the brig, I asked Rogers to let me have him.

''I don't know what the hell you want with him,'' Rogers said. I had scouted around and discovered that Bob Cat was a big winner at pay day poker and crap games, any time he was in camp. Winning company, battalion, and regimental eliminations, and with as much as $3,000 burning holes in his pockets, he felt compelled to take off. I figured that a kid who won invariably at poker was no idiot. I enrolled him in a radio school the Signal Corps was conducting.

''Sergeant Fulbright,'' he said, after he had attended the school about a week, ''I want to thank you for sending me to that radio school. It's the only thing I've done in the Army I cared anything about. I paid $500 to take this course, just before they got me in the Army. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to complete it.''

He graduated with honors. He gave me no trouble in Company Headquarters. He was never AWOL again.

He survived his one-man battle with Mark IV tanks, but got no credit for it. After the war I read an ''official'' account of it, by the War Department's Historical Service Division. Naval historian Dr. Samual Eliot Morrison drew from it, almost verbatum, for this account in his **History of Naval Operations in World War II**:

At 10:20, 13 Mark IVs rumbled down the highway from the north, threatening the 142nd Regimental Command Post, which had been set up in the Capaccio Railroad Station, a few miles north of Paestum. A DUKW pulling an 105mm howitzer arrived just in time to shatter two of them; a third was destroyed by an Invader dive-bomber; gunfire from a naval vessel, probably the H.M.S. Abercrombie (with 15-inch guns), accounted for two more, and the rest retreated.

So much for ''official'' history.

My First Introduction To Combat

By Robert F. Spencer, Clark County, Indiana

Served in Bn Headquarters: F, G, and H Companies, 2nd Bn, 143 Reg., 36th Inf. Div,; October 1943-1945

The 36th Division suffered numerous casualties while making the invasion of southern Italy and I was among the first replacement troops. My rank at that time was 2nd Lieutenant. I was assigned to F Company, 143 Infantry, and for the next several weeks spent regrouping, re-supplying, and conducting extensive training; preparing for the next combat mission.

On November 15th, the 2nd Bn, 143 Infantry, received orders to relieve 3rd Division troops on Mt. Rotondo, on this day I received my initiation to enemy fire. The relief was made at night traveling down a secondary road with one column on each side of the road keeping the men only close enough to see his buddy in front, therefore, reducing the chances of one shell causing excessive casualties in the event we were hit by an artillery barrage.

As we moved down the road, incoming artillery could be heard and as we moved toward Mt. Rotondo we kept getting closer and closer to the impact area and I was becoming very concerned that we were being lead into the sounding artillery barrage. About this time I observed a rather tall soldier moving up through our columns, when he came closer I recognized him as Colonel Denholm, our Bn Commander. He slowed enough to chat with me and then moved on toward the head of the column in his seemingly non-chalant manner.

Colonel Denholm's attitude relieved some of the concern and fear that had built up as we approached the incoming artillery. This taught me a great lesson that when the going was tough, to be visible to my men as often as possible. We kept moving but a short time later we were lead off the road into the hills away from the impact area. Later I learned the incoming artillery was from the Germans who were shelling a bridge near Mt. Rotondo. We rested for awhile but were soon on our way up again. On the continued journey up the

mountain I had difficulty keeping the men together and moving as the terrain was steep, rocky, and covered with scrub brush making it easy for the men to lose sight of each other and therefore running the risk of becoming lost.

Eventually we reached the troops we were relieving and located the Platoon Sergeant in command. After 48 years I have never forgotten his face. It was haggard, covered with black whiskers, the look from his eyes was difficult to describe; wide and glaring, resembling a wild man reflecting the hell he had been through and seen taking and securing Mt. Rotondo.

The Sergeant quickly showed me his defensive position. he then gathered his men and said, "We are GONE." After placing my men in position I was ordered to search the area for dead GI's and have them carried to the foot of the mountain. This was a sad and unpleasant task, yet very necessary. Several dead Germans were in our area but having our own to remove we had no time to properly take care of them, all we could do was to bury them in shallow graves on top of the mountain. I have often wondered if they ever were found and given a proper burial. While on the mountain, our supplies were only K rations, water and ammunition with very limited amounts of everything. All supplies had to be hand carried up the mountain to our positions. This is not uncommon in regards to most combat situations.

Our outfit stayed on Mt. Rotondo in a defensive position for 7 days being harassed by artillery fire and enemy patrols causing several casualties in the company. The one that touched me the most was the death of our C.O., Lt. Buster, who was killed by an artillery shell. His death brought the reality of war much closer to me and many others in the company. Lt. Buster was a good officer and I sorely missed his command. The company and especially myself, respected him very much.

Upon finally being relieved we moved down the mountain to a bivouac area in the rear of the combat zone for rest and supplies. This was also done at night on very dark and muddy roads. The weather was uncomfortably cool and before long we were again subjected to an artillery barrage which dispersed us into all directions looking for any type of cover for protection. When the shelling ceased I collected the men together as best I could in the darkness and quickly continued toward the bivouac area. Upon reaching the area I checked the platoon and discovered one of my sergeants missing; Sergeant Pakoski. He was located, but for me, yet another sad blow, Sgt. Pakoski had been killed during the shelling. In the moments that followed I reminisced about the sergeant. He had been a favorite of mine, very efficient and outgoing, enjoyable to be around even in these conditions. But I also remembered that just before we were sent on the Mt. Rotondo assignment, Sgt. Pakoski had received a "Dear John" letter which had hurt his morale and sent him into combat in a sad and unhappy state of mind. Still he never faltered in his command.

This article is not intended to portray any heroics, but to describe tactics and perils of hardship to soldiers in combat. Many GI's who were in combat can still today relate to what I have written.

Puzzling Behavior

by James Erickson

Away back in the spring of 1943 I graduated from a northern Minnesotan high school. World War 2 was in full swing so it seemed that the ink on my diploma was hardly dry befoe a draft notice arrived in the mail. One of the neighbors received his the same day. A part of the community organized a send-off party for the both of us. After reaching the reception center at Fort Snelling we went our separate ways. I wound up in the ASTP for a while but that was disbanded. Then I was sent to far off Italy to be cannoned and foddered with the 36th Division. I lost all contact with my co-inductee.

In 1946 after the war I heard he was home so I went to see him. I was greeted at the door and invited in for coffee and doughnuts. Then he asked me what was on my mind? I reminded my neighbor that since we were drafted into the army on the same day and then separated, it might be interesting to review our experiences. At this point he began shouting at me so I made a quick exit. Puzzled by this strange behavior I went down to the big hall where the old-timers played cribbage. I told them what had occurred. One fellow responded, ''Haven't you heard what happened?'' He was with the infantry in France and stepped on a 'Bouncing Betsy' mine. It sort of put him at a disadvantage with the ladies.'' Since my former neighbor has been dead for many years, I can tell this story.

James Erickson
E 141 INF LM 817

The Fighting 36th HISTORICAL Quarterly

THE FIGHTING 36th HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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

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Service Record of the 36th Infantry Division in World War II

Activated 25 November 1940 at Camp Bowie, Brownwood, Texas, they were the first American troops to invade Hitler's Europa at Salerno, Italy, 9 September 1943.

The division made two other amphibious assault landings at Anzio and Southern France.

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

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

The 36th suffered over 27,000 casualties, third highest of any World War II division.