

The Fighting 36th
HISTORICAL
Quarterly



MG Fred L. Walker at Rabat

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The 36th Quarterly Not Dead; Just Combined with T-Patcher

The 36th Division Historical Quarterly will take on a new look from now on. It has not been abolished. The Board of Directors of the Association decided to continue the familiar format and to incorporate it, instead, into the 36th Division Newsletter, The T-Patcher.

The decision was first made at the May Board Meeting. Your editor initially strongly opposed the termination of the Q, feeling that abandonment of publication would be a statement to the membership that preservation of the division's legacy would be abandoned as well. Your editor again brought the matter before the Board at its August meeting due to the hue and cry of loyal Q subscribers and faithful historical writers who submitted fascinating stories of the 36th Division in camp and combat. And again, the board stood by its earlier decision. Considerations leading to that action were; subscriber income fell short of supporting the publication, too many were being printed (as mandated by the board), the number of manuscripts submitted was declining, and the burden of editing was heavy on the volunteer T-Patcher.

The 36th Division Historical Quarterly was the brainchild of the late Bill Jary, T-Patcher, war correspondent, and editor of the T-Patcher Newsletter during World War II and in the years after the war. The Q carried out the preeminent purpose for which the 36th Division Association was formed, "to preserve the history and legacy of the 36th Division."

The Q was supported by subscriptions to lessen the dependence on the Association itself. Loyal Q subscribers have made a lasting contribution to Association history for the past 15 years. The Association has been able to subsidize the publication.

Benefits of merging the two publications:

- 1. The T-Patcher will continue to carry news and features as before, and to be a communications link among all members.*
- 2. A quarterly supplement will be merged into the T-Patcher so that Q stories will be distributed to all members.*
- 3. As to dwindling manuscripts, stories over the past 15 years, read only by Q subscribers, can be reprinted for the benefit of all members, 90 percent of whom have not seen them.*
- 4. A plan has been developed to observe over the next two years the 50th Battle Anniversaries of WWII; writers have been encouraged to find and write stories of these actions. Personal stories from all members are solicited as well.*
- 5. A study of plans for professional editing and publishing was initiated by the Association president to lend permanence and stability.*
- 6. Publication costs can be minimized with a single editor and a single publisher.*

Gordon Rose, Editor

1992-1993
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FIGHTING 36th HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

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March 27, 1944

Wounded T-Patchers Return to Texas

(Speech of Walter R. Humphrey to B&PW Club)

Tonight I'm going to talk about the 36th Division and the plans for a memorial in its honor in Temple...but more than anything else, I am going to talk about a date...a date that should be ringed on every calendar in Texas...a date written in blood and death and courage.

The date is September 9, 1943. May no Texan ever forget it is a date for history. It is a date for free men of all the world to look back upon, in grateful memory of the men who hallowed it.

Sept. 9, 1943: The 36th Division...90 percent Texan, but carrying with it, too, a mixture of brave young men from New York and Pennsylvania and Oklahoma and many another state...hit the beaches at Salerno in the dark hours before the dawn on that morning in history. The army of the United States began in the morning darkness of that day its invasion of Europe.

The 36th Division didn't rise and fall on a single bloody day. But no army ever had a greater test on its first day in action, nor on the days that followed. A wounded corporal, Homer Read, told me that for five days every communique said "Fight or Drown." It was bazookas and courage vs. the 16th German Panzers.

Many, many men fell...men from almost every town in Texas. The little town of Caldwell had more than 50 casualties. Belton lost more than half of its company.

Who were these men who made Sept. 9 a date for history? Who were these men we have seen fit to honor with a memorial to which men and women down the years always may come to refresh their own courage?

Primarily they are our neighbors, the young men of the Texas National Guard which, in both wars, became the 36th Division. The roots of this division are in the tradition of the Alamo and San Jacinto.

Down through the years, Texas guardsmen have served in every war, in local emergencies, in border disturbances to quell Indian raids. They fought in the war for Texas independence, in the war between the states, the Spanish American War, in both world wars.

Their organization was built up in its early years by the adjutant generals of Texas, who commanded them under the governor of the state, their commander-in-chief.

Brig. Gen John A. Hulen actually organized the 36th division and commanded it first. In World War I Texas troops were mobilized at Camp Bowie, Fort Worth, where the 36th was created by War Department order of July 18, 1917, from guardsmen of Texas and Oklahoma. The shoulder patch of the 36th Division perpetuates the memory of that World

War I partnership, the arrowhead of cerulean blue representing Oklahoma, the superimposed "T" of olive drab representing Texas.

The first units arrived in France, May 31, 1918, the last on July 12. The division first was attached to the French Fifth Army, then the French Fourth on October 3. Three days later, it began the relief of the American Second Division, launched its attack October 8, losing 86 officers and 1,227 men that day. It remained in the Meuse-Argonne drive until the end of October and was credited, among other things, with freeing the city of Rheims. Its casualties totaled 5,000.

After it came home, the 36th was forgotten for a while. No memorial was erected to it.

The National Guard was reorganized in November, 1920, and on December 14 of that year orders again were issued for the formation of the 36th Division under Major Gen. John A. Hulen again. It performed many peacetime services and then began in November, 1940, its preparation again for its role in Europe...and again it was at Camp Bowie, but this time in Brownwood.

Sharply trained by Maj. Gen. Claude V. Birkhead and then by Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker at Bowie, Camp Blanding, Fl., and Camp Edwards, Mass., it sailed in April, 1943, for its date with destiny.

It has lost many of its members to other organizations and had added many new replacements from all over the union. It lost, permanently, the 131st Field Artillery which was detached in November, 1941, and sent to the Philippines only to arrive after the Japanese had invaded the islands. It moved on to Java and there became truly a "lost battalion," with many of its men undoubtedly prisoners of the Japanese and casualties unknown. Others of its original units have distinguished themselves.

Then came Sept. 9. Texas parents suspected their sons were making that beachhead and as weeks rolled around, their suspicions were confirmed by those dreaded notifications from the war department. But so far as the world knew, the 36th Division was not fighting in Italy until the story was broken by the Temple Telegram and through it to Associated Press newspapers everywhere on the morning of November 15. I have met the half dozen convoys of wounded veterans of the 36th Division returned to McCloskey General Hospital by ship, plane and railroad. I have heard their stories and have seen what happened at the battles of Salerno, Volturno, and Rapido, Cassino.

I think I know as well as anyone why we ought to build a very fine memorial to the men of the 36th. This wasn't done for them after World War I and nobody had made any serious gestures toward doing it for them this time.

But when Harry Withers, managing editor of the Dallas Morning News, speaking to a dinner we held here February 8 honoring 50 of these wounded men from all over Texas, suggested this memorial, the suggestion found fertile ground in the hearts of the people of this area.

That's why we're launched on a campaign to build this memorial at Temple. That's why we've asked the cooperation and participation of outstanding business and professional men and women from throughout the state. We're enthusiastic and red hot for it here because we've seen these men of the 36th without arms and legs, otherwise crippled and wounded, and we've seen the light of appreciation in their eyes when we've told them our plans.

These men, I assure you, are our strongest boosters. Not for themselves, but for their buddies they left fighting or fallen on the beaches or on the hills and in the valleys of Italy.

What have we done? We've organized a campaign to raise funds to build the memorial and we've started soliciting the funds we'll need. We've solicited the aid of the Texas Society of Architects, whose committee will direct a statewide competition for the best design for the memorial. Temple men have offered a \$1,000 cash prize for the best plans.

And we have organized a state-wide 36th Division Memorial Commission of distinguished Texans, 27 of them, including the governor of the state and two former governors.

This commission will see that the interest of the men of the 36th and of the people of Texas are represented properly in this memorial which will be built around a museum and Little Theater-type auditorium. They will be custodians of the money we shall raise.

Why should we build a memorial? Why should the people of Texas support this memorial?

It is because of Cpl Merrill Varner of Milford whom I welcomed home to Texas as he lay in his bunk on an army hospital train waiting for a litter to remove him to McCloskey General Hospital. He had left both legs in Italy and I was embarrassed to ask him if he minded that report that. He didn't mind, because his folks already knew.

It is because of him that we should see this memorial built.

It is because of Capt. Henry L Waskow of Belton, whose body was brought down an Italian mountain on the back of a mule. "Never have I crossed the trail of a man as beloved as Captain Henry Waskow of Belton, Texas," wrote Ernie Pyle.

It is for Sgt. Charles E. Kelly of Pittsburgh, a fighting Pennsylvanian who found himself in fighting company. He got the 36th's first Congressional Medal of Honor. He killed 40 Germans.

We're building this memorial for men like Kelly. For men like Private Wallace Everett of Dayton, Tenn., who spent 48 hours on the north bank of the Rapido River. No Allied soldier has spent longer! Everett, who said "Texas boys fight as good as Tennessee boys," left a leg on the north bank of the Rapido.

We're building this memorial for men like Col. Hal Jones and Capt. Bill Yates and many another Texan who is fighting the rest of the war from a German prison camp. For boys like the Goad twins.

It's for boys like fair-faced Jesse Stojanek of Little River who lay all day on a field under artillery barrage with his left hip torn by shrapnel.

It's for men like popular Jack Akins of Tulsa, who led a company of medics from Fort Worth and Paris. You know how Capt. Akins lost his leg? He lost it while treating a German officer on the battlefield. "Poor comrade," said the German when Akins fell.

It's for men like Corp. Raymond Y. Harris here in Temple, machinegunned in both legs north of Naples. He invaded Italy twice, once at Salerno, once north of Naples.

We're building this memorial for Capt. Alfred Laughlin, superintendent of schools at Moody. Laughlin held a town until every man in his company was killed or wounded.

And for the Gingles twins of Cleveland, TX, one wounded and back home, and one still fighting. But the one who came home didn't come until he had taken care of a Nazi who had killed his buddy on patrol, Sgt. Melvin Sparks of a team of Kansas twins.

It's for Master Sgt. Clinton Eaton of Amarillo who has fought in two wars and made his way far in the Italian peninsula to Nola. On his finger he wears a ring put there by an old lady of Nola in gratitude for liberation.

It's for Sgt. John W. Whittaker of Fort Worth who, with a single 75 millimeter cannon, repulsed five German tank attacks on the 36th Division staff headquarters at Salerno.

This memorial is for men like Lieut. Col. Keith Dodgen who used to head coach the Temple wildcats to glory, who was wounded but came back to command a battalion in action and to keep on fighting.

It's for Sgt. Bob Chute, a Bell County farm boy who received the Distinguished Service Cross for leading a small unit and capturing 17 Germans.

It's for Capt. Carl Bayne of Yoakum, captured by the Nazis, escaping from a speeding train, wandering through the hills of Italy for 35 days to fight again and to be killed fighting.

It's for Private John Z. Bell of Killeen who thought the landing at Salerno was a maneuver but who fought through two beachhead operations only to fall at Altavilla.

It's for Captain Stophan of Galveston who spoke German so well he talked his trapped company of men right through German lines back to safety.

This memorial is for Private Wallace Watson of Winters who never saw daylight of Sept. 9, although he took part in the invasion. He lost his left eye before dawn.

It's for Private George Pollock of Groesbeck who told me if the Nazis counter-attack of Sept. 13 had kept up, "the 36th would have been pushed to the sea."

It's for Private Clayton Honeycutt of Pendleton who is getting around now but was mowed down on the beach by machinegun fire which perforated his ankles.

And for Corp. Jack F. McPherson of Troy, killed while protecting his company from counter-attacks. He won't return to his folks at home, but in his place will come a Silver Star, small compensation of a grateful government. That is about all.

And for thousands of others. I couldn't begin to name even the men you know. They made Sept. 9 a date not to be forgotten, and their battlefield in Italy is more famous for us than it ever was made by Caesar, Hannibal or Napoleon.

The General's Lady and the 49th Armored Band

by
Gordon A. Rose, K-143

This, until now, is an untold story related by Mrs. Clara Kerr, widow of BG Clayton P. Kerr, (or "Clayton Price," as she always says), in a conversation with Gordon Rose and Payne and Liz Rucker who visited her in her Dallas apartment where she still treasures memorabilia of her husband, a great T-Patcher general.

Generals Clayton Price Kerr and Fred L. Walker shared responsibility for the reorganization of the 49th Armored Division shortly after World War II, but it was



The General's Flag - Mrs. Clara Kerr exhibits the two-star flag belonging to her husband, Major General Clayton Price Kerr, in what she called her "War Room," which also contains other honors and promotions earned by the T-Patcher officer.

diminutive Clara Kerr who put the final element into the postwar 49th organization chart.

Gen. Walker stayed at the Kerrs' Dallas home to assist in the reorganization, and sometimes their planning and talking took them into the late hours. Clara usually hovered around the two officers, bringing coffee, cookies and whatever snacks they needed to keep going. She often overheard the conversations, and as a result, she made a terrific single contribution not published until now.

On the last day before the deadline, as the officers were finalizing the table of organization for official submission, Gen. Walker scrutinized the document one last time. His eyes rose slowly from the chart, and he turned to Gen. Kerr.

"Clay," said Gen. Walker, "I've looked over the final tables of organization and I have found a serious omission."

"Fred," said Gen. Kerr, "I feel sure we've covered everything; we've gone over these charts several times, the tank requirements, engineers, medics, artillery, signal, headquarters for all units, inventory, etc. What possibly could be missing?"

"A band, Clay, I see here the 49th Armored does not have a band," said Walker, "and we've simply got to get one before the day is over. We're out of time."

"Where in the world can we get a band? Time is short; we need one at the armory by tonight," said Kerr with worried excitement in his voice. The two officers tapped their pencils as they silently pondered the vexing problem.

Then from the corner of the room came a clear, non-military voice, "Perhaps I can help, gentlemen," said petite Clara Kerr, who overheard the discussion as she arrived to pour coffee.

"Honey," said her husband gently, "These are heavy and intricate military matters, and I appreciate your interest; but...well, how do you think you, a school teacher, can help reorganize a National Guard division?" Then he and Gen. Walker sat back to hear her plan. Wise generals, these, as it turned out.

"At least I think I can get a band," she said, then she explained her strategy to the T-Patcher officers.

"Just give me time to make some phone calls, and I will have you a band," said Clara. "Move over, Clayton Price, and let me sit there near the telephone."

Reacting quickly to her husband's slow, uneasy nod of permission, Clara dialed the phone and began to work.

She first called Boude Story Elementary School where she had been teaching. (The eyebrows of the two Generals raised as she asked for the band director). "Clara," softly renonstrated her husband, "a band from an elementary school?"

"Clayton Price," she whispered to him with a phone in her ear, "please let me finish." He did, and she completed her call.

Clara's school band director, a friend of the Southern Methodist University's Mustang Band director, at her insistence, agreed to call SMU about the National Guard "opportunity" for the college's musicians .

"Please tell your boys that there are openings for musicians in the National Guard band; they'll get paid, and if they are interested, they must report to the National Guard Armory tonight at seven o'clock," Clara told the band director. "Tonight's the deadline."

Sure enough, at 7 o'clock that evening, about 12-15 SMU student musicians

reported to the armory, filled out enlistment forms and were sworn in. Generals Walker and Kerr congratulated the new recruits as they returned salutes and welcomed them to military life. Thus, thanks to Clara, was born the postwar 49th Armored Division Band.

The two generals appreciated how this tiny woman's dedication, enthusiasm, networking, creative thinking, and persistence under deadline pressure yielded such needed and beneficial results in plugging the gap in 49th's organizational chart. The division's table of organization, now complete with a lady's finishing touch, was submitted and approved.

Gratitude for Clara's action was expressed many times thereafter when the 49th Armored Band, seeing her in the audience, would dedicate a military march in her honor, undoubtably, John Phillip Sousa's stirring, *The Stars and Stripes Forever*.

Worldwartwoveterans.org Incident in a Lumber Camp

by

Gordon Rose, K-143

What could be the most beautiful and enduring memory in the world is that experience of a wounded super-patriotic GI returning aboard a troopship in New York harbor of seeing, for the first time, the greatest pin-up in the world, the Statue of Liberty.

Another, meaningful landmark to a Texan was the neon "Flying Red Horse" (Pegasus) atop the Mobil Building in Dallas. We didn't feel we were HOME until we saw that WINGED HORSE. Coming home, we all cheered, just as though it was the Statue of Liberty.

I reported to Camp Maxey at Paris, near the Oklahoma border, and was assigned to the 105th Battalion Infantry Advanced Training Center. I learned that I was to "infantryized" (my term) a bunch of Air Force guys. They had been released to the Infantry since there was an overabundance of enlisted guys in the Air Force and fewer in the Infantry due to combat losses.

I was called into the Camp Commander's office to be told by the Colonel that the 7th War Loan Drive wanted enlisted Infantrymen with battle experience and honors, and with an IQ of 120 or above. I was recommended.

The purpose of the War Loan Drive was twofold, to sell bonds and to highlight the impact of the Infantry in the war effort. Previous drives had focused on the glory of the swashbuckling Air Force, the "Hell on Wheels" tanks, the Navy's PT boats, cruisers and destroyers, and the Marines. As the casualties from Africa, Europe and the Pacific atolls began increasing the number of Gold Star Mothers all over the nation, the National War Finance Committee might have felt that somehow the story of some important fighting element was missing...the Infantry.

Forty-eight rifle toters, one for each state, reported to the U. S. Army War College in Washington, D. C. for "training." We were to be coached on the purpose of the War Loan

Drive, and on the refinements of dress and speech so that we would be proper representatives of the War Loan effort. Guess they thought all we infantrymen looked and talked like Willie and Joe.

As we gathered for our first session, I was about to inch by a small guy standing in the doorway when he tugged on my sleeve.

"Here, soldier," he said, "let me see that badge."

I then saw the stars on the shoulders, the fruit salad on his uniform, and recognized General Jonathan Wainwright, CMH, who commanded Bataan after MacArthur was ordered out, and was a POW for three years. He fingered the Combat Infantryman's Badge on my chest and said, "That's the one badge I wish I had."

Our group listened to an officer, slovenly dressed, medals askew, and in a halting manner, told us how to make a speech. He droned on and on, nearly putting us to sleep. At the coffee break, we all agreed that fellow was a bimbo; he was terrible!

But how wrong we were! The next hour was memorable. The officer again took the podium with a neatly pressed uniform, decorations in place, stood proudly erect and then made one of the greatest speeches we had ever heard...about sacrifice, patriotism, the flag, principles of freedom, how despotism had to be stopped, etc., etc. As he finished, we didn't know whether to cry, stand and salute, or re-up for another five years. We then found out who he was. He was James Warner Bellah, historian, screen writer and professional speaker, and the author of "She Wore A Yellow Ribbon," "Fort Apache," (remember John Wayne?), and dozens of other films and screenplays.

We were assigned to each of the states. Some of the guys wanted to be assigned to their home (or nearby) state and the officers did their best to accommodate us. Having no home to go to, I chose "any state in the Northwest." Another Texan (based in another state) chose Texas. Idaho was open, so to Boise I flew.

I was picked up by a man named Ted Wegner, an insurance man, the volunteer State Chairman of the Idaho 7th War Loan Drive, who took me to the Idanha Hotel. I had breakfast with the state committee and a Mr. Schoonover, a banker. (At the Idanha, on April 12, I was crushed by the news of Pres. Roosevelt's death).

There was no formal schedule or itinerary, but Ted was well enough known throughout the state to easily find a group that would stay still for a GI to talk about the Infantry and bonds.

With Ted as a chauffeur and introducer, we traveled all over the state. What a beautiful state it was, with mountains, 200-foot waterfalls, Snake River, 5,000-foot deep canyons, and potholes in asphalt roads after thaws. This young Texas boy was overwhelmed.

Speeches: To a nurses graduating class (heavy on wounds and medics), Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs (tough war talk), a Boy Scout Jamboree (compared to Nazi youth program), and many others. Once I talked to Indians on their reservation, translated by another GI who was a tribal Indian on furlough visiting his home tribe near Pocatello. Ted even introduced me at a Lutheran Church on Sunday.

"I want to see Couer d'Alene," I told Ted. "Let's go," he said, "the fishing up there is great."

On the way up the panhandle, Ted would stop for an hour or two and do some fly-fishing, his favorite sport. We spent one night in his hideaway mountain cabin. (On that trip, I hit a penny jackpot (\$5) in a small cafe in the mountains. 500-to-1!)

I spoke to miners in the zinc and lead mines, and had the opportunity to go deep

in a mine with a gang of workers.

At a stop, Ted looked over his notes for other places for me and mumbled, "We just as well skip that one," as he "X-ed" out his map.

"Which one?" I asked. "The Day Lumber Company," he said. "I took a Marine Corps major up there a year or so ago and they literally threw him out of there; those guys are mean! They don't want to hear anything about buying bonds to support the war."

"Then we're going to the Day Lumber Company," I said, "They need an education."

Reluctantly, Ted drove to the company's headquarters. We were told there was no auditorium for a speech, but that we could go to a quonset hut used by the lumbermen for lunch or relaxation.

At the hut we found 30 or 40 lumbermen having lunch on carpenter benches. A company official introduced Ted; he, in turn, introduced me to talk about the Infantry and the War Bond effort.

Those guys were really interested in my "mud, mules and mountains" talk, about Salerno, Altavilla, San Pietro, Anzio, Velletri and Rome. Then, something strange happened just as I began to talk about War Bonds. About half of them stood up and started for the door. I couldn't believe it! (I think a shift whistle might have been sounded which I didn't hear.) Then I recalled what Ted had told me about the major and their lifestyle.

"Sit down, you bastards!" I yelled, "You have heard just part of the story and you're going to hear the rest. Sit down!"

Puzzled, they sat down. Ted was getting nervous.

"I have heard how you guys don't give a damn about your country while the GI's who are doing the fighting and dying for you," I said. "You work your butts off during the spring, summer and fall, then you grab your paycheck, and with a bottle and a broad, you lay around all winter, go broke, then come back and sponge off the company until the spring thaw."

"I'm not asking you to enlist and fight a war. All I'm telling you is that you should do your part, a damned little part, in making sure those soldiers, in the mountains of Italy, the hedgerows in France, and on the beaches in the South Pacific, guys younger than you, who are risking their lives to have enough ammunition, bandages for their wounds, body bags, and enough food to keep up their strength to protect your lousy hides!"

Before I finished the tongue-lashing, Ted, sensing danger, had quietly moved behind me and crouched behind a desk.

"Come on, Ted, let's get the hell out of here," I said.

As we approached the door, I heard a voice, "Hey, Sergeant, wait a minute!" I felt a hand on my shoulder. Well, (thinking about the major), here it comes!

I turned around swinging and hit the big guy in the chest, knocking him off balance. He had already pulled back because of the suddenness and surprise at my reaction. He backpedaled trying to regain his balance, stumbled over a bench and slammed against the quonset wall. Everyone stayed put without a sound... watching.

"Look here, soldier," the mountain man said, as got to his feet, "I don't want to hurt you. I just want to know how to go about getting those war bonds." I was relieved! I only weighed about 150; he was about 210. I had no chance in a fight.)

"Go talk to your paymaster!" I shouted, "Frankly I don't give a damn whether you or any others buy a single bond. I'm sick and disgusted with the whole damn lot of you."

Then a shaking State War Bond Chairman and I, Ted first, left and got into the car. On the long drive back, Ted said, "Gordon, you could have gotten us killed back there!" I replied, "There's a tougher war going on, Ted."

A couple of days later, there was a message in my box at the Idanha Hotel to report to Mr. Schoonover's bank. Ted picked me up, and as we entered the bank, there was a group of about 15 huddled with Mr. Schoonover. When they saw us, they smiled and softly patted their hands together. It was the State Committee.

"We want to thank you two gentlemen," said Schoonover, "As a result of your appearance at the Day Lumber Company, for the first time in all our War Bond efforts, they have bought bonds. They have just bought \$40,000 worth of bonds, and 85% of their employees have enrolled in a bond-a-month plan. Congratulations!"

After spending an extra month in Idaho at their request, I flew to Salt Lake City, June 30, 1945 where I received a Citation from the Commanding General of the Army War College and Ninth Service Command's Commanding General Shedd at Fort Douglas.

For the first time, Idaho met its war bond quota. The citation stated, "numerous letters of commendation were received from organizations throughout the state" and that "a large percentage of war bond sales can be attributed to your numerous appearances. "You have done an excellent public relations job in acquainting the people of Idaho with the INFANTRY since the Chairman of the War Finance Committee for the State of Idaho has asked that I particularly commend you on your enthusiasm, appearance and attitude."

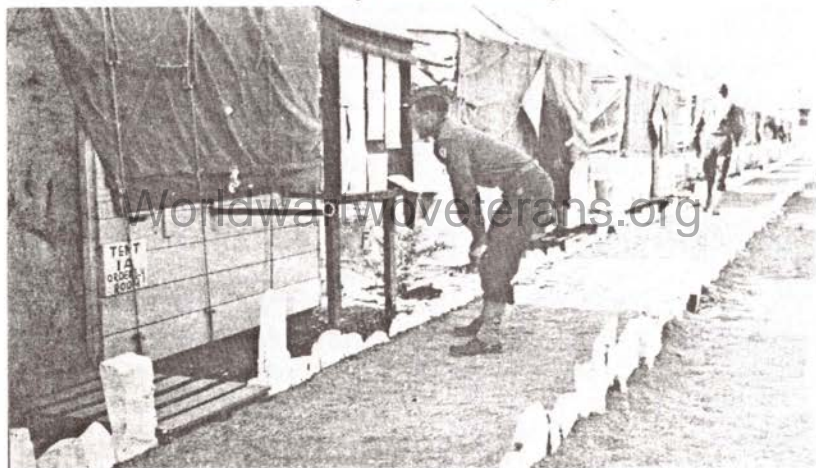
Back in Dallas, I had to stay over in a hotel because Greyhound was on strike. I reported two days late at Camp Maxey, and was charged AWOL by some idiot Lieutenant and confined to barracks.

In a couple of days, the Camp Commander released me. He had been ordered to have a full dress parade in my honor, and to read the citation to the troops.

(It didn't seem quite proper for the honoree to be in the brig on such an occasion.)

Bowie by Burrage

Photo by Richard Burrage



Guard or KP Duty?

ARMY COOKS

by

Larry Sparks

At a not too distant reunion of the 143rd Infantry, in Waco, a man entered the hall and began to wander over to the gathering place of the men of Co. K. Across the floor friendly shouts and cheers greeted their companion of long ago.

"Hey, gut robber!" grinned one of the aged-warriors.

"Look! It's cookie!" pointed another.

"Hey, do you know where I could get a good meal?" questioned yet another "T-Patcher."

The years and the lines faded from the faces of the 36th Division men who had gathered to remember. The slightly stooped shoulders squared as their backs became ramrod straight again: the fire and youth returned to these "strong men armed" as it had been some 45 years ago in Italy.

"Why, you boys are the only company that had fresh baked bread at the front!" the man laughed as he returned the good-natured ribbing; and with that greeting the old friendships had been renewed, and it was time to remember.

Napoleon was credited with saying that an army marches on its stomach; however, he failed to add that the men who set the cadence of that march are the army cooks. T-Sgt Carroll Sparks was one of those army cooks.

Sgt. Sparks' Story as Told to his Son

I had been a cook at Tiner's Cafe on the square in Waco, before enlisting in the National Guard in September, 1940. Captain George Creasey would come by the cafe to eat. He knew that I worked there as the cook.

One day after enlisting, we were drilling on a parking lot at 12th and Washington: back and forth, back and forth, when Captain Creasey came by for inspection. He moved up and down the rank and file of men and stopped at me.

"What are you doing?" the Captain asked.

"I'M A DRILLIN' SIR!" I replied.

"Like hell, you're our cook," he smiled and thus assigned me as the company cook: that also ended my basic training. I ended up spending 18 months overseas in combat without any formal basic training. (See Historical Quarterly-Spring 1985-Vol V No. 1 "Escape from Altavilla" pp. 40-44. See Historical Quarterly-Winter 1992-Vol. XII No. 4 "What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?" pp. 8-24.)

After I rotated back to the States in August, 1944, I was reassigned to a different outfit. They found out that I had not completed basic training, and decided that I had to complete it. I told them that I would go out and watch them, but I wasn't going to drill. So one day during bayonet practice the Drill Instructor called me over. I had been sitting under

a tree watching the rest of the boys go through the drills.

"Sparks, show 'em what you men did with your bayonets in Italy."

"Well, this is what I did with mine," and I took it and tossed it away. "That's just a bunch of extra weight to carry, and if you get close enough to stick somebody, you're gonna shoot 'em first." I found out real quick that the outfit I had been reassigned to was fixing to go overseas, once was enough for me, and I managed to get out. I rotated home in August, 1944 and was discharged December, 27th 1944.

After being mobilized the 143rd moved from Waco to Brownwood; however, I was sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to baker's school where I stayed for 3 months. Afterwards, I caught up with Co. K at Camp Blanding, Florida. In 1943, we were sent to Camp Edwards, Mass. and trained for amphibious landings on Martha's Vineyard. Then on April Fool's Day, I boarded a ship for overseas and headed for North Africa. We crossed the Atlantic on a converted luxury-liner, The Casablanca; it's former run was from New York to Havana. The ship had mahogany decks and rails. During the crossing, I worked below decks in the butcher's shop and would sleep during the day.

In a war, you are not constantly fighting the enemy; however, the daily routine of life has to continue and being a cook is almost a constant danger. Not so much from the enemy, but from your own troops. The combat infantryman is in a bad situation, to say the least. He is deprived of nearly all forms of comfort and civilization that he has known. We, as cooks, tried to give a little piece of home and comfort by providing the best meals that we could, with what we had. There are a couple of incidents that stick in my mind.....

Thanksgiving in Italy 1943

I believe we were near a town called Venafro. The company was provided with some frozen turkeys for the traditional Thanksgiving Day meal. The frozen birds arrived and we set them out to thaw. Well, a strong Italian wind blew in and scattered our turkeys everywhere. After reclaiming them from the Italian countryside, the cooks got down to the business at hand. We decided to make dressing to go along with the meal; however, several key ingredients were missing. So we improvised. We had to make do with what we had, so cornmeal, powdered eggs, and several other substitutes ended up making the dressing to make the Thanksgiving Day meal complete. We fed the men in shifts under a rock cliff for protection from the German artillery. (See photo in 36th Division Pictorial History.)

Rock-Hard Bread

The boys in the company needed some fresh bread. We could get bread from the bakery but it was usually rock-hard. Well, we didn't have the necessary ingredients to make bread. So we would go down to the supply depot and bribe the quartermasters with bottles of cognac in exchange for 100 lbs of flour and some yeast. The boys would throw it over the fence to us. There were about four of us this particular time, and we threw our supplies into a jeep and headed back to the front. Some M.P.'s had seen us and were in hot pursuit. After a short distance, they stopped us.

"You boys gonna sell that stuff on the Black Market?" the M.P.'s questioned us. They thought we were going to sell it to the Italians.

"Hell, No! We're gonna eat it. You wanna go back up to the front with us and

watch?" There was certain edge to our tone as we replied.

They declined the invitation and Co. K had bread that night. Our loaf pans were made out of spam cans cut lengthwise, and the Engineers made us some baking trays out of a piece of flat steel from a tank.

They welded some legs on it so we could slide them into the field range. After the bread was baked, we sliced it so that every man in the company would have one piece. At that particular time we were down to less than 180 men, and we had exactly the same number of slices of bread. Well, Captain Wittmann comes through the line and wants two pieces of bread.

"Sorry, Captain, we only have enough bread for each man one slice," I informed him.

"I told you, that I wanted two pieces!" he said.

"Well, after every man has been served, and if someone doesn't want their slice, you can have it," I told him. Every man in the outfit deserved to be treated equally, whether they were an enlisted man or an officer, and that's what we did.

Tack Walker (T-Sgt Clyde "Tack" Walker) would come by and ask, "Do you have any extra for my men?"

"Oh, hell, Tack, you just want it for yourself," I would grin and tell him. Tack and I had grown up together. His father's and my father's farms were adjoining. In fact, Tack and I enlisted together on the same night. Actually, there were six of us from Gholson who joined up that night; Tack, Sam E. Bessire, Claude Hopkins, Slick Willis, Jake Sparks, (Carroll's brother) and myself. Tack and I were to rotate home at the same time. But Tack passed up his spot in order for a married man in his outfit to come home. I tried to talk him into coming home and letting the new men finish the war. Tack told me that he was going to dig a slit trench and relieve himself in the streets of Berlin before he came home. Well, he almost made it.....

(Clyde "Tack" Walker was killed in action shortly before the war ended.)

Before I left to come back to the States, Tack sent his medals home with me to give to his family.

Fresh Eggs

From time to time, some of the boys in the outfit would bring a fresh egg or two for breakfast. So we would cook it for them while the rest of the men had to settle for powdered eggs. Captain Wittmann gave us an order that no one in the company was to have fresh eggs unless the entire company had fresh eggs to eat. O.K.

A few days later, Captain Wittmann came up with a few fresh eggs wanting them for his breakfast. "Sorry, Captain, you said, 'No one gets fresh eggs for breakfast until every one in the company does.' I can't cook them for you." I repeated his order.

Bo Moore, our Mess Sargeant, added a comforting thought by telling me, "You're gonna get busted!"

"Well, he told me not to cook any more eggs until everybody gets them."

Captain Wittmann reconsidered, his face softened into a smile and he said, "From now on anyone with eggs can have them for breakfast." He got his asked eggs.

THE STORY OF FOUR MEN

by

Y.R "SHIM" HIRAOKA,
Fresno, California,
442nd Inf. Reg.

KATSUJI NAKAMURA,
Honolulu, Hawaii,
100th Bn - 442nd

SERGE CARLESSO,
Bruyeres, France,
French Forces of the Interior

JACK L. SCOTT,
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma ,
111th Engineer Bn.

(Wars change history of nations. They also change the lives of people. Men are killed and wounded, changing the family back home and men in combat especially acquire a certain admiration and respect for all other combat personnel and often have an attitude of low esteem of those who operated the rear echelon stealing supplies and selling them, putting up the local women in special housing to be available on call and generally following closely behind the combat soldiers to grasp anything of value. On the other hand they immediately admire those they meet who wear the Purple Heart or the division emblem. These four men shared that great feeling of knowing they offered their lives for their country.)

PART I CHAPTER ONE

College Boy Goes to War

December 7, 1941. Jack L Scott, student, Oklahoma A & M College, Architecture School, Kappa Sigma Fraternity, enrolled in advanced R.O.T.C. which had been increased from a 3-hour to a 6-hour course, was a typical College Junior on that afternoon. Everyone talked about a possible war but didn't really think it would happen. Then it happened - December 7th. A new cadre of regular Army personnel was assigned to step up training and the cadets received word that they would not be commissioned directly to the service but would be sent through O.C.S. to insure that their training was complete. They were inducted into service on March 20, 1942, as privates and given a delay in route to permit us to complete next year's advanced R.O.T.C. and to attend O.C.S. In March of '43 reported to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to await classes starting in May. September 1, 1943, the H-909 class graduated and assignments were made. Scott was assigned as Platoon Commander of a training battalion at Camp Claiborne, LA, December, 1943. He was assigned to a holding company at Camp Shenango, PA. for preparation to go overseas in February. Meantime,

the 36th Infantry Division had made the Salerno Beachhead, crossed the Volturno River and fought the Rapido River battle. On arrival in Italy, March 6, 1944, Scott was assigned to the 2nd Placement depot at the Mussolini Dairy Farm. Toughing up to face combat playing tackle football, Scott broke his hand just after requesting to be assigned to the 45th at Anzio along with Robert P. Jones. Two weeks later, 5 Second Lieutenants were riding the back of a 2-1/2 ton truck headed for the 36th.

In late May at Anzio the 36th jumped off through the 3rd and 34th Divisions and headed toward Velletri, the anchor of the Hitler line. Extensive over-flights by General Walker and Colonel Oran Stovall persuaded the general to press General Clark for an infiltration of the 142-143 behind Velletri and force the enemy to pull out, providing that Stovall could build a road straight up the mountain in 48 hours to insure supplies and ammunition could be brought up. The road was almost complete in 24 hours with only a few men and one dozer. Scott rode shotgun for John Bob Parks, "B" Company tank dozer operator, a man who would attack a tiger if it got in his way.

June 4th, the 36th was in the outskirts of Rome and on June 5th entered triumphantly. Moving on up to Leghorn, a Japanese unit was spotted attached to the 34th Division. Stories of their dedication were heard around the 36th. The 36th returned to Salerno for invasion training for a landing on an unknown beach. Early August at Salerno and Rome officers tried to match line maps we had with the curves on the beaches of a big map. Two spots showed similarity - one was Yugoslavia on the Adriatic and the other was a little known town of San Raphael on the French Riviera. As the ships headed out to sea, briefings on the landing were held.

Scott was moved from Assistant Platoon Commander to the Platoon Commander of the First Platoon of "B" Company, 111th Engineers. This was truly magnificent to Scott. First, he did not expect ever to be promoted past the 1st Lieutenant who commanded the platoon. Second, it was a great honor to be selected and to carry the responsibility for the lives of 40 men, all of whom had more combat time. Being wounded at Velletri was helpful in being accepted as one of the battalion.

The food and ice cream were delightful on the troop ship. Everything now depended on Scott's correct decisions to hit the beach first, blow down the sea wall and let the Infantry through. Soon the Battleship Arkansas was thundering away knocking down buildings as the company headed for shore in the L.C.V.P. Scott moved to the front gate to be first out to direct the placing of explosives. Four hundred yards from shore the Navy turned the attack in a new direction for fear of losing the boats because of the heavy artillery fire, so we landed behind the 143rd Regt.

After the long drive up through France, at the Moselle River there was some evidence of the 442nd Japanese Infantry regiment soldiers. Across the Moselle and shortly after, near Bruyeres, the 442nd was there. The taking of Bruyeres was given to the 442nd and after several days in mid-October it was in their hands.

October 19th, Scott was called to company headquarters and told "you will be attached to the O'Conner task force" which will consist of one platoon of tanks, one platoon of Engineers and one or two companies of the 442nd." October 20th, 9:00 a.m., Scott's 23rd birthday started bad and got worse. As the task force moved out, the Germans had the coordinates on the church and courtyard and turned on the 88's. Everyone dove for windows, doors, basements or anywhere to get off the street as they hit right in the front of

our column.

When the artillery let up, Scott's company regrouped. One Japanese-American was lying in the street who did not make it. The task force moved on. At the edge of the church wall was a Volkswagen and a dead German officer who had hit a mine the night before. Scott's engineers were hit with a mortar which killed four men and wounded five as several mines blew at once.

Scott reorganized the platoon, took the third squad and started in search of Captain Sandy Saunders of the 1st battalion, 142 staff who was attached to the task force. Four hundred yards down the road they were back in position. This was the beginning of the long battle to extricate the "Lost Battalion" of the 141st by the 442nd.

Later, the 442nd was sent back to Italy and the 36th had no further direct contact in the war. Nobody was aware of the young 16 year old French buck private Serge Carlesso with the badly shattered leg, caused by the heavy shelling of the 36th, 155 artillery, nor of the close presence of one Y.R. "Shim" Hiraoka of California or an also younger Kats Nakamura from Hawaii of the 100th battalion, 442nd. Kats was in "K" Company which was in the O'Conner task force so, though right next to each other, he and Scott had not met. Some day they would become very close friends.

From October, 1944 to September, 1979, 35 years, there was no contact between these four except when the 442nd made a special visit to Bruyeres, enmass, to have a joint celebration in early '79 with the French people who were ever so grateful to the Japanese-Americans of the 442nd Infantry. Kats, Shim and Serge did not know each other and didn't know Jack until later. Only Shim and Serge had met at the 442nd return to Bruyeres in the 1970's.

PART I

CHAPTER TWO

KATSUJI "KATS" NAKAMURA

(From December 7, 1941 to December 29, 1945)

I. December 7, 1941 (The Beginning)

This day was anticipated with excitement and high expectations, for it was our first day of winter baseball practice for Junior A League players at Ala Wai Field, just outside of Waikiki. Practice was called for 7:00 a.m., but warm up started earlier and balls were being tossed around when we heard some explosions from the direction of Damon Tract and Aiea. We could also see some planes flying about and occasionally diving. Everybody thought the military was conducting a target practice using live bombs. Little did we realize that this was the "Day of Infamy" as aptly put by President Franklin Roosevelt. Japanese war planes had bombed Pearl Harbor. I was a mere 17-year-old high school senior at that time.

II. January 22, 1943 - May 2, 1943 (Basic Training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi)

President Franklin D. Roosevelt said "The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that: Americanism is not and never was, a matter of race or ancestry." This history making statement was made after the War Department directed by a letter that a Japanese-American Combat Team should be activated on February 1, 1943 and thus the 442nd Infantry Regiment, the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, 232nd Engineer Combat Company, and the 206th Army Ground Forces Band were formed. The 100th Infantry Battalion which was mostly draftees, and older than the 442nd, retained its own identity and became the 1st Battalion of the 442nd Regiment. I became a member of Company F and began Basic Training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. We trained together with chiggers and water moccasins, all out to get our blood. Somehow, we got through and on March 4, 1943, General George C. Marshall himself reviewed our Regiment. It was announced to the men that General Marshall was pleased with what he had seen.

III. March 14, 1944 (Entering the War)

Ten days later, the 442nd was directed to prepare for overseas movement. Soon we were deep into the Rome-Arno Campaign. But, prior to that, the ships carrying the 2nd Battalion dropped out of the convoy and docked at Oran to discharge cargo. We did manage to sneak into the City of Oran for a look-see at the populace. We never understood why all the ladies had veils which made it very, very discouraging. We attended a 10:00 p.m. movie and returned home about 1:30 a.m. After about two weeks in Africa, we boarded the HMS Samaria for Naples, Italy. The Samaria was a British vessel, so you can imagine the type of meal we were served, whole boiled liver, whole boiled potatoes with skin, whole kippers, dried herring and always served with a bucket of murky brownish liquid which they called English tea mixed with milk. The diet was sure foreign to us. We clamored for rice. We were happy to debark in Naples, Italy, on June 4, 1944. From the staging area in Bognoli, we were ferried up to Civitavecchia via LSTs and LCIs. Here, the 100th became the 1st battalion of the 442nd regiment but retained their numerical title. We were assigned to the 34th division on June 15th and on June 26th, the first day of battle, F Company was in battalion reserve. Somehow, unbelievably, communication became fouled up and F Company was not informed that the hour of departure was changed to an hour later. Needless to say, we encountered the German troops first and its Tiger Tank had a field day at F Company's expense. G-2 later acknowledged that this even had significant military impact. As they did not know that Tiger Tanks were being deployed in the sector, and that a major breakthrough by the Germans was prematurely halted by F Company being in their way at the wrong place at the right time.

Hill 140 was next on the agenda and soon became known as "'Little Cassino.'" The intense pounding we took and the helplessness will always be remembered. The Arno River was crossed without incident soon after. The enemy was again on the run and pulling back to the Gothic Line. After a short rest, everybody guessed that we were going to France. We

were trucked to Naples, picked up 67 replacements and boarded the USS Dickman on September 26, 1944.

IV. October 13, 1944 (Marseilles, France)

After we had reached Marseilles, France on October 13, 1944, we were attached to the Texas 36th Division commanded by Major General John E. Dahlquist. On October 15, 1944, we went into a different kind of battle where we could hardly see clearly in front of us; we were in the Vosges forest. It was dark, dark, dark, day and night. On October 20, 1944, in a brilliant move from an opened flank of the enemy lines, Task Force, O'Connor, attacked the rear of the enemy, and soon the battle was over. Later, all the units of Task Force O'Connor were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. Unknown to Jack and Kats, they were both involved in this battle.

V. "Battle" for French Riviera

The battle of the French Riviera was next. As the Vosges took a heavy toll of the regiment, it was time for recuperation. The bubbly Champagne Campaign was unbelievable in that we were able to relax in Nice, France and enjoy the sights of young women swimming and running around topless. This was the famous Riviera.

VI. March 25, 1945 (Po Valley Campaign)

All good things must come to an end. On March 25, 1945, the 100th/442nd arrived quietly into the staging area in Pisa, Italy. We then were attached to the 92nd Infantry Division. We were back in Italy where we thought we had left for good about six months previously. Then began the Po Valley Campaign, the formidable Gothic Line.

VII. Post War

The veterans were processed to return home according to a point system earned during combat and months of service. President Truman saluted the 100th/442nd on July 15, 1945 as the men marched to the Ellipse. He personally presented the Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation Banner to the Combat Team Colors. He at that time repeated President Roosevelt's words "Americanism is not a matter of race or creed, it is a matter of the heart."

On December 29, 1945 at the Army Separation Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, Katsuji "Kats" Nakamura (SN: 30105530) became a civilian once more.

VIII. December 7, 1941 to January 22, 1943

Marital law was imposed on the whole Hawaiian Islands, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Life was not easy but the populace, be they Hawaiians, Chinese, Portuguese, Koreans and local whites, did not crucify us for what Japan did. Truthfully it was only the mainland white people who were ignorant and thought they owned the land and began to call us names and thus many of them had bloody noses and black eyes. (This was still true even in Camp Shelby where the 442nd was in basic training.) We thought they had no business defending the Constitution because they were all ignorant and did not understand loyalty.

The 100th Battalion was made up of draftees who were in the army before the 442nd was formed. They took their basic training in Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, and joined the 442nd in Camp Shelby, Mississippi.

IX. Acknowledgements:

The following people who were all American citizens, and who were all well known amongst the Hawaiian populace banded together and lobbied heavily for the formation of an all Nisei (second generation Japanese) army combat team. Needless to say, they themselves were second generation Japanese, but a much older group, who saw a necessity for such a formation. Thus, the 442nd Infantry Regiment was born. The rest is history. To these men, the 442nd, bow their heads and say, "Thank you for your foresight, and because of it we are today living like any human being should be living—free and respected."

The organizers were as follows: Barron Goto; Masao Katagiri; an original 100th veteran who went with the group as its dental officer and morale officer, Katsumi Komentani; Masaji Marumoto; Ernest Murai; Shunzo Sakamaki; Jack Wakayama; Shigeo Yoshida.

All of the above were professionals like judge, lawyer, MD, teacher, business man, etc. All of them were highly respected by the whole populace.

STRANGE DESTINY:

My Adolescence

Worldwartwoveterans.org

by

Serge Carlesso

For Laurent, my grandson, and all those of his generation, so that they may never know the tragedies engendered by the cruelty of a war.

By Serge Carlesso, disabled ex-serviceman, Infantryman of the National Legion of Honor. From my Birth to December 7, 1941.

(The survivors of this world conflict are aware today of being miracle survivors. They have requested, to their credit, neither compensation nor recognition. They collect their thoughts, they remember and they offer evidence for history. This story is also in memory of the people who were hailed one day in the course of this terrible war, the memory of which those from our generation cannot escape; a war whose scars will never be erased.)

MY FAMILY LIFE

I was born between the two wars in a village near Bruyeres, in Laval on the Vologne River. My father worked in a paper mill. He had arrived from Italy after the First World War, and had stayed in this village in the south of Bruyeres.

Man of honor and duty, he had a taste for hard work and the will to succeed. His goal was to give good upbringing to his children. He especially didn't want to see them one day follow the road of exile.

Much appreciated for his professional and human qualities, it didn't take long for him to be noticed by the boss, who since 1930 gave him management level responsibilities in this factory.

At this time, there were three children in the family, and my father, encouraged by the mayor, was seeking his naturalization, which was given to him.

In this village of Laval on the Vologne, we were somewhat financially blessed, as for the financial situation, due to the remarkable work and recognition drawn by my father whom we revered.

Mama, untiring woman, worked equally in this undertaking. Energetic, dynamic, she cared for and managed the house with rigor and an uncontested authority.

SEPTEMBER 1938 The Beginning of the War.

Papa is called into active duty, inducted into a battalion of infantrymen stationed on the French-German border. However, diplomacy, by the agreements of Munich, avoids conflict. Twenty days later, Papa comes back home and the family circle is once more intact.

AUGUST 1939

We are with my oldest brother on vacation in Nice. The diplomatic situation is alarming; the war rumors are circulating. It seems that this time nothing can stop a disaster. August 31, 1939, special buses arrive in Nice during the night, and we urgently went home so the families would not be separated from their children.

SEPTEMBER 1, 1939 - The German troops invaded Poland.

This aggression certainly was not a clash of thunder in a serene sky.

SEPTEMBER 3, 1939

After a long journey, were back home with the family. At about 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon, the alarm goes off again. We immediately understand that France just declared war with Germany.

MAY 10, 1940

The German offensive, firing a deluge of shrapnel and fire, launched an irresistible advance. Their Air Force controlled the sky, and spread terror and horror of death. The powerful Hitlerian war machine armored troops cut through and circled the United French forces.

JUNE 10, 1940 "A Fist in the Back"

Italy entered the war. On the same day the French government left Paris and set up camp at Bordeaux.

Men age 16 to 60 were begged by the government to go to the south of France. The men who had an exempt status due to a special need in their business had to join the war unit they belonged to, however they could. That was the case with my father who left to go to the Jura where the battalion he served in 1938 was reforming.

The families who lived in the east were urged to leave the region. Mama, woman of character, decided that we would not leave the house, which would automatically be vandalized and pillaged by the troops that come through, or future invaders.

On the roads, in a state of total chaos, civil and military personnel attempted to flee towards the south. With at least 4 million people in distress, it was the greatest collective terror of contemporary France.

JUNE 22, 1940

At Rethondes, at the signing of the Armistice, in six weeks one of the greatest European nations was crushed. After the signings, a few islands of resistance tried to hold out. Units still eager to fight refused to accept the Armistice, and honorably fought collective heroic acts.

BRUYERES (Extract from Volume 5, Servicemen, June 18, 1940)

"Bruyeres shelters more than 2,000 wounded who were evacuated to the hospital, the school establishments, and the two Army bases. This important number of wounded is explained by the arrival three days earlier of several units of Medical Corps whose hospital trains were immobilized when the thundering German armored divisions of Guderian (German Chief of Staff) advanced."

The Doctor Colonel Meerseman became Chief Medical Officer of the Place de Bruyeres. Late afternoon of June 18, 1940, German planes bombarded the city. There were

three killed, numerous wounded and about ten homes in flames. The anxiety of the Army medical corps grew after this aerial attack.

JUNE 21, 1940 3:30 P.M.

A Second Lieutenant spoke in the name of the Commandant of two motorized divisions which circled the town. "Why wish to defend the city when the armistice is in place? If you refuse to allow us to enter the city, it will be crushed by the Air Force." With the medical corps' insistence, the Commander of Arms decided to give back the city without fighting. In light of this decision, detachments of all forces moved towards Laval to continue the fighting. The last orders of General Duron were: "Keep on fighting."

JUNE 21, 1940 5:00 P.M.

The German Infantry front line units of the 75th division penetrated the city. They moved towards Laval which has become the center of the French Resistance, the command post of the 3,000 congregated men located in the interior of the Paper Mill which had ceased all its activities. Serious fire-fights occurred at the entrance of the village; the Germans lost about 20 men.

JUNE 22, 1940 5:00 AM.

The German artillery opened fire on the village. The density of shots was horrible, the last defenders were crushed. The Paper Mill was on fire and several houses were burned. From bayonet to cannon, the German artillery took possession of Laval during the day, under the tired watch of a population which was living buried in caves. The French losses were considerable. This fact of war will remain engraved in my memory for eternity. It will be the most cruel, overwhelming image. These men surrendered by the hundreds, formed an immense procession, arms raised, drunk from fatigue. The colony of prisoners, placed under the guard of riflemen, were directed to the prisoner camps, awaiting their transfer to Germany.

JULY 10, 1940

The French Republic was destroyed. The Petain government installed its new headquarters in a famous water city, Vichy.

The Vosges state of Alsace Lorraine was once again one of the most stricken. All the armies of the East found themselves surrounded: One million and a half men were captured, 26 of whom were Generals.

The damage imposed is considerable, the civilian population threw themselves into the exodus. Only some of the women, children, and old people remained behind, overwhelmed in the face of disaster.

The Nazi flags fly on numerous buildings. Thus we learn where the Commandant is, the German Army Bases, barracks, the parade ground. All participate in the regimentation of public life.

The German victory also brought back the return of borders fixed by the Treaty of Frankfurt of October 3, 1872, the annexation of Alsace and a part of Lorraine.

The Vosges are situated in the red zone, under top surveillance. Nobody could leave the state limits or cross them without special authorization of the occupation forces. At Bruyeres, the German garrison numbered 2,000 men. It was a major reason for which the resistance would take a long time implementing the reorganization.

In spite of everything, June 18, 1940 was to remain a date to remember in the beginning of the French Resistance.

The call launched from London by General DeGaulle will only be heard by a very small number of French, because of the material conditions of the exodus. The Germans were completely controlling the press of the occupied zone. In these conditions it sank down into a colorlessness, field marshal, anti-Jew, anti-English, anti-Gaullist.

The revitalization - a whole population was brutally plunged into shortages; flour, sugar, soap, oil, milk, butter, bread, potatoes, vegetables, and fruit all disappeared from the markets or from the warehouses. From September 18, 1940, all the foods are rationed. Ration cards are distributed. From one month to another, the rations always fluctuate downward.

JUNE 22, 1941

Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The occupant removed its mask and Hitlerian Germany no longer hid its nature and its plans. Later, the anti-Jewish propaganda began the holocaust, by systematic confiscation of Jewish people who then populated the camps at Pithiviers, Beaune la rolande, Drancy, first transfers to the concentration camps in Germany.

In the occupied zone, added to all the harassment, was the obligation to wear the Jewish star from the age of six. It was the prelude to the great raids of July 1942.

While artistically maintaining a climate of terror, stirring up in everyone a constant fear, the Nazis, by the execution of hostages, looked for other places to lock up the resisters, throwing back upon themselves alone the responsibility for spilled blood.

For a French man or woman, the fear of such reprisals was able to lead to retaliation. Twenty of them, relieved of their torpor, became at least in their hearts, unified in the Resistance, soon ready to effectively adhere to their solidarity.

Daily life became more and more difficult. Arrests increased, denunciations were frequent, controls got tighter.

We stayed there many months before learning that Papa had been captured and that he was a prisoner at the Citadel of Besancon. A former soldier of the first World War, he was not transferred to Germany, but liberated.

CHAPTER THREE

(From December 7, 1941 to October 20, 1944)

December 7, 1941- Bombing of Pearl Harbor

It is only the next day that I learned the terrible news. An old farmer that I visit each day to buy my milk, and with whom I often talk about this difficult period following the Nazi occupation, tells me that he has heard about the Pearl Harbor disaster on the radio. The information, coming from a radio station which has allegiance to the Germans, mentions that the whole American Navy in the Pacific is destroyed, that the number of dead sailors can be counted in the thousands and that this Japanese bombing would have given a fatal blow to the great America. We are devastated; however, the regional newspapers which the next day report the event announced that President Roosevelt, in accordance with the U.S. Congress, has just declared war on Japan and Germany.

Home or Prison Camp

In North Africa, the Franco-British launch a wide scope operation which compels the armies of the Afrika Corps to retreat toward Tunisia, pressed as they are to escape the thongs which were beginning to close since the landing of the American troops in Morocco. My older brother and I follow on a world map the progression of the Allied troops, and we easily understand that the situation created during the year 1943 is becoming favorable. We learn that the French troops in North Africa under the command of General De Gaulle are organizing. General LeClerc with the first "D.F.L.", and General De Lattre with the First Army represent the French hopes.

Life in occupied France is getting more difficult; a curfew is imposed; assemblies are forbidden. We are not able to practice any sport; we do not have any transportation and there is no food. In the country we are somewhat privileged because of some clandestine growing of food and raising of animals, but we always have to worry about jealous neighbors. It is an unhealthy climate, because the people feel persecuted. For no reason at all, you are summoned to the "Feldkommandature," the organization which takes care of all, and you never know what could happen. You either go back to your home, or you are sent to the camps in Germany. Those camps of which we will only understand the horror after the Liberation.

The resistance is beginning to organize in the Vosges, but there is still too much mistrust for it to be efficient or effective. The German repression is terrible. It frightens even the most careful partisan. Each day we learn that some young people have just been condemned to die by the Nazi military courts.

We had recuperated some weapons of war at the moment of the great collapse of the French Army in 1940.

1943 brings us great hope. The Allies have landed in Italy. We know that a terrible battle is being fought in the south of the peninsula; Belvedere, Monte Mario, Cassino,

Anzio, Garigliano, names which come to us as synonymous of hope. June 1944, the landing in Normandy, August 15, 1944 landing in Provence. This time there is no more reason to be pessimistic. The fight for the liberation of the national territory is engaged. The resistance is moving, even in the Vosges which is going to become in just a few months the region most brutalized in France.

Massacre in Front of Mothers

June 6, 1944, attack on the German Garrison of Traintrux. It is a failure for the resistance that is obliged to retreat toward the mountain sector. The German repression is both terrible and terrifying. Ten thousand men commanded by General Vlassow (Ukrainians who work for the Nazis) are launched to pursue the "F.F.I." Eighty-two are taken and massacred, some will be killed on the village square in front of their own mothers. The Germans burn half of the village, all the farms in the mountains are also burned. About 1,000 men, under suspicion of having given refuge to partisans, are taken as hostages and directed toward the camps of Struthof, Dachau, and Mathausen.

September 5, 1944, the resistance attacks a German truck that was transporting ammunition. The S.S. stationed at the village Bruyeres intervene. They encircle the village of Champ-le-Duc and purposely burn the houses surrounding the church. Later, they call all the able men to put out the fires. Father refuses to go. He tells us that he believes it is a trap. Contravening fatherhood's wisdom, we decided to go help fight the fires. As we arrive around the church, the S.S. begins firing over the heads of the voluntary firemen. The drama for everyone present will be to regroup like sheep of Panurge. Four of us are able to diverge and to scatter around; this will save our lives. The S.S. fire toward us, but we are too far to be hit. We find refuge in a wooded area close by. Sixty of them will be deported to the death camps in Germany (only 12 will come back).

September 9, 1944, the sinister boss of the Gestapo Klaus Barbie is in the area accompanied by the French militia. In a nearby village, he accuses the mayor of the locality of being a resistance leader. The man is arrested and thrown alive into the fire of his own sawmill under the eyes of his terrified wife. Eleven workers are also shot without further ceremony. A wounded man escapes. He knows my family and comes to take refuge at our house where we take care of him. The next day, I accompany him to another village in order to help him escape from the search of the French militia. We live in horror wondering every moment what will happen to us in the face of this furious craziness and barbarism being propagated by the S.S. and helped by the French militia.

36th Division Expected

Around September 20th, I encountered a man I knew. He has been condemned by the French Police for being suspected of trafficking in the "Black Market." This is common practice during this period of recession. The French and German authorities at that time had imprisoned him at the town of Vesoul. This town, 100 kilometers south of Bruyeres, has been liberated, the prison doors have been opened, and all the prisoners who had only committed minor infractions have been able to flee. This man, who is still relatively young, did not hesitate to cross the German lines and to return to Bruyeres. It is only by chance that I see him. It is he who tells me that the American troops have liberated Vesoul, and he gives

me more information about the event. It has to do with the 36th Division from Texas, an elite unit which has led the fight since the Italian landing. I go home full of hope, and also full of pride for being able to communicate such information.

At about this time, the Nazis are publishing a bulletin. Every young man from 16 years old and older is susceptible to being sent to the sectors where the German troops are undertaking defensive work, such as taking down railroad tracks, constructing small fortified buildings, and protective trenches. Those who would want to disregard the requisition order learn that repressions will be taken against their family which means that their family would be deported to Germany. In the afternoon of September 21st, a section of S.S. arrives at the perimeter of our home. We are all asked to go into the yard. Under the threat of guns and bayonets, the enemy takes us to the power plant near our house. There they order us to remove all the leather belts necessary to the generators transmission. We load this material onto a military truck. Then two firemen blew up the generators with dynamite. The explosion is so violent that the windows of the adjacent buildings are all shattered. It is an added annoyance for the terrorized population, and a spectacle of desolation. Henceforth, there is no more electricity; we are going to have to learn to live with every means of lighting that we are able to provide for ourselves. Two young women who work for the resistance succeed on crossing the enemy lines, and we learn that the town of Epinal is liberated and that the American troops of the 36th Division should be arriving here in a few days.

The citizens of a number of villages are without shelter after the "Wafen" S.S. and the militia have burned dozens of houses. Many people working for the resistance have been shot, others have been deported without having had the chance to say goodbye to their families. All the buildings, cellars are transformed into makeshift dormitories. The bombs are beginning to fall on the village. The population living in isolated sectors have been evacuated by order of the "Wafen" S.S. and regrouped in those dormitories. One hundred people are now living in inhumane conditions; they need food.

There is no water, no bread, no electricity, and no business going on. The only things left are the potatoes in the field. They need to be pulled out of the fields which are subjected to intensive bombings which are getting worse as each day goes by. During a mission to find food, I fell while trying to find protection against the bombing. My wrists are injured, more than likely fractured. I decide to go see a healer a few kilometers away. I take my bicycle and leave. At a crossroad, I am stopped at an anti-tank barricade built by the Germans. I am suspected of being an agent of liaison for the resistance. I try to explain that my left arm is wounded, but no luck. The Germans confiscate the bicycle and take me to the command post installed in a nearby farm. I feel as if everything is lost and that I am going to be taken in front of a special tribunal. An S.S. soldier takes me to the Major of the C.P. To my great surprise, in this room there are two Americans who must have been captured during the night near the villages of Lepanges and Laval. A guard is left in the room to keep us from talking. Anyway, I do not even understand the American language. Later I am introduced to the German commander.

The interrogation will last more than one hour. I maintain my version of the story, and I try to get some care for my injury. A military nurse is brought; he will confirm that I have been telling the truth. Providence is with me, and I am authorized to leave the premises; however I will not get my bicycle back.

36th On The Way

Henceforth, I know that the 36th Division is composed of three regiments of infantry - the 141st, the 142nd, and the 143rd which are backed by a powerful artillery, a battalion of transportation engineers, and total logistics support.

The artillery shelling is increasing as each day goes by. The Germans, who have a strong hold in the sector of Laval-Bruyeres, are not giving up. However, the population needs to survive and each day takes terrible risks in order to find food. The battle is raging, and the artillery duels are fantastic. The wounded are multiplying in the population, and the streets and the roads are only frequented by the German troops. The French population is condemned to live buried like rats.

During the night of October 7th and 8th, the artillery duels slow down a little. Normally it is around 9:00 p.m. that the shelling is the most frequent and persistent, but all of a sudden it is complete silence, neither artillery nor individual firing. The civilians packed in this cellar are anxious as if they were missing the noise of the battle. At around 11:00 p.m. this silence is interrupted by a lot of noise from boots, guttural orders, and weapons being put down. All this comes from the first floor of the building which has been occupied by Germans for the last several days. I go up the stairs and become aware that in fact there are many enemy soldiers. It is also the time at which the food resupplying the advance post is done. All the men on duty are busy with the tin cans which in a few moments will be sent to the sections posted on the first line beyond the Vologne river. The river runs 100 meters in back of our building. In addition, in the yard, about 100 men are waiting. I am convinced that the Germans have just received some major reinforcements. I ask the officer who occupies a room in our apartment to let me go to the toilets which are outside the building; no objection on his part. I noticed the status of these reinforcements. Where are they going to position themselves? At dawn tomorrow I will need to know. This extra security position makes me think that the Germans are getting ready to face an American offensive. The Germans are packing many crates on which I can read "ACHTUNG MINEN". Are they going to mine the sector? Back in the makeshift dormitory in the basement, I tell my brother about what I have seen. In the morning the cannons are being heard again. This morning of October 8th, under the pretext to gather potatoes and get some water, I went on a scouting mission to find out about the changes in last night's German reinforced positions. They have installed a heavy machine gun on a small hill facing our house, this makes me think that they are worried about an attack coming from the woods near the train station right on the other side of the railroad. At about one kilometer behind this natural cover is where the village of Fays which has been occupied for several days by the troops of the 36th Division is situated. The American division is also at the village of Lepanges.

Bridge to Fimenil Blown

Very early in the morning a violent explosion shakes the building. What is happening? The Germans have just blown the bridge crossing the Vologne river which connected us to the village of Fimenil. They are conducting a strategic retreat and are

mining the sector. My brother and I decide to go to the village of Fays; we have been careful to take utensils to look as if we were going to pick potatoes. We reach the village without any problem.

What exuberance! We discover the power the Americans have at their disposal. Vehicles of all types, light cannons, tanks, etc. The village mayor receives us and takes us to an American officer. There, a French officer of F.F.I. serves as a translator. After having assured him that we are young patriots and that we have just taken awful risks in order to communicate to them the German defensive positions, we indicate the enemy's positions on the map and let him know about the mined sector as well as the German lookout in the church bell tower. We are congratulated for our initiative, and we are told to take great care during our return home. We have smoked our first cigarettes, "Camels". October 9th, the battle is raging, the wounded are multiplying, several houses are burned. October 10th, the drama; No change in the situation.

The Americans are preparing their offensive and intensifying their firing on the blockade. The damage is becoming worse, more importantly, our building has been severely hit. Three shells have smashed the center gable, and the roof is gaping. Nobody is wounded. As I notice while walking by the door of the infirmary, the German count in dead and wounded is high. At around 10:00, I leave to go get food. I go up in the direction of the woods by the train station because I am sure that I have seen some movement at the edge of the woods. It can only be Americans who have arrived there, and I would like to give them a sign to tell them about the German's machine guns. All of a sudden a real chaos of fire is falling on the sector. The firing from the blockade is of an unbelievable violence. In this "no man's" land, it is impossible to find refuge from the firing. At the exact moment I want to throw myself on the ground, I see right in front of me a flame, and I hear the explosion. I am projected several meters. I feel terrible pains; I believe that my left leg is severely wounded. Blood is running from everywhere. I am able to pull up my pant leg, and what I discover is horrible. An open wound into which I can see crushed bones; the skin is swollen. I try to relieve my smashed leg, but my hand sinks into a hole behind my thigh. Not fainting, this will save my life.

With my belt, I am able to make a tourniquet. I hear screams in the woods, men have been hit. A little below me are Germans who are wounded. They must have been part of the patrol that was going to the front line. A German signals my presence to the patrol's chief who walks toward me pointing his automatic, but he is quickly aware of the gravity of my wounds. Firing at a wounded man is not proper. He signals to one of his men, and they transport me into a shelter situated at the German first aid post. There are many wounded there and even some dead. The Germans do not have sanitary means of evacuating the wounded, so they requisition a truck topped with a white flag. We are directed toward the hospital at the village of Bruyeres. This trip is horrible, we have to go across several anti-tank barricades built by the Germans and the road is all broken up by the bombings. It takes us almost two hours to reach the hospital. The cease-fire has been respected, the artillery guns have stopped. I believe that in each side they are counting the loss of lives. As soon as we arrive in the hallway of the hospital, a German major picks me out among the wounded as his priority. At that same instant, I become aware of the gravity of my wounds. I am put to sleep with chloroform, and go into deep sleep. In the evening, I come to and begin to realize the drama that I have just lived. I wonder if it is a nightmare, and suddenly push away

the blanket covering my legs and notice that instead of my left leg there is a bulky bandage that must hide a bloody stump. I am exhausted, all my wounds are throbbing, but I believe that my worst wound is psychological. Everything has fallen apart, I want to scream like a wild beast, but I am able to keep some dignity. I will suffer in deep silence. During the night, the German soldier next to me dies.

Bruyeres Liberated

We can hear the noise of the battle, the shells are falling in great number, and even the surroundings of the hospital are not safe. I am taken into an underground cellar where I will stay for eight days without light, in the humidity, lying on a stretcher. I believe that I somewhat lost the notion of time in this space between life and death, between hope and darkness. On the morning of October 20th, an American officer and a Lieutenant of the F.F.I., the same ones who had received us in the village of Fays, come down to the cellar.

I then learn that Bruyeres has been liberated after two days of intense battle by a shock unit from the 442nd R.C.T., a regiment of Japanese-Americans, and by the 143rd Regiment Infantry, U.S. The French officer tells me that because of my numerous wounds, I am going to be evacuated to the American Sanitary Service. He writes my name on a tablet. I wait.

In the afternoon two young American women in military uniforms come down. They take me out of this cellar where I have been stagnating for so long. My wounds are seriously infected, pus is running from them. I see the sunlight again for the first time. There is a lot of excitement in the yard of the hospital. Germans and Americans are lying down the halls. We are put into waiting ambulances. I am with a Texan and two Japanese Americans. The ambulance takes off. In the town, bulldozers are clearing up the debris from the streets. The ambulance driver, using fantastic dexterity while driving through the rubble, dashes through. This October 20th, I am en route toward a new destiny.

CHAPTER FOUR

Y.R. "SHIM" HIRAOKA

(From December 7, 1941 to October 18, 1944)

1. December 7, 1941

Shim was on the family farm in Fowler, California, on December 7, 1941. It was a quiet day that Sunday morning, usual on a farm where the harvest was completed. At about 10:00 a.m. Shim heard the voice of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who announced the "Day of Infamy" after Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor.

More surprised than shocked, Shim's mind entertained moments of the past, present and future. What had happened in his life in the past and what was happening in the present were known. It was the future that was a mass of confusion. He had known of the

exploits of the Japanese army and navy in the Russian War. He had known of the forays into Manchuria and China. He knew Japan had entered into a partnership with Germany and Italy in the late 1930's.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor evoked a fearful thought. Measured by the past xenophobic attitudes prevailing among the politicians, supported by the acts of the American Legion, the National Grange the Native Sons of the Golden West, the California State Federation of Labor, members of Congress and the California Legislature had no difficulty in enacting laws preventing and prohibiting aliens of Japanese ancestry from obtaining United States citizenship, owning and leasing agricultural lands, denying them commercial licenses, relegating them to deciding whether or not to return to Japan or be in a servile state. For, after all, in the 1920's and 1930's, the source of wealth was land. It produced the most important item in a person's life, and that is food.

His parents were aliens, denied citizenship by federal law. As aliens, in a time of war, when the United States considered Japan an enemy, the only conclusion that could be arrived at was that the parents were "enemy aliens," and, as such, could be rounded up and be placed in concentration camps as prisoners of war.

As for the Nisei, the second generation, born in the United States, therefore citizens of the United States, of which Shim was one, a great many were minors, under age 21. Though citizens, yet dependent on parents who were aliens, what happens to them? Do they go to concentration camps with their parents or are they left to survive the best way they know how. Shim could not recall that the United States had ever experienced such a problem. Surely, in World War I, the Germans in the United States had been vilified and the vegetable called Sauerkraut was no longer referred to by its name. If it were to be vilification only, Shim could withstand that. He grew up knowing inequality in a political, economic and social sense. This segregation did not bother him. A person develops a negative reaction towards slanderous epithets.

II. Removal To Gila River Relocation Center

Eventually, in August of 1942, by Executive Order 9066, signed by President Roosevelt, Shim, his parents and three brothers and three sisters were forced to leave the farm for a stay on an Indian Reservation near Phoenix, Arizona, during the War. He left knowing only of his removal and without any inclination as to when he would be able to return, if that were possible. The family assets, farm, trucks, equipment and personal and household items were sold for pennies or given away. What was stored was gone when the family returned in 1945 to claim them. The Gila River Relocation Center was on land where only sagebrush grew, with scorpions and rattlesnakes being the living creatures. There was not one tree to shade a person. It was a desert. In a 20' x 20' barrack, the sides being nailed 1" x 12"s, the floors the same, with two small windows wherein his family of nine, two parents and seven children, were expected to reside for the duration with no partitions and only army metal beds as furniture. There was a total lack of privacy. If one needed a chair or table, he looked for scrap wood and nails to piece it together. There was much competition for these scraps of wood. Five thousand residents were in Camp #1 and ten thousand in Camp #2.

It was a communistic type of living. Three meals a day were served at the mess hall, where a line formed before the bell rang to announce the meal was ready. Showers and toilet facilities were open with no partitions and unenclosed. At least the women and had their own facilities, the men crowded in theirs separately.

Everyone was expected to work, jobs being divided into two classes, the ordinary, paying \$16.00 a month, professionals and those in administrative work getting \$19.00 a month. Shim served nine months, first, as a farmer, and later, as an attorney. When the Army created the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Shim volunteered.

When it became known that Shim was volunteering, a group, solicitous of Shim's reasoning, (and thinking that he was losing his mind) approached him to let him know in no uncertain terms that he was a second class citizen and should know better than to volunteer after being placed in a barbed wired camp. Shim explained to them that what he was doing was based on a personal decision, that he realized discriminatory attitudes prevailed against the Japanese and that he was second class politically, economically, and socially. However, Shim further explained that this was the only country he knew and that his lack of a Language School education and knowledge of the language would be a detriment if he considered going to Japan.

Shim married Chiyo Tsukahara on April 25, 1943, and left the camp for Fort Douglas, Utah, on May 25, 1943. He was inducted on that day. With him were some 27 other volunteers. Some were sent to the Military Intelligence Service Language School in Minnesota. Shim knows of two of the volunteers in the 442d that were killed in action and every other volunteer received a commendation or medal.

III. Formation of the 442nd Combat Team

The 442nd Combat Team was activated on February 1, 1943. Actually, the 442nd Combat Team included the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion and the 232nd Engineer Combat Team Company. The unit trained at Camp Shelby, near Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

The officers were, in the main, white. The cadre was composed of Nisei soldiers who had enlisted prior to the formation of the 442nd. On April 13, 1943, some 2,686 men came from Hawaii, where more than 10,000 had volunteered. From stateside, small groups from different parts of the United States came in, until May 10, 1943, when basic training began. Shim was still in Gila River Relocation Center.

IV. At Camp Shelby, Mississippi

Shim arrived at Hattiesburg in the middle of June, 1943. Hattiesburg was a small town. The weather was hot and humid. Resident males could be seen walking on the street, their shirts with wet outlines of perspiration. If Shim had a choice, he would have stayed on the train for another destination.

Shim can say with impunity that the then military justice stunk. In fact, Shim was nearly court martialed. It had to do with his being sent three times to Recruit School, where basic training was taught. It wasn't that Shim didn't pass the tests. He could pass any of the physical requirements, including the 25-mile hike with full field pack. Shim weighed about 135 pounds.

Shim did not object to the second stint at Rookie School. But, when the 1st Sgt. ordered that he report for the third time, Shim requested to see the captain. The request was granted.

Shim told the Company Commander what had happened. Shim explained that he knew everything that had to be accomplished and that he had accomplished them. Shim even asked to be transferred to another outfit.

The captain said he would look into the matter and told Shim to return in a couple of weeks. This, Shim did, but was told, "There's nothing I can do. You've got to go back to Recruit School." "

May I have your permission to see the colonel, sir?"

"No, it won't do any good."

Shim went back to Recruit School, finished the course. Shim is of the mind that he was the only soldier in World War II to go through three Basic Training courses. Before Shim returned to Recruit School, he sat down and wrote a three page letter to the Adjutant General of the United States, addressing it to the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., explaining his predicament.

In about a month, Shim was called in to the Company C.P. The Captain was there and obviously irate about something Shim had done. He reported and this conversation followed:

"Hiraoka, do you know what you've done?"

"No, sir, what did I do?"

"You wrote a letter to the Adjutant General without going through channels."

"What is this 'channel' that you refer to, sir?"

"That letter should have had, first, my approval, after me, the Colonel approves and so on."

"But, sir, if that letter got into your hands or the Colonel's, it would have been thrown into the waste basket."

"We must court martial you."

"Fine, sir. Now, we're getting someplace. One thing, sir, I am a lawyer. I'll defend myself. I'll save the Army the need for appointing a shoe clerk Lieutenant to defend me. I think with the First Sergeant and you as my witnesses, I will beat the Army. Let's get on with it."

What Shim wrote about was the fact that he was a Japanese and from "day one" he never was accorded this thing we call equality in the United States. He could study with the best and hold his own. He was never a burden to society and had obtained a university education without grants of any kind. In fact, during the Great Depression, he couldn't find a scholarship. In fact, Shim has always used this argument that he owed society nothing. When a presiding judge of the local court expounded that Shim had a duty to defend, indignant, he argued that he owed no person any such duties. The judge understood.

Shim was given a company punishment for writing this letter, which he knew nothing about until he became the 1st. Sgt. of the company. Shim disposed of that document immediately. No court martial was ever pressed. Shim went overseas with the 442nd. He was appointed 1st. Sgt. only a couple of months before he was shipped home in December of 1945. He had been an acting mess sergeant, acting supply sergeant and acting 1st. sergeant.

The next morning found the Captain viewing the same list of promotions. Again, he looked at Shim, crumpled the list and threw it into the basket.

In the interim, after he finished Basic Training and before returning home, Shim applied for OCS. The first application was at Camp Shelby in September of 1943. Shim was accepted to be interviewed and before the board, he was asked, "Why do you want to become an officer?"

Shim thought if he told the truth, he'd be rejected. So he answered, "To better serve the Country, sirs."

"Yes, sir, but I can't make either of the services was because of my eyesight deficiency. I'm not 20-20."

Then, the law member requested to look over Shim's application. After a review, he stated, "This soldier qualifies for Judge Advocate General's School."

Shim's heart missed a beat. Somehow, Shim knew he could get beyond this wall the Army erects against individuals. Shim had passed. The first sergeant told him to make himself scarce as he'd be leaving the company in a month. Shim became a nondescript soldier of the 442nd for 14 or 15 months.

In either late February or March of 1944, the 442nd was ordered to go overseas. Shim was still with the outfit.

A day or so after the alert notice for overseas duty, the OCS papers were returned to Shim with the notation, "No action taken." As he saw it, the papers never left the 442nd. Shim believes those in charge were getting even with his writing to the Adjutant General, which did cause some embarrassment to the staff.

Shim went overseas, serving with regimental hqs. and hqs. company in various positions. After the Italian campaign, the 442nd was sent to Southern France. The 442nd was committed to battle the Germans outside of Bruyeres, a small village of 3,000 residents, where the Germans were holed in and had been there for four and one-half years. The 36th Division had attempted to take the village, surrounded by three hills on top of which were the Germans controlling the sector. They could see every movement made by their enemy.

The 442nd became attached to the 36th Division and on October 14, 1944, it began the ordeal to rid the village of Bruyeres of the German Army. It was a "do or die" affair on the part of the Germans, but, after a loss of many lives and wounded, the 442nd RCT entered the village. It took only four days. Committed on the 14th of October, the 442nd was in Bruyeres on October 18, 1944.

The villagers awaited the triumphant entry of the American Army. The villagers anticipated Caucasian soldiers, tall, lean and white. What they saw were soldiers, Oriental, short and brown. The residents did not know what to think or do. Some thought of the Axis, where Germany, Japan and Italy were partners in World War II. Germans were retreating from Bruyeres, being replaced by Japanese. The residents had never before seen an Oriental. Suddenly, a female resident, who understood and could read English words, saw on the Jeep bumpers, "US ARMY." She ran into the street and embraced a 442nd soldier. That did it. The whole village followed to welcome the 442nd soldiers. If one goes to Bruyeres, he will see the sign "Rue 442nd", a street named after the unit. Also a memorial ceremony on the weekend closest to October 18th is held in honor of the dead of its liberators. (Shim has been, with his wife, Chiyo, to Bruyeres on five different occasions, the first being in 1977. Shim hopes to be at the 59th anniversary on or about October 18, 1994, God willing.)

After Bruyeres, the 442nd was relieved of combat duties. Its strength had been depleted to the extent that replacements had to be added to get it up to combat strength. While in the rear, the "Lost Battalion" incident occurred. One of the battalions of the 141st Regiment of the 36th Division attempted to rescue the surrounded soldiers, but failed. The general of the 36th Division committed the 442nd to the rescue, knowing full well that since Bruyeres, it was not at combat strength.

The 442nd in a few days contacted the surrounded soldiers. Some of the companies of the 442nd were decimated to where a sergeant was in charge of a company. The 442nd lost 800, either dead or wounded, in rescuing 220 soldiers of the "Lost Battalion" of the 36th Division.

While in France, Shim made a second application for OCS. The interview was to take place in Paris.

Shim waited and when it came time to go, everyone, except Shim, who applied went. The reason was never disclosed but he pointed to the Adjutant General. No other reason existed. It made Shim dislike the Army.

However, when the 442nd returned to Italy for the final push, his application made in the French Theater of Operations, was pushed through, and after the War ended, Shim was ordered to appear before the OCS Board of the Fifth Army. Shim no longer wanted to be an officer since the war was over. Neither did he want to stay overseas for an extra year which was required.

Shim appeared before the Board and explained that he no longer desired to be an officer and apologized for the inability to cancel the hearing. Shim told the Board that he did not find one day in the Army challenging; that he had served after being dispossessed of home and that if the Country needed him thereafter, it would have one difficult time to make him serve. All he wanted was to go home.

On November 17, 1944, the 442nd was relieved from attachment to the 36th Division. Before the pull out, Major General John E. Dahlquist wrote:

"1. The 36th Division regrets that the 442nd Combat Team must be detached and sent on other duties. The period during which you have served, October 14 to November 18, 1944, was one of hard, intense fighting through terrain as difficult as any Army has ever encountered.

2. The courage, steadfastness and willingness of your officers and men were equal to any ever displayed by United States Troops.

3. Every officer and man of the Division joins me in sending our best personal regards, and good wishes to every member of your command, and we hope that we may be honored again by having you as a member of our Division.

The 442nd was pleased with the tribute, but more than that, the 442nd was happy to leave the forbidding mountains and insufferable cold of the Vosges. They were to go to Nice, France. Their stay there was named the Champagne Campaign.

The 442nd was attached to the 34th Division and the 92nd in Italy. In France, the 442nd served in combat only with the 36th. In war, amid the shelling, the killings, living under inhuman conditions, a strong bond develops among soldiers.

It was in 1977 that Shim first met Serge Carlesso and his wife, Monique. Chiyo and Shim have been guests in their lovely home in Bruyeres. It wasn't until 1980 that Shim

got to know Jack L. Scott, then president of the 36th Division Association. It was through his efforts that the largest, most rewarding reunion of ex-soldiers in the United States took place in Dallas, where Shim met Kats Nakamura, a member of the 442nd.

V. Record of the 442nd The 442nd Combat Team was in the following battles: 1. Rome-Arno; 2. Southern France; 3. Rhineland-Vosges; 4. Rhineland-Maritime Alps; and 5. Po Valley .

All told, 35 officers and 534 enlisted men were killed, 155 officers and 2,478 enlisted men were wounded in action, 7 officers and 60 enlisted men were missing in action. Awards included 1 Medal of Honor, 47 Distinguished Service Crosses, 354 Silver Stars, 17 Legion of Merits, 848 Bronze Stars, 2,637 Purple Hearts, 7 Distinguished Service Citations, and 3 other Presidential Unit Awards. No other outfit of its size in World War II received as many awards as the 442nd.

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PROFILE OF AL DIETRICK, CO. B, 141 1993-1994 President

Al Dietrick was born 15, Dec. 1921 in San Antonio, Texas He grew up in a military environment, his father being a sergeant in the regular army, the 2nd Inf. Div. His mother spent her life bringing up Al & his older brother. His brother died in the Phillipine Islands at the outbreak of the War.

Al graduated from San Antonio Vocational & Technical High School as a machinist. However his natural ability to read technical drawings led him to begin his career as a Topographical Draftsman. Al served in the High School ROTC and was Cadet Capt. of Co. B. His Company received a trophy for being the best drilled Company in the Corps. He was awarded a medal for winning the Manual of Arms competition, and was awarded a medal by the Corps Commandant as the Best Officer of 1939.

Some things happened in 1939 that would shape Al's future. In 1939 he :

1. Graduated from high school with a skill that would stay with him the rest of his life.

2. He would meet Berdie Tamez whom he would marry in 1942 and today they have been married almost 52 years.

3. He joined B Co. 141st Inf. 36th Inf. Div. and would serve overseas until Jan. 20, 1944 with the division.

Al joined the 36th Inf. Div. in June 1939. He federalized with the division on Nov. 25, 1940, and sailed to Africa April 1, 1943. In July 1943 Al's unit was sent near Rabat,

Morocco, where they posted guard over some 15,000 Italian & 10,000 German prisoners of war. The month of August was spent preparing for the inevitable—COMBAT.

On Sept 9, 1943 Al landed at Salerno with the first wave. The first 1/2 hr. of daylight would be the most suspense filled time of his combat career. He would see his buddy killed by a hand grenade within 15 feet, come face to face with a German infantryman, spend 24 rounds of carbine ammo, throw 4 handgrenades into suspected enemy concentrations, fire a rocket from a bazooka at a Mark IV tank disabling it, and his platoon capture the German tank crew. He disabled one German with his M-1.

On Nov. 1943, the 141st Inf. Regt. was relieved by the 15th Regt. of the 3rd Inf. Div. at Mount Redondo. During this tour on the front line Al's platoon destroyed a German armored recon vehicle on Hwy. 6. The platoon, entrenched just 20 yards off Hwy. 6, took in one prisoner who surrendered one early foggy morning.

On about Dec. 14, 1943 the 1st Bn 141 Inf. was relieved by some of Italy's prime troops. These troops assaulted the German positions and received blistering fire causing heavy casualties. Today there is a cemetery where these men met their fate (near Mt. Lungo).

After relief and rest, B Co.'s next objective was to carry rations to the 504 Parachute Battalion. The 504 was on top of Mount Sammucro (Hill 1205). The company scaled the steep mountain beginning at sundown and dropped their rations and descended the hill by daylight. With a few hours of rest the company was ordered to go back and relieve the 504 Parachute Bn. to whom they had just taken rations.

Back on top of 1205, Al's platoon advanced along the ridge and finally made contact with the Germans. Next morning before daylight B. Co. assaulted the German positions but could not dislodge them before approaching daylight. The following morning the Special Forces troops supported by B Co. and elements of D Co. were successful in driving the Germans off Mount Sammucro. Al spent Christmas Eve on this hill and the company was relieved one day later.

The 141st Inf Regt. next moved into the Mount Trocchio area for the assault on the Rapido River. It was here that Al ended his service with the 36th Div. He suffered torn knee cartilage and after recovery was assigned to the 229 Ord. Evac. Co. unit that transported tanks and armor to armored divisions. When the war ended Al was in Augsburg, Germany. He returned home with the 69th Inf. Div. and was discharged on Oct. 20, 1945 at Camp Fannin, Texas.

Back home to his wife and family, Al settled down to a Civil Service career at Kelly AFB. He attended San Antonio Junior College and achieved an Associate of Arts degree. He gained the title of Architectural Designer and served at Kelly AFB 37 years before retiring. Still restless he worked an additional 8 years at University of Texas Health Science Center in the Plant Services Dept., again designing laboratories, classrooms, administrative offices, etc.

It wasn't until 1984 that Al Joined the 36th Div. Assoc. and the San Antonio Chapter. He served two years as Sec. Treas. and 2 years as President of the San Antonio Chapter. He was also chairman of the 141st Inf. Monument project that was dedicated 13 April 1991. He served as Editor of the Chapter Newsletter for two years and is currently editor of the 141st Inf. Regt. Newsletter, "The Morning Report." In March 1990 Al served on the Monument Committee for the 50th Celebration at Brownwood where the Division first encamped after federalization. In 1990, he joined the Historical & Records committee

to develop the 36th Div. Museum which now exists at Camp Mabry, Austin, Tx. He served as Vice President of the 141st Inf. Regt. and served on the Board of Directors. In 1992, he was elected Exec. Vice President of the 36th Div. Assoc.

He looks forward to serving as President of the 36th Div. Assoc. in 1993-94. Then he hopes to accomplish one more task and that is to restore a 1931 Chevrolet four-door sedan he has waiting in his garage.

Al & Berdie were married Jan. 4, 1942, almost 52 years ago. They have a son, Stephen and a granddaughter, Erica. Al & Berdie live at 322 West Glenview, San Antonio, Texas where you are always welcomed.

MY BAPTISM OF COMBAT- THE RAPIDO RIVER

by
BILL HARTUNG, E-143

I landed in Naples from Oran right after Christmas. We rode most of the night by blacked-out truck to within walking distance of where Co. E., 143 Regt. was dug in...what was left of them after the Battle of San Pietro.

We really had to move fast to be dug in before daybreak. Nothing moved above ground in the daytime. There were quite a few replacements, as the 36th had been wiped out twice already. I was made first scout, since I had over a year's training in the states with the 94th Division.

My first experience before actually going into the front lines, was seeing one of our B-17 Bombers limping back alone, at a low altitude and about half-speed to their base in Foggia. Antiaircraft fire from Cassino shot it down. No survivors. The next day, a fighter plane was shot down. All we saw was a big black ball of smoke go up on the other side of the mountain. The pilot did bail out, and showed up at our bivouac area the next day. All he had was a broken leg and bruises, very lucky.

That night, the squad leader came to our foxhole and gave us the details about what was going to happen later that night. We got extra ammunition, K-rations, and were told to fix bayonets, "It was going to be extra rough," and what to expect.

We waited, went through a half-pack of cigarettes, and then was told the crossing of the Rapido River was called off. The first attempt, by the 141st I believe, was unsuccessful. I'm not sure. Another day of waiting.

The next night we WENT. It was bitterly cold, and the closer we got to the River, the colder it got. We couldn't move fast was visibility as about zero, so this made it worse to try to keep warm.

We went down a little horse and wagon road, and on the right side was an embankment about six feet high. We had already picked up our rubber boats, so we scraped against the side as we headed toward the river. A couple of hundred yards from the River

(so it seemed), it didn't seem what we were walking on was dirt and rocks. We soon found out that it was dead GI's, stacked sometimes six high. They were from the crossing the night before. They never made it across the River. When I returned from across the River the next afternoon, they were gone.

We finally got to the River about 4 p.m. We found a foot bridge, (Two 2'X12"s tied together with a guiding rope on each side to hold onto), and I and the second scout, Company Commander and Platoon Leader crossed. The CO gave us our job to do, and wanted a report back to him. We never saw him or anyone else again. The second scout and I continued forward. (We didn't know any better then). Rifle fire was cracking around my head from all sides, but I didn't know I was that close when it sounded like that, 'til later. I was to hear a lot of that later.

Rodgie, the second scout, and I kept going, following the tape laid by the (11th) engineers the night before, until it ran out. I didn't know how I made it this far, as that German rifle fire was close to us- Finally it started getting a little lighter, and we saw where someone the night before had started a foxhole the night before, but it was only about 10 inches deep. The GI was still lying there, what was left of him. This was my first sight of a guy killed in combat, but wasn't going to be my last, even for that day.

We took off our equipment and started working on the hole. Thank God for the mist and fog from the River, and our smoke screen, or we would have joined our buddy lying there as it was "lights out" now. We were about three feet deep when the Germans spotted us, then all hell broke loose. "Screaming meemies," mortars, artillery fire, and machinegun fire about six to eight inches above ground hit us. Our equipment laying outside was blown to hell, the dirt we were piling up was blown back into the hole. We still didn't know how bad off we were because when they stopped firing for a few minutes, we would stand up and try to see what was going on. All we could see were GIs being lined up and taken prisoners. The enemy also had tanks dug in up to the barrel, and fortified as bunkers with steel and concrete about two feet thick. Anyone caught above ground was gone. We finally dug to about six feet deep, and water started coming in so we quit. By this time I was bleeding from the nose and one ear. Nothing was left above ground, and the sides of the hole was caving in from almost direct hits.

All at once, when the firing ceased, someone came tumbling in on us. It was Col. Martin (143rd CO). He didn't know how close he came to be blown away because there were Germans in parts of our rear. He asked our names, what company, and told us to stay and hold out. Help was coming. He was also putting us up for the Silver Star (which we never got). He took off like a big bird. (He made it because the next time I saw him was the day before we entered Rome in June.)

By this time, it was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and visibility was pretty good. I told Rodgie we were getting out of there. I left first, not knowing which way was back. I never saw Rodgie again. I finally found parts of the tape and made it back to the Rapido. There were bodies everywhere, mostly parts, arms, legs, some decapitated, bodies with hardly any clothes left on. I thought I was going to get sick, but I guess I didn't have time, and there was always that spine chilling cry for "medic." But there weren't any left.

The bridge was about a foot under water most of the way, and stacked with bodies from upstream. A lot of the men drowned from the flow of the river with all their equipment still on. I looked at some, that is when I noticed most died with that look of surprise on their face, like "what happened?" and "why me to die this way?"

I made it back to our side, and to the road we came down on the night before. The piles of bodies were gone. I got back to our bivouac area out of artillery range. I laid down completely exhausted, and felt like I had turned into an old man overnight. I know I was never the same person again. When it hit me, I was angry; I cried and shook all over. A medic gave me something and I really conked out. When I awoke, it was almost dark. Very few men were left, but replacements would put us back to full strength. I think there were 27 left out of more than 200 men from our company, no officers or NCO's.

Our division finally gave up trying to cross the river. A truce was declared the next day to get back our dead, and only time enough for a few of our wounded.

After that, we spent our nights on outpost along the river bank. About six or eight inches of water would fill the bottom of our foxhole, so we had to bail it out and sit and stand on C-ration crates. My mom had sent me about the biggest all-wool muffler they made, and that really helped. But it would freeze up from my breathing when wrapped around my face. The cry for "medic" was still heard from the other side of the river. Very sad.

Our outfit later moved over to the mountains by the Cassino monastery. It took two nights to get up there; it was above the clouds most of the time. We couldn't dig in, but had to pile rocks up around us. The mules couldn't even get up there, so each night you either went half-way down the mountain for ammunition, food and water, or on patrol. Some choice.

We did have a ringside seat when they bombed the monastery. We were there for six weeks with no change of socks, no hot food. We finally were relieved the week before Easter. Forty-nine men, counting replacements, were left in our regiment. We had gone from regimental strength to battalion to company to almost platoon strength in the Battle of Rapido River.

I managed to survive Anzio and Rome, invasion of Southern France, and the Battle of the Bulge, then the war got the best of me. I still have problems today and have 100% service connected disability. The nightmares make it seem like it all happened yesterday, not 50 years ago.



36th Division Park Dedicated at Brownwood - Two years to the day that they landed at Salerno, 36th Division officers dedicated this monument on 9/9/45. Left to right are: Maj. Herschel Forester, LtCol Bart D. Greer, LtCol. John T. Scheumack, BG Paul D. Adams, LtCol Jack L. Rhodes, Sgt. R.T. Venable, MSgt. Robt. M. George, and Maj. T.W. Byham. Seated are American Legionnaires. In 1946, Texas Governor Coke Stevenson, during the first post-war reunion, officially dedicated the park. Texas Parks and Wildlife, when visited by Gordon Rose, could find no name change for what is now called Lake Brownwood State Park. Odd.

The Men Who Wore the T

**36th Infantry
Division, WWII**



by
**Melvin C. Walthall,
B-144th**

In the year of doubt and indecision
The T assembled its might.
One of the few who were ready
When America was called to fight.

November '41 the first unit departed
The 131st Field Artillery.
December 9th the Infantry was called;
The 144th was off to its destiny.

On a far-off island called Java
Where the 131st perchanted to be,
Fought a weary gang of warriors
The men who wore the T.

On Salerno's sandy beaches
Their blood flowed into the sea.
This was the baptism of fire
For the men who wore the T.

Then came San Pietro,
Another bath in blood.
The Rapido River crossing—
They hit it with a thud.

German machine guns answered back.
Casualties ran high in each company.
Blood was shed most every day
By the men who wore the T.

Then a place called Cassino,
Another named Castellone Ridge.
There followed Velletri and Marino
And rivers without a bridge.

Once again they boarded transports
And headed out to sea.
The invasion of Southern France
By the men who wore the T.

Northward through France, they fought
Across the Rhine into Germany.
Then into Austria and V-E day.
Happy were the men who wore the T.

Those who still lived turned about
And gazed back whence they came,
Thinking of departed buddies,
Calling each one by name.

How many times did the bugle blow?
How many deaths did they see?
Under how many acres of tall, white crosses
Lie the men who wore the T?

We should remember these men of the T
In their graves so cold and deep
And be ever wakeful to our future tasks -
They alone have earned the right to sleep.

143RD CANNONEER CHASES GERMAN ARMY IN BATTLE OF MONTELMAR

by
PAYNE V. RUCKER
CANNON COMPANY, 143

This story begins early in the morning of the first day of the Invasion of Southern France by the 36th Infantry Division.

That day was August 14, 1943, when Cannon Company, 143rd Infantry Regiment faced the enemy at the Riviera, European society's playground. No scantily clad ladies were there to greet us, but only the might of Hitler's war machine, which had cleared the beaches to face the onslaught of freedom-loving, experienced soldiers of the American Army coming ashore.

The LST that carried my tank toward the beach where it was to drop its ramp to allow it to move immediately to the battle area, was fired upon 200 yards from shore by a German cannon. The projectile hit the water close to the LST, and the explosion sent shrapnel all over the ship. I was frustrated, standing at topside with nowhere to go; I couldn't challenge the cannon, and a guy can't dig a foxhole on a steel deck.

Since the LST was not equipped to return fire, the captain wisely backed his ship out of range. He tried again to land us ashore, but got the same results. Then, after a third try he managed to dock his ship which allowed us to disembark. As my tank moved over the beach a few yards, I heard an explosion, looked back, and saw that the German cannon had scored a hit on the LST on the upper right side, just where our tank had been. Damage was slight.

The German resistance was light in this area, so we moved inward at a fast pace, a lot different from the landing at Salerno.

Along the road French civilians offered champagne and wine. I was told that after an area was cleared of the enemy, French people rounded up women collaborators and shaved their heads for being traitors to France. We saw some of them later.

Annoying Sniper Interrupts Lunch

At about noon, the front line was slowed down and we went into defensive positions. I was about to eat my C-Ration when a sniper took a shot at me and missed. I remember yelling and shaking my fist at him. Even though he could not hear me, I felt better. I went to the other side of the tank and finished lunch. The sniper stayed in the area too long. He had not noticed two riflemen approaching his area; we weren't bothered anymore.

We resumed our forward movement, with Sgt. Ashlock's tank in front of mine, and a jeep with a major behind. We took turns as to which tank would be in the lead in a probing action. The first would be the one to attract fire from the enemy.

Sgt. Ashlock's tank ran into a German roadblock manned by a small anti-tank weapon. The German commander, caught by surprise, fired and hit the road in front of Ashlock's tank, and ricocheted over my own tank.

We came near some old French barracks that must have had a German artillery spotter there. An artillery piece, probably an 88, started firing at us from the left. The gun was accurate, but could not hit us since we were behind a high embankment. The 88 shells could not hit us, but the shells would burst on the embankment or go over us and explode into the trees. I could not see the gun firing at us because of the embankment. I ordered my driver to move my tank back a few yards to the shelter of a small hill. All tanks in the company finally lined up behind the hill and we felt we could now locate the gun without exposing our tanks to disabling fire.

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Sgt. McCally Dies of Wounds

Sgt. McCally's tank, also a member of this task force, was in line behind the jeep following me. He, with his gunner, climbed the hill sheltering us. As they reached the crest of the hill, the tank was hit, killing the gunner and severely wounding McCally. He died on a hospital ship, we learned later.

Some Germans had infiltrated the French barracks, so we began to receive some small arms fire. I manned the 50-caliber machinegun on the Germans in the barracks. The enemy firing ceased, but I "caught hell." Captain Stem, our Company Commander, came up and asked me, "What in the hell are you doing firing that machinegun?" After I explained, he told me to get ready for one of the worst barrages that we have ever experienced. He was correct; every German in that area gave us a terrific barrage that lasted 30 or more minutes. My firing had drawn enemy firing.

We had managed with our 75's to silence the first gun that had bothered us but they had many more out there. All I knew about this mission until that time was that we were pursuing a retreating enemy. It was a rout, moving literally miles per day.

I learned that we were part of a Task Force that was rushing to the far end of the Rhone Valley to Montelimar. The Germans were using it to "slip" a full Army through it in an all-out retreat. We had run into to their "holding action" which, when faced with defeat, would withdraw to new defensive positions.

After dark, all firing ceased. As the enemy moved out, so we began again to move forward, continuing the chase.

Along the way we notice parachutes hanging in trees where one of our American paratroop units had landed. We drove all night and stopped at a German road block that been knocked out. A dead bald-headed German soldier, apparently too old for such combat, was lying in the road.

Hungry, I decided to eat my C-Ration breakfast, and as I sat on the ground to eat, I just couldn't muster an appetite with that old German lying so close. I dragged him by his legs into a ditch, to be out of sight, and then finished my meal.

Shortly thereafter, I was told to follow a jeep, with an officer and rifleman, of a motorized patrol in a small town. We had to check it out for the enemy. Entering the town and not finding Germans, we were told by local citizens that the Free French Army killed the Germans, and then offered to show us where the bodies were buried.

One of the women offered a jar that looked like plums floating in juice. I thought a glass of sweet plums and juice would taste great, so I thanked her and took a small glass. I downed it with one swig, throat burning. As I was coughing and trying to get my breath, an officer drove up in his Jeep and said, "Sergeant, I see you have had your Schnapps."

The town now secured from the enemy, he returned to our original position. When I returned, I noticed the dead bald-headed German I had been pulled into the ditch, was again lying back in the road. I asked loudly, "Who placed this body back on the road?" A GI who remained behind said he put the body back and also got the German soldier's watch. I realized then that I had been careless about searching the bodies more carefully, but I ordered the body be again placed in the ditch so that it would not be run over by some other vehicle.

Moving forward again, more vehicles and truckloads of soldiers joined the column. That afternoon, the column was stopped and a report was relayed back that a T. D. (Tank Destroyer) had been knocked out and the driver killed. Captain Stem pulled my platoon out of the column and ordered us to destroy the 88 that knocked out the T. D. Each time it fired, the 88's muzzle blast could be seen.

Advance, Fire and Withdraw

Since our tanks were light and fast, our strategy was to observe the 88's blast, then move fast and close, fire three rounds of 75 H.E. (high explosive), then get out of there quickly. My tank was first, followed by the others. The 88 was silenced. No one knew which tank had done the most damage. I did know that my gunner, Cpl. Gunzelman, was the best in the company and I feel he deserves most of the credit.

The next morning, we were at the edge of the Montelimar Valley. We were spotted by the enemy and they began cannon firing at our position.

As we reached the valley, I was told that there were not enough vehicles to rush riflemen to their designated positions in the valley. I carried three riflemen on my tank. My tank was not following Lt. Brinkley's tank, our platoon leader.

Traveling up a cart trail, we neared the crest of the valley as the Task Force was attempting to seal off the German retreat. Our column stopped. My tank stopped on the trail that was in full view of the enemy. From the floor of the valley came a direct hit from German artillery. The shell hit a rise to the right of my tank spraying us with shrapnel. One of the riflemen was wounded and fell off the tank. He was able to move, so Cpl. Gunzelman grabbed his arms and attempted to get the soldier inside. Then another artillery blast hit in about the same spot as before, this time fatally hitting the same rifleman. His new wound was bleeding on Gunzelman and inside the tank. I told Gunzelman to release the dead GI and he was gently lowered to the ground. One of the other rifleman held up a bloody hand to show us that his fingers had been blown off one hand. The third rifleman was uninjured, so I told him to get inside the crowded tank. I also lowered myself into it.

Bogey Wheel Damaged

Because the tank had an open turret, I would sit on a pillow I had borrowed from a house, and I could direct the driver and give fire orders just as well as before. That pillow had been pierced with shrapnel which just missed my rear end. More shells came in and one of them damaged a bogey wheel on the left side. I didn't know it was damaged until after we had completed our mission. We were just too busy firing or dodging artillery shells. The German tank couldn't be seen from our position, so we couldn't return fire, but he could see us. We had to move out of his line of fire. The bogey wheel, the wheel that turns the treads which move the tank, was about to collapse. I ordered my driver, Grunkemeyer, to move forward even if he had to push Lt. Brinkle's jeep out of the way. I shouted at Brinkley to move, and before our tank reached him, he moved.

I used to blame just about everyone for stopping our column on that trail, but now I feel it was the lead vehicle which had stopped for some reason, and military traffic was stalled. None of the stopped vehicles could go around the others because the trail was too narrow, and if a vehicle tried, it would likely topple into the valley.

We moved on up the valley and found an aid station. I asked the uninjured soldier to help his buddy get some medical help for his fingerless hand, and then get him back to his company.

We were assembled at a jumping off point for our next mission and received our fire assignment. We remained in place until dark that evening when we were told that McDugal's M7's was having a tough time of it in the middle of hundreds of Germans who were retreating through the valley. The enemy had made a stab at knocking out or capturing the M7's. (The M7's were Patton tanks with turrets removed and armed with a 75mm rifle and a 50 cal. machinegun. Ours had other weapons; one with a 60mm mortar, another a bazooka, racks of 75mm ammo, hand grenades, and TNT.)

Burp Gun Riddles Cannoneer

McDugal's had enough firepower and brave soldiers to ward off the German attempts. We moved out in a pitch dark night to help McDugal's M7's. Our tank almost got hit by a vehicle that I thought was German, which crossed very fast right in front of us. Our troops were scattered in every direction, so there was no way for us to fire into the darkness. When we met up with McDugal's force, we heard stories of combat action during the night. Dick Ryle, an M7 driver, decided to grab a rifle and fight off the Germans. A German wounded Ryle by shooting him with a "burp gun." Ryle had so many holes in him he didn't think it possible he could survive. (But he did; after a long stay in a hospital he made it OK.)

Bud Cross, an MT platoon leader, captured a German officer and his crew. One of his crew members, a Polish soldier with a family still in Poland, saw an opportunity to take revenge on the German officer. Grabbing a rifle by its barrel, he swung the butt to knock the head off the German. The officer ducked and Sgt. Cross got the hit which put him "in another world." The Pole was truly sorry he hit Cross; the German officer helped Cross to his feet.

At daybreak, my platoon of M8's was stationed as close as possible to the valley rim, with our 75 howitzers pointing downward. The valley road was teeming with activity as the Germans raced up the valley in retreat. German soldiers, tanks, trucks and every kind of weapon were trying to make their escape. Lt. Brinkley, stationed with a good view of the turmoil below, relayed fire orders by radio to the section leaders who, in turn, relayed orders to the unawares. The first orders were directed at troop-carrying trucks. We fired our guns continuously without stopping; and the recoil system got so hot that the system was slowing down. Norris, my loader, was pushing shells into the breach with his fist, and due to the fast fire, his skin began to peel off his hand. I exchanged places with Norris for a while, and I also lost some skin. We fired until we were out of ammunition and had to order more.

German Counterattack Repulsed

Lt. Brinkley excitedly ordered all guns lowered to barely clear the valley rim. He said Germans who were not wounded or killed were attempting to climb the valley wall, and it appeared they were trying to attack us and stop this debacle. The directed fire was so accurate that the Germans gave up the attack. By this time, the valley floor was literally covered with hundreds of destroyed German trucks, tanks, and dead soldiers. Many of the enemy did make their escape, but hundreds of them were pounded so thoroughly that they lost their will to resist, threw down their arms, and surrendered.

By now our guns ran out of targets, and there was an eerie silence in the valley. Infantrymen were finding some German soldiers who had not yet surrendered. My platoon was ordered to move to a prisoner collection area. The prisoners' faces reflected the devastating ordeal they had endured in the fighting, yet they were relieved that their war was over. One even grinned when I removed his watch. Bud Cross asked me to keep three P-38 pistols in my tank for safekeeping. My crew, which could not leave the tank to go foraging for souvenirs, were disappointed. Our Company Commander, Wiley Stem, had issued an order that stated: *IF ANY MAN LEAVES HIS TANK DURING ENEMY ACTION, HE WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO A RIFLE COMPANY.* I told my grumbling crew that I would mind the tank while they scooted around and made a few collections, but that they better make it quick and get back to the tank in hurry. I thought they deserved the privilege.

Machinegun Jams From Firing Heat

With my crew gone temporarily, I scanned the south end of the valley with my field glasses and saw a number of Germans descending toward the valley floor. I fired our 50 cal. machinegun into those troops until the gun barrel became so hot that it jammed. My crew, hearing the machine gun, returned. I thought about firing some 75mm shells in that area, but didn't do so since the Germans had scattered and had taken cover. Also, so many of our own soldiers were in the valley that I didn't want to take a chance of hitting them.

I think some of these Germans were the ones which surrendered to Bob Passons. While still in place at the prisoner collection area, I had heard that Sgt. Passons had captured a large number of the enemy. Passons said that he had injured himself and needed help in getting his prisoners to the collection area. I turned my tank over to Cpl. Gunzelman and,

with one of my crew, left to find Passons. I found him with a large number of prisoners, but he was limping badly.

Passons said one group of Germans had surrendered to him without a struggle. While he was lining up his captives, another group, being led by an officer, was moving toward him. Bob approached them and asked them to surrender. He did not anticipate any trouble since they could see the large number of fellow German soldiers already in American custody. Bob thought the officer would surrender his group, when one of the men took a shot at Bob. He was missed, but he jumped for safety over a hedge into ditch he knew was there. The ditch was deeper than he had thought and Bob broke his ankle as he hit bottom. While he was in the ditch, the prisoner group he had just been talking with surrendered. I and my crew member herded all the prisoners to the collection area. Bob was taken to an aid station in an ambulance. On our way back with the prisoners, we captured a single German soldier hiding in a ditch.

This concludes my part in the Battle of Montelimar, France.

(After our Company assembled for the briefing for our next mission, Captain Stem ordered me and my driver to take my tank back to Ordnance and have that bogey wheel replaced or repaired before it collapsed. In fact, the wheel collapsed on our way to Ordnance....BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY.)



JULY 4 NORTH AFRICA 43

T-PATCHERS ON PARADE - Troops of the 36th parade on July 4, 1943, according to this photo provided by wife of General Fred. R. Walker's late Aide de Camp, 1st Lt. Frank E. Burgher. (I'm sure I was in it, but don't know it's location. - Ed.)

MEMORIES FROM THE PAST—

SURVIVING GERMAN ENCOUNTERS IN FRANCE

by

GEORGE M. LEGG, C-144, LATER E-114, 44TH DIV

We marched through a small town in Southern France, (don't remember the name) then followed a railroad north for about two miles. We then stopped for the night. I was a gunner in a 60mm mortar squad of the weapons platoon in a rifle company.

Our two machinegun squads dug in on the east side of the railroad tracks; our three mortar squads dug in on the west side. Sometimes during the night, the guard on duty, a machinegunner named Smith, heard German voices advancing. He hollered, "Halt!" and the Germans opened fire with their rifles. Smith cut loose with the machinegun. The next morning, Smith found a dead German soldier about fifteen feet from his foxhole. Smith said there had been three of them apparently headed for the town. One bullet had hit the jacket around the barrel of his 30-cal. air-cooled machinegun, with a glancing shot. Fortunately, it missed Smith.

As for me, sleeping across the tracks, I didn't hear a sound. We in the mortar squads, so very tired, didn't hear the excitement, and didn't find out what had happened until morning. We stayed there all day.

On our feet as it got dark, we proceeded north along the tracks, following some tanks that had been brought up as additional support. It was a very dark night, *I mean it was pitch black*, as we entered a forest, holding on to the man in front of us to keep from getting separated. We had penetrated the forest about 200 yards when the Germans opened up with one of their best weapons, the Eighty—Eight; they had that railroad zeroed-in perfectly.

Our tanks stopped moving and we hit the rocks on the track bed. Almost as soon as we got quiet, the shelling stopped, but not for long. After lying there for about ten minutes, and just as we started moving forward again, the Germans opened up with that artillery again. My squad leader hit the rocks, stretched prone against the railroad tracks. The man in front of me was lying with his head against the squad leader's shoulder, and I hit the dirt with my left shoulder touching him and my head against the squad leader's hip, and a man behind me was against my right shoulder with his head crammed against the squad leader's knee.

The squad leader got hit in the leg, the man on my left got hit in the back of the neck, the man on my right was hit in the hand, and all I got were some rocks or shrapnel bouncing off my overcoat. My foxhole buddy, who was wounded in the neck, was the most seriously hit. I carried him back to the aid station that had been set up in an old farm house at the edge of the woods. I cut away his clothing and got him ready for the medics. As soon as the medics

arrived, we put him on a stretcher and headed for the town where an evacuation center had been set up. After carrying the stretcher back about a hundred yards, I told my squad leader there was no need for me to go back into the town as I had not been wounded. Neither the squad leader or the ammo man were seriously wounded, so they took over and I went back to the aid station. There, I asked if they knew where the company had gone. "On up the tracks," they told me.

I went out, took one look, and said "there's no way" that I was going up those tracks that night. Since I had covered my buddy with my overcoat, I looked around and found a GI raincoat, then went into the farm barn, that had a nice large shell hole in the roof, climbed into the loft, buried myself into some hay and went to sleep. The next morning I woke up with a good sprinkling of snow over me and the hay. When I started moving around, I found the loft was full of GIs.

Then I headed up the railroad tracks, looking for my outfit, and came across my mortar, mortar ammo, machinegun ammo and rifles, at the place where we were last shelled. I picked up my mortar, one bag of mortar shells, a box of machinegun ammo, and two MT rifles. I arranged these around my body, then headed north. I don't know what I would have done if I had run into an enemy patrol, but I knew I had to get back with my company and I was loaded for bear. I walked the tracks for about two miles and found one of our company standing at a gate near the tracks. He told me the company's location, so I headed for the farm buildings about a half-mile away and rejoined my outfit there.

We had lost about 30% of our platoon the night before, and fortunately, most were not seriously wounded. Our squad leader and ammo bearer were two of the three men of our five-man squad to return later in the day. (The other man, my foxhole buddy, returned to the company in Austria after Germany surrendered. His neck was still stiff, but he was alive.)

We spent the night in the farm buildings. At morning, we found rain had started during the night and continued as we advanced about a mile. We stopped, and as usual, began digging foxholes. Every time we dug a shovel full of dirt, water would fill the hole. The C.O. lined us up to move out to a better place and just as we were to move out, another outfit came up to relieve us.

After lengthy discussions, the relief outfit decided to move further on and it passed on through. They had advanced only two or three hundred yards when they ran into a well fortified German force just waiting for our advance. The relief outfit really got chewed up in that encounter, taking a beating intended for us. Once again, I guess the Good Lord was still with me, since we had pulled back just in time.

I'm not a "Holier than thou" religious man, but I firmly believe in God. Without his protecting hand, I do not believe I would have come through some of these experiences without a scratch.

I am proud to have been a member of the "Fighting 36th Division." I am also proud to have been a member of the 144th Infantry Regiment, a part of the 36th Division until shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

I joined Company G, 144th Infantry Regt., 36th Division, in June, 1938. I attended summer camps in 1938 and 1939, but did not attend the Louisiana Maneuvers in 1940 as I went to work as a field assistant for an entomologist right after graduating from high school in May, 1940.

When Company G was activated into federal service, I went with my outfit to Camp Bowie and served my year of active service along with the rest of the 36th Division. As fate would have it, when Pearl Harbor was bombed, the 144th was removed from Camp Bowie and eventually from the 36th Division.

Soon after leaving Camp Bowie, many were reassigned to various other units, and most of us eventually went overseas. The 144th eventually became a training cadre, and trained many, many men for overseas assignments. Although this organization did not go overseas, it did contribute trained men for every conceivable military organization - the medics, the infantry, air force, engineers, armored units, anti-tank, anti-aircraft, military police, paratroopers, and on and on. Many of us went overseas and many of them gave their all for their country.

I wish to pay tribute to this "PAR ONERI" regiment for its great contribution of fighting men during World War II. Some were sergeants, some were privates, some were lieutenants, and some were generals. All were "fighting men." To these men, living and dead, I say "God Bless You," and "I am proud to have trained and served with you."

THE 144TH INFANTRY

by
GEORGE M. LEGG, CO. G, 144TH

The 144th, though torn asunder,
Its members scattered far and wide,
With heads held high, will ne'er go under;
For its members served with pride.

In foreign lands, on island strands,
Where e'er our soldiers died,
The 144th lent able hands;
For its members served with pride.

"EQUAL TO THE TASK," its motto read,
And they proved it never lied,
By the living and the dead,
For its members served with pride.



I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW!

by
LT. BOB GANS, I-142

One of the most controversial actions of World War II took place during the invasion of Southern France and by a strange chance, I was right in the middle of this controversy!

For months the Allied forces had been planning the invasion in great detail under the code name Anvil. The 36th was one of these divisions to fight supported by the Free French Army. During the planning, the landing at San Raphael was considered the most dangerous of all. This was a natural harbor and the Germans had fortified it with great care. Every type of weapon and obstacle was placed in and around the beaches.

The 36th Division planners worried about it and had an alternate plan in case it proved too tough to crack. Just before the invasion, the Krauts moved a full Panzer regiment to add to the defending forces!

Well, the 142nd boarded the boats in Naples and made for the attack areas. Two days out to sea, my platoon, together with I Company, was called into the dining room of the ship to receive final instructions for the invasion of San Raphael. We crowded around a large relief map of the area and the Intelligence Officer explained our orders.

It seems the regiment was to attack at H + 6 hours - six hours after the landings at Yellow, Blue and Green beaches. The officer in charge pointed out every detail of our attack. He explained the mines, artillery emplacements, barbed wire, etc. and then he called out my name, "Lt. Gans," he said. I raised my hand. "Gans, take your platoon in on Red beach at this point and get across the beach area to the beach wall, jump over the wall and move at an azimuth of 220° to this road crossing just below Frejus. Pay no attention to the enemy until you reach the roadblock." "Oh yes he continued, "There is a German roadblock next to the road junction and if you can, clean it out!"

I was absolutely stunned! He was ordering me to lead a 28-man platoon across a heavily armed beach, reach a road junction 3 miles away - through thousands of combat enemy. "Oh yes," the officer continued, "you will start 1 hour before our main regimental attack!"

Just then, Lt. Andy Diaz of our 2nd Platoon cried out, "That's downright murder! It's crazy." I thought so too, but I didn't want to scare all of my men.

Well you know the rest. The invasion started off - Green, Yellow and Blue beaches were taken easily. Red Beach was never subdued and the early bombardments did not reduce the enemy positions. At H hour, I and 28 guys boarded our invasion boat and took our seats and headed toward the beach. My heart was pounding pretty good by now. It seemed to me we were all headed for certain destruction. General Dahlquist had gone ashore at this time at Blue Beach and the Naval Commander, Rear Admiral Spencer Lewis, was faced with a dilemma. The defenses of Red Beach had not been destroyed. What to do? Bravely, on his own he ordered the entire 142 regiment, now fully in boats, to veer to the right and land at Green Beach. This they did without a casualty. General Dahlquist approved

the change, but General Lucius Truscott, VI Corp. Commander was furious. He threatened to relieve General Dahlquist and court martial Colonel Lynch!

All went well. Red Beach was taken one day later from the rear. What puzzles me to this very day, are the orders given to me and my men. Why were we ordered into an absolute certain death trap? Why kill 29 men? Who gave such an order? Over the years, I have wondered about it and the providence that saved our lives. Could it be that someone in regimental wanted to test the awesome defenses of Red Beach? If so, what a cold and inhuman way to do it. Maybe someone, still alive in upper echelon knows the answer. I'd like to know.

Lt. Bob Gans
I Company, 142 Infantry
36th Division

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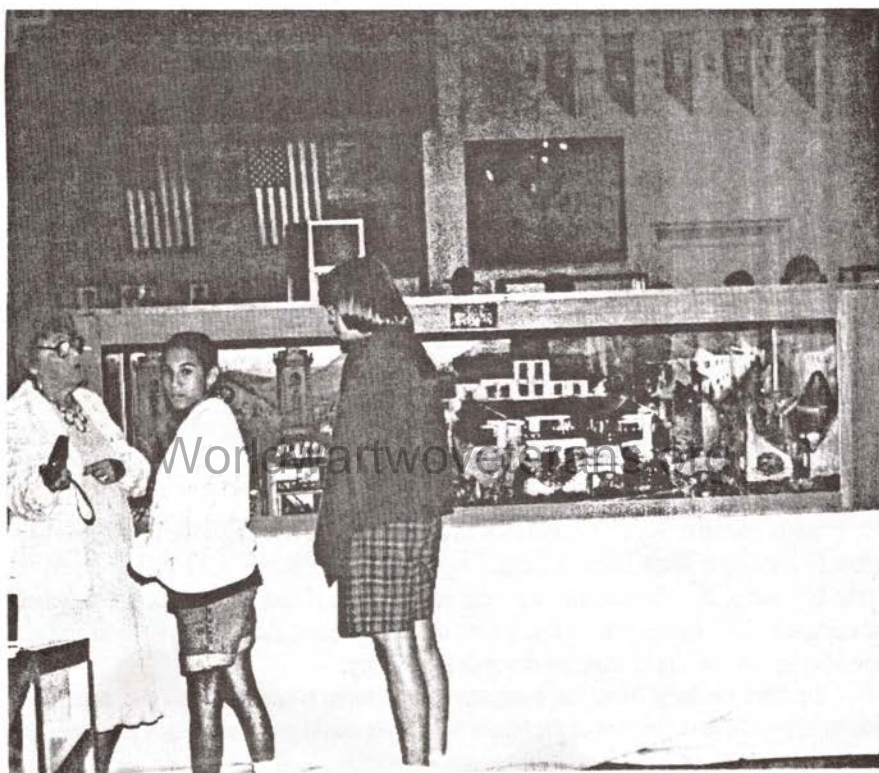


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THE 36TH DIVISION MUSEUM IS BORN - On February 12, 1993, documents creating the 36th Infantry Division National Museum were signed by Association President Gordon Rose, and Lt. Gen. Thomas Bishop, (both seated) chairman of the Texas Military Forces Museum, and MG Sam Turk, Adjutant General. Witnessing were, l to r, S/Treas Bob Faught, Past President Rusty Pope, Trustees Billy Kirby, Orville Joe Stephens and Alvin Amelunke, Assn. Exec/Sec. Leonard Wilkerson, and Trustees Payne Rucker and Hicks Turner.



School Kids Flock to Museum - At a meeting of the Museum Trustees, the museum was visited by about 40-50 Austin school children. Below, Museum Life Member Berdie Dietrick tells a couple of girls what it was all about. A few of the young visitors cried.



Red Dust and a Pile of Red Bricks

by
David Arvizu B-143

After returning from the hospital in Paris having recovered from the wounds of 17 December, 1944, near Bennwhir-Mittlewhir, I rejoined the 1st platoon of B-143 at Hagenau, France. The company was deployed on the south side of a road that ran parallel to a canal. The Germans held positions on the north side of the canal about 200 yards across from our defensive positions. At this time the situation was almost static. Sometimes our troops would fire away at some of the houses that were supposedly occupied by the enemy. The enemy would respond to our fire, but no assault was conducted by either side.

Two of our company officers, Lieutenants Demick and Blackwell started a chain of events that caused my platoon leader, Lt. Brancato to jump on me and I reacted with anger bordering on insubordination. Lt. Brancato had joined the company recently from the OSS in Italy and the 1st platoon was not very pleased to have him as their leader. To the men of the 1st platoon they only had one leader, and that was Sgt. Dick Hupman. Much to the dismay of the platoon Dick had been wounded and transferred out of the company. Sully (John Sullivan) took over the platoon sergeant position and we did not particularly care about having a commissioned officer leading the platoon. Lt. Brancato was about 5 feet 3 inches tall. I was about 5 feet 4 inches tall and we could certainly look each other in the eye. However, we certainly did not see eye to eye on many things.

One day Lts. Demick and Blackwell decided to liven things up a little by harassing the Krauts. Lt. Blackwell got a BAR and Lt. Demick a rifle, and they went to the upper floor of the house being used by my squad's defensive position. My squad had a good defensive position in the basement of the house. We had a light machine gun, a bazooka and the riflemen were placed on the windows at ground level along the side of the street across from the enemy positions. We could come in and out of the basement from a rear entrance without being seen by the enemy.

On this day Lt. Blackwell fired the BAR at suspected enemy positions, and Lt. Demick got off a few rounds with the M-1 rifle. The Germans fired back with a machine gun. At this time both officers decided to leave well enough alone and returned to the company CP.

Early the next day a German tank fired four or five rounds at the house and blew off most of the upper floor, causing bricks, wood and other debris to block our entry/exit from the basement. Needless to say we were mad as hell. If those two officers, now back in the company CP had not started this we would have a good defensive position and also still be able to use the upper level to observe the enemy.

I called for help from the company CP to have someone from the demolition section to blow a hole in the rear of the house so that we could go in and out of the basement

area. In the meantime we were getting by, "snaking" in and out by removing some of the debris.

The next day two men from the A&P platoon showed up at our position and wanted to know "what wall" we wanted blown up. I explained to them that what we wanted was to have a hole blown in the brick wall at the rear of the house at ground level so that we could get in and out of the basement. I showed them where we wanted the hole and the approximate size. I noticed that they had brought about one-half of a case of C-4 explosive. I asked them if they were going to use all of that explosive, and they said "It's better to have more than not enough." I was concerned that if they used all of that explosive it would be dangerous to anyone stayed in the basement. I ordered all the men out of the basement and told them to bring all their weapons and personal belongings with them. They all came out as ordered, but the machine gun crew did not bring out the machinegun and the bazooka was also left behind as well as the ammo for both weapons.

By this time the A&P men were almost ready to set off the explosive charge. One of them asked me if all the men were out of the basement and I told him they were all out. He then said they were ready to set off the C-4 explosive. I again told them I thought they were using too much explosive. The one who seemed to be in charge paid no attention to my remark and proceeded to lay out the wire to where they had set the plunger. The wire was connected to the plunger and then came the familiar call "Fire in the hole" and the plunger was activated. There was a tremendous explosion and a big red cloud of red dust, bricks and debris flew in all directions. When the dust settled all that remained of our defensive position was a large pile of red bricks, wood and other debris.

I was mad as hell, yelled at the two A&P men and called them all kind of names. They just shrugged their shoulders and walked away. In a short time Lt. Brancato and Sully showed up at our position and asked what had happened. I explained what had happened. Lt. Brancato asked if anyone was hurt and I told him we were all OK, but that the machine gun and the bazooka and ammo for those weapons was buried under all the rubble. He then blew his top yelled at me and really made a scene. I lost my temper, yelled back at him, told him I had done the best I could and he was not going to change anything by losing his temper. I went on to tell him I had to find another position for my squad and walked off.

He walked away mad as a hornet with Sully trying to cool him off. Later on Sully came back and told me to carry on with what I was doing and not to worry about what Lt. Brancato would do. Apparently Lt. Brancato went to the company CP and told Capt. Chambers that he was recommending some sort of disciplinary action for me for failure to protect government property. Capt. Chambers was a real infantryman's friend and a fine leader. He had a personal talk with Lt. Brancato and reminded him that he had an excellent platoon and experienced NCO's and to forget all the talk about any disciplinary action. After this incident Lt. Brancato and I got along well, and joked about how we behaved that day, and about how our excellent defensive position had been reduced to a pile of red bricks and shredded wood.

FROM A PETTICOAT SOLDIER TO THE 36th DIVISION ASSOCIATION

by
Maxine Thorward

Gentlemen: Worldwartwoveterans.org

After 45 years of complete denial of my WWII life in a dual role of a T/5 WAC and a member of JICA (Joint Intelligence Collection Agency) trained in MIS Pentagon and with a State Department contract, a frightening flash back period came gushing out. I felt like Lady McBeth sleepwalking, wringing her hands and crying, "Out damned spot!"

During those 45 years, whenever I was confronted with questions about the war, I casually admitted, "Yes, I was a petticoat soldier who wound Army red tape on little wooden spools." Subject closed.

I had never been debriefed, nor had a multitude of combat men like you. Hence, whenever we get together in little groups we still continue to swap war stories while patient and tolerant wives sit together on the sidelines bored with it all. Bless them. The psychological need to get it all out is powerful and a necessary therapy.

In Nov. 1990 when the dam broke following a news item in the San Antonio Express News that the City Council OK'd a granite monument surrounded by paving bricks with names of men and their families who fought in the 36th Division, I began to vaguely recall - I know so much more about this outfit and it was not fantasy.

I had to keep in touch with them. I did.

When the 141st Regiment monument was dedicated I attended. I had such powerful feelings of belonging! On the back of the monument are carved the eight campaigns and beach head landings of the 36th Division. I noted and documented from old letters, photos, official Army Orders, my honorable discharge, that I took an active part in four of the eight, and was stationed later in the Naples-Foggia area in Caserta, but long after it was declared rear echelon.

I could only recall for certain two incidents concerning face to face contact with T-Patchers. The incident I wrote that was published in the Fall 1992 Issue of *The Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly* and one I wouldn't write up because it involved two Nighthawks from San Antonio who could at that time have been court martialed for what they did to save my neck. This because of my respect for their excellent training. Before I got into their 2-ton, I checked their bumper ID. As I took turns updating the General's situation map, I knew exactly where their little flags on that map. Staying under cover, I asked them what outfit

they were in. Both clammed up so fast! Later I asked where they were bivouaced. Again I got rude silence. As I say, you all were well trained.

However, premonition nagged me, THEN -

I read in the Feb. '93 issue of the T-Patcher News Letter that Bird Dogger Myron Cook had turned in a long list. My attention stopped at Frank G. McDonald, Waco, Tx. who served in Hq Div and Hq 2/143 Inf. I couldn't go to the next name. I knew something more about that person. What?

Hey! In 1944 (I think) in the AFHQ in Caserta G2 Section, a Maj McDonald came in and a Maj. Arno disappeared.

Major McDonald's leaves turned silver and I knew him only as The Boss, The Secretariat, and a Texan.

This T-Patcher could have been the same person. I cannot recall ever knowing that The Boss was or had been a T-Patcher. Such was the nature of my training. I knew so very much that I was trained to know and hold in my memory bank only as long as it was needed, and then WIPE IT OUT!

I wrote a letter to him saying I was a T/5 WAC who received her mail in Caserta at G2 OI HHFQ and was in the 6666th WAC Hq Co for rations and quarters. "Is you is, or is you ain't the Secretariat?"

I got a letter back saying, "Yes, I am one and the same Lt. Col. McDonald who served in G2 Section of AFHQ in Caserta." and he gave me a lot of feed back about things only he and I would know about. (G2 people always double check identities.) He even remembered - better recall than mine - a day in 1952 when my husband and I were in Hillsboro, Texas (the only time I have ever been in Hillsboro) when I recognized him on a street in front of a store where he was waiting for his wife. Yes it was an accurate account, but G2s usually have memories like elephants. However, from 1946 to 1990 I erased my whole WWII experience, I was trying so desperately now to recall for my own piece of mind.

He's the man who sent in for a Rome-Arno Campaign battle star for me, and when it came through he brought it to my drawing board and handed it to me with congratulations. He also sent through a Meritorious Service Award for me. In his letter he said he remembered me well.

When the war was over, this T-Patcher gave me my LAST military order: "The General (British) needs some sugar for his tea." (The General had a batman and I was never asked to do anything menial,) but I was a soldier in Intelligence and immediately did exactly what was said - no hesitation, no questions. (My boss had recently upgraded my rank to T/4).

Lt. Col. McDonald was treating me like an officer. Protocol - present yourself to your highest ranking Officer to be formally relieved of duty. But I had to carry out his orders. I filled two cellophane cigarette pack covers with sugar from a mess hall and with those little square packets hidden, one in each of my big GI (mens' issue) shirt pockets, I presented myself at the General's door. The General's tea tray was nowhere in sight. He smiled when I handed him the two little packets of sugar. He went formal in relieving me of further duty in G2 Section and I was to return to a WAC unit for transportation home to the States, plus a handshake and some flattering words concerning my military performance. At the foot of the stairs, Lt. Col. McDonald was waiting for me. He put his arm around my shoulder and walked me to a little back door I always used, said some flattering goodbye words, shook

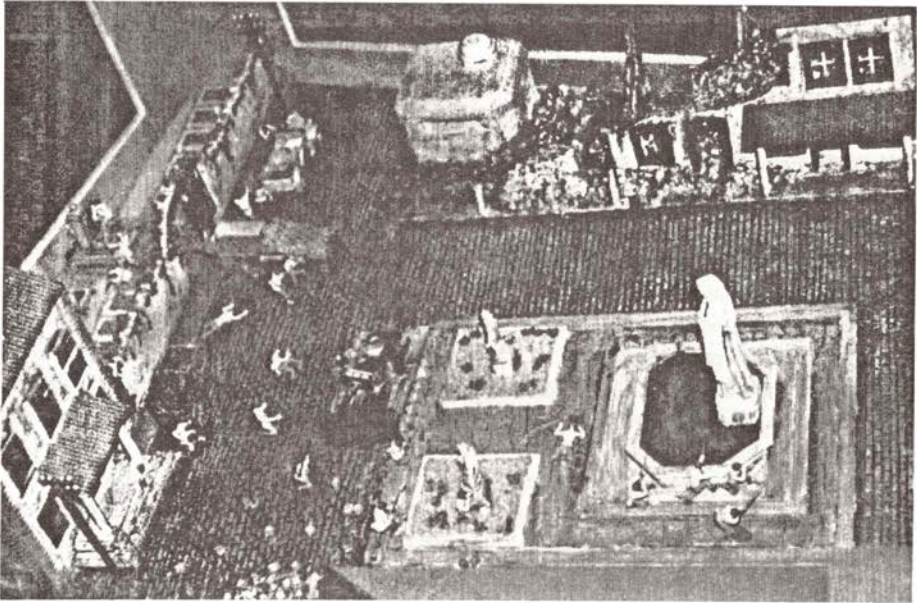
my hand, and I was no longer in Army Intelligence, but on my way home to the States. I had served my term of "The duration and six."

As I said in the article I wrote for the Quarterly: "I never expected anyone to believe me."

Lt. Col. McDonald, Sir! Please come to the next reunion. We have so many old war stories to share. Did I know you were in the 36th Division? You see I'm now an Honorary Member of the 36th Div. Assoc. and an Assoc. Member of the San Antonio Chapter and always believed inside that I belonged there.

Maxine M. Thorward

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The diorama of Velletri at the Museum.

‘First In Spite of Hell’ Motto Gives Way to ‘We Play the Game’

by
Capt. Raymond E. Kane, Battalion Historian

JUNE 10, 1945, IN GERMANY

VOL. 4. NO. 5

T-PATCH 36th Division News

Just a little more than 75 years ago, the 131st Field Artillery Regiment, a large, bulky outfit, landed in France during the summer of 1918.

Moving north from the port of Bordeaux, the artillerymen trained at Redan and then pushed on to Coetquidan on 4 September, 1918. The flamboyant insignias of the French units, and their flair for organizational banners and badges, proved a challenge to the ingenuity of the swaggering Americans.

Answer to the question was quick in coming. Capt. Ed Yinger, Waxahachie, Tex., Commanding Officer of Service Company and Regimental S-4, combined the colors of the artillery and the fleur-de-lis, denoting service in France. Below the distinctive device, he wrote the slogan, "First In Spite Of Hell." He had his insignia constructed in front of his headquarters in white-washed rock.

Col. Claude B. Birkhead, who later became Division Commander, commanded the 131st Field Artillery Regiment. He approved the design and slogan. All units in the two battalions, comprising the regiment, took up the new insignia. Col. Walter G. Jennings, now the Sixth Corps Ordnance Officer, served as a second lieutenant with Battery E, and later as a battalion executive officer, before he was transferred.

After nine months of occupation in Germany when the war ended, the 131st returned to the United States with the "First In Spite Of Hell" insignia adorning their lapels and campaign hats. It was a proud outfit and a proud insignia.

In 1923, all National Guard Divisions were reorganized and placed under close observation by the War Department. Unit insignias were scrutinized. The insignia was approved, but strangely enough, the motto, "First In Spite Of Hell" was frowned upon.

It fell upon Col. Golding, the new commander, to choose another slogan. Upon the crest was imposed the much milder, "We Play The Game."

The "We Play The Game" insignia is represented all over the world. In November, 1941, before the regiment was triangularized, the 2nd Battalion hailed from San Francisco, wearing the insignia. Two days before Pearl Harbor was bombed, their transport had sailed from there. When war was declared, and the Pacific was alive with Japanese warships, the 2nd Battalion sailed into the teeth of the enemy.

On December 7, 1941, the transport headed for the Philippines. A change of orders was received on the high seas and the single boat turned toward Australia. From there they were sent to Java, attached to a Dutch division to fight the Japs. Today, their history is shrouded with mystery. Fragments of heroism which have seeped through have shown how much glory has been added to the shield.

Though the "We Play The Game" slogan remains on the crest, the "First In Spite Of Hell" better suits the Battalion. For it was the first artillery unit to land at Salerno; the first artillery in Division Artillery to land in Southern France; the first artillery unit to fire around in Germany; the first artillery in the Division to cross the Rhine; and the first artillery in the Division enter Austria.

Ed.(Bill Jary): Almost all the facts made available in the story behind the 131st Insignia were recalled by Maj. Ross Ayers, Waxahachie, Tex., Battalion Executive Officer, and the only officer, now present, who also mobilized with the unit back in 1940.

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Heroics of Beach Battalion at Salerno

THE HEROIC ACTIVITIES OF SEAMAN SECOND CLASS ROBERT DANKE AT THE SALERNO INVASION

ROSTER OF PERSONNEL INVOLVED

DANKE, Robert	708 97 61	S2c	V6
FOLLMER, George	377 59 86	BM1c	M2
THOMPSON, Charles W.		Lt. MC	USNR
THOMPSON, James Woodrow	552 29 30	HA1c	V6
DESHOTELS, Philip P.	274 68 77	PhM3c	USN
WEISE, Clarence Herman	576 26 81	PhM3c	V6
JOHNSTONE, Elmer Ruel	653 36 85	HA1c	V6
DENEEN, Richard M.	643 05 97	Cox	V6
GUNNELLS, Clarence L.	Sgt. 531st	Eng. Shore Regt.	
BENTLEY, Everett Judson	183764	Lt. D(v)	USNR

On D-Day of the invasion of Fortress Europe, Plt. C-7 of the Naval Fourth Beach Battalion landed on Yellow Beach at about 3:30 AM under the daylight glare from those brilliant German chandelier flares.

We were clearing the beach of obstructions, setting up communication centers and medical stations. During these early morning hours, there was relatively little enemy fire. However, soon after daybreak, the beach was virtually shut down because of enemy 88mm fire from the tanks, small arms snipers and machine gun fire.

In midmorning (at approximately 10:00 AM), a wave of nine landing craft approached the southern end of Yellow Beach near the outlet of a small stream.

The intense enemy fire turned the landing craft back, but a British LCM carrying an estimated 45 soldiers received a direct hit from a German 88mm shell fired from one of the Panzer tanks which were using the ancient earthen aquaduct (several hundred feet behind Yellow Beach) as a shield to hide behind.

The landing craft was helpless and drifted shoreward until it lodged on an outer sandbar about 100 yards off the beach opposite where our foxholes were located in the lee of the first grassy hummock of the beachhead.

At about 10:30 AM, from his foxhole next to Robert Danke's, Sgt. Clarence L. Gunnells called to Danke to ask if he could hear the calls for help coming from the stranded landing craft.

The writer's foxhole was only a few feet south of their foxholes from which their conversation was easily overheard. Gunnells urged Danke to go with him out to the landing craft to see how many soldiers were still alive and if they could help.

In spite of the continuing heavy artillery fire, small arms and machine gun fire, nonswimmer Danke (wearing a life preserver) accompanied by Gunnells swam out to the boat. Their efforts to remove the two surviving, severely wounded soldiers was unsuccessful because the water was too deep.

So Gunnells suggested that Danke go after a line to tie to the boat so that they could try to tow it to shallower water. Danke started to swim back, but meanwhile, on learning of the problem, Bos'n George Follmer had procured a line and swam out to the boat and joined Danke and Gunnells in their efforts to save the injured soldiers.

It was at this moment that another shell hit the landing craft setting it on fire and injuring Gunnells with the shrapnel. After the three of them had towed it part of the way to the beach, other members of our 4th Beach Battalion commandeered a truck and hauled the landing craft to the water's edge.

Disregarding his injuries, Gunnells climbed into the landing craft and with the help of an unidentified Army doctor, lowered one of the wounded soldiers into the arms of Danke and Thompkins and the other soldier into the arms of Deshotels and Weise.

The wounded soldiers were carried to shelter under the bank of the small stream where Plt. C-9's Doctor, Lt. Thompson, C-9's Corpsman Johnstone and C-7's Corpsman Thompkins gave them plasma and prepared them for evacuation.

The extreme physical and emotional stress in Danke's efforts to save these wounded soldiers reached his limit. He then barfed and collapsed on the beach. He was carried to the writer's foxhole by Corpsmen Deshotels and Weise. Danke stayed in my foxhole until midafternoon recovering from this experience...through several air raids. During one air raid, our foxhole was strafed. This continuing enemy fire kept the beach closed until after dusk.

The writer strongly urges that Robert Danke's recommendation by his Commanding Officer for the Navy Cross Commendation be given favorable consideration in view of

his complete disregard for his own safety in his heroic efforts in rescuing these wounded soldiers.

Dr. Thompson made the statement in his medical report of the incident that these men voluntarily exposed themselves to small arms sniping, machine gun and enemy artillery fire as well as to the very real possibility of explosions from the gas tank of the burning boat. Their action undoubtedly prevented the wounded soldiers from perishing, according to Lt. Thompson's report.

Respectfully submitted,

James Q. Townley,
Editor, 4th BB Newsletter

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SEARCH FOR A WARTIME BUDDY PAYS OFF

by
Jack Leura

A young Frank Santacroce, from Sag Harbor, NY, had two buddies when he went through basic training in 1942, Jack Leura and Dave Lalicata. It was just as the war against Germany was escalating in Europe, and American replacements were being sent across the Atlantic to relieve the men and women who had already put in their time. Within days of meeting, the three had become good friends, and served together in the same company, A-111th Eng. Regt, 36th Division, until circumstances separated Santacroce from them; one forever, and one for nearly fifty years.

On Christmas Eve, 1942, Santacroce arrived at Ft. Leonard Wood, MO, and met up with Leura and Lalicata as the three began their training for the Engineer Corps. Little did they know, however, that their engineering skills would have a lot less to do with how they spent their time during the war than they imagined.

The three traveled to Nashville for two months where they learned welding, then on to Grant City, Ill, for more engineer training, then on to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey, before traveling across the Atlantic to Africa, in June, 1943.

The temperature was 115 degrees in the shade in a place where you couldn't find any shade.

36th Division Assignment, 111th Engineers

After arriving in Africa, the Allied invasion of Italy began, and the three soldiers were assigned to A Co., 111th Combat Engineers, 36th Division. Although they were in different platoons, the three kept in touch, and shared many of the same experiences.

It was in Italy that they learned the Army had other duties in mind for them; they were taught about explosives, and how to use them. After fighting it out in the bottleneck of Cassino Valley, A Co. was ordered above Rome to Grosseto. The enemy controlled the high ground, and those moving along the valley floor were easy targets. They were sent back to Naples for more combat training, where we saw the port was filled with Allied ships as the invasion advanced.

The 111th was sent to France with the idea that they would be relieved within 10 days. We were advancing so rapidly, however, that it would be 125 days before relief came, and for David Lalicata, that would be too late.

The Army Can Always Find A Job For You

We were engineers; we didn't always have the same thing to do, and when you're standing around without an assignment, the Army will find one for you.

One day, the Army found just the assignment for Frank's platoon.

We were told to take three days' rations, and when they gave nine heavy chocolate bars, I thought, "Oh Jeez, we're carrying explosives!" (The chocolate was intended to give the men energy, and keep them awake.)

The Co. Commander, not wanting to assign any one particular platoon to the job, weighing the danger, had platoon leaders to draw straws. Frank's platoon got the short one.

The assignment was to take 2,000 pounds of TNT and a bunch of rubber rafts up the river and blow up a bridge. If they couldn't get back, they were told to hide-out with the French underground.

Attack Virtually Annihilated Platoon

Although it was clearly a dangerous mission, it turned out to be a fortunate one. That night and two succeeding nights, the Germans severely attacked the Allied positions and the mission was scrapped. However, the attack virtually annihilated the platoon that Jack Leura was in. Only a handful of stragglers returned, and Leura was not among them. With one friend killed and another missing, Frank changed companies and left the service in October, 1945.

When Santacrose, a member of American Legion Post 388, thought of his friends in the ensuing years, reading histories written about the 111th, hoping that

there would be some mention of Jack Leura, but all of them noted that he was MIA. For the past 48 years, Santacroce has believed that his friend with whom he spent basic training, and with whom he trained in explosives, died the night Santacroce's platoon got the short straw.

That was, until one night this past January, when Frank's wife answered the phone from a man asking if it was Frank Santacroce 8 residence. "Yes," she replied.

Is he Alive?

"Did he serve in the Army in Italy?" came from the voice on the line. "Yes," she said...and then there was a pause, as Santacroce noted this week, the voice wanted to ask if he were alive. "Yes, he's right here," said Mrs. Santacroce, handing the phone to her husband.

It was, of course, Jack Leura, who had not forgotten his "Frank" Santacroce. In fact he had thought of Frank often, as well, but when Jack scanned histories, he couldn't find the name of his friend. Because of his wounds suffered in a combat company, Frank had changed companies as the war was ending.

After 48 years of remembrances and replaying the march through Italy, and the battle in France over in his mind, Frank finally got to meet his surviving buddy. Jack Leura, as it turns out, has a granddaughter who went east to take a job in New York—that made Leura take a longshot. He knew Frank was in New York some place, out on Long Island, maybe, and sent his granddaughter on a "mission." It wasn't long before she turned up a Santacroce in Sag Harbor, and turned the phone number over to her granddad to make the call.

The two war buddies were reunited after nearly a half century on Sunday (June 20, 1993) at Frank's Jefferson Street home.

It was the nicest—simply the nicest—time I've had in my life, and then there was a pause. "I don't know," said Frank, "how do you say how you feel after 48 years?"

Well, my experience in combat was almost similar to his, except I was captured in the town of Bonjeu, France, 25 miles from Montelimar as the enemy was attacking on August 25, 1944. I was firing from a window of an old barn. The enemy saw my fire and shot me through the shoulder. However, I couldn't get away since the enemy had surrounded the town with a Panzer division. We were marched some 50 miles that took about a week. The Germans did take me to their field hospital and treated my wounds, but returned me to my buddies for the march.

We were loaded into railroad box cars and continued on to Germany; strafed almost daily by American planes until we got to our destination, Stalag 12-A. After 2 weeks there, I was transferred to Stalag-III- C, about 40 miles from Poland. My wounds healed.

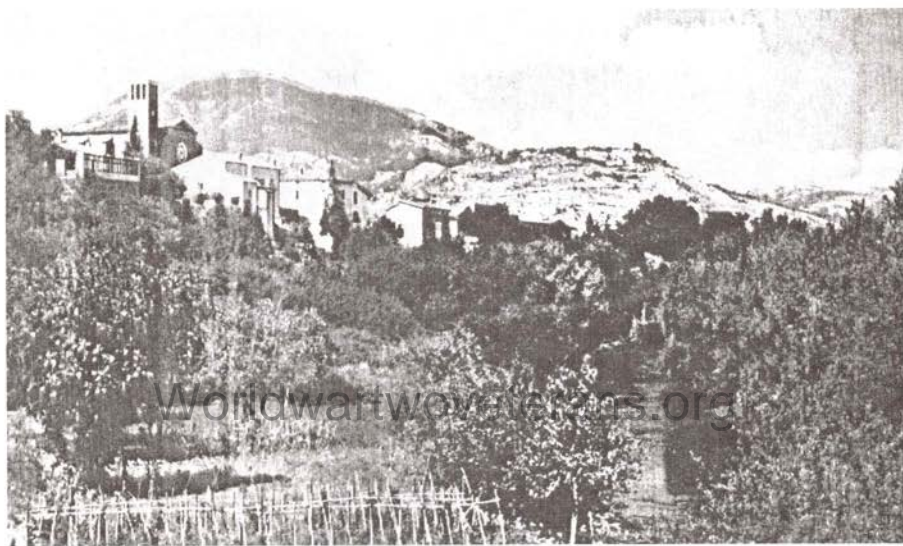
On February 1, 1946, I was with a group of five prisoners who escaped from the prison camp. The escape was easy because the Russian Army was advancing

toward the camp. The German guards, who considered themselves as noncombatants, got very nervous and left their posts, so we took the opportunity. Many of us rushed out of camp toward the Russian combat lines. When we approached closer to their troops, rifles were aimed at us, then they lowered; we were taken to officers for interrogation. Then they discovered we were escaped American prisoners-of-war.

We were taken to Lodz, Poland; stayed there for about two weeks, then transferred to Odessa on the Black Sea in Russia. After living in box cars for two weeks, some of the Russian soldiers told we would be taken to another part of Russia for better protection, but we knew very well it was to the labor camp in some unknown area.

It was our good luck that a British ship came in to port to unload military equipment for the Russian Army. The British officers got wind of our predicament, and ordered the Russians to release us to them. The British then returned us to Naples and the American Army. I was glad, of course, but also sad that I had lost track of a friend who would remain lost to me for 48 years.

PS: I was a professional boxer when I entered the service, and returned to box from 1945-50. I am Cmdr. of the San Gabriel ExPOW Chapter, at present. I'll be going to Italy on the 36th Division tour, Aug-Sept.



Monastery hovers over Rapido River - This excellent photo shot by T-Patcher Joe Pinto on the recent battlefield tour shows San Angelo (left), the placid Rapido River (foreground right) and on the high ground atop the Monte Cassino, the Monastery overlooking the Rapido River River Valley.



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MAJ. GEN. FRED L. WALKER



T-Patch

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MILLION DOLLAR MOUNTAIN TO SAN PIETRO

by
Colonel Vincent M. Lockhart

On 21 September 1943 the 36th Division was given the limited mission of outpostting the old beachhead area and given time to reorganize and re-equip for further offensive operations.

The Luftwaffe was very much in evidence in those early days in Italy. The nightly raids on the great port of Naples were the principle harassment as the 36th Infantry Division rested and trained in the Pozzouli area just north of Naples. Two bombs dropped in the ancient cemetery back of the Quartermaster dump one night, leaving huge craters, but no one was injured.

Early in November, the Division assembled in the Pignataro, Villa Volturno area. On the 15th of November we reentered the line in the mountainous Mignano sector.

First back into the line was the 142nd Infantry, which relieved the 7th Infantry of the 3rd Division on 15-16 November. The following night the 143rd relieved the 30th and the 141st relieved the 15th.

The rest of the month of November was rainy, muddy, cold and quiet, although the Division lost more than 550 officers and men from the heavy enemy artillery fire and from patrol actions. Non-battle casualties brought on by the severe weather and poor living conditions were three times this amount.

But this was the lull before the storm.

Small clouds loaded with the promise of rain floated above the mile-high mountains. In the West a dull red glow marked the setting sun. The day of 2 December 1943 had been ominously quiet and those who were "in the know" awaited the hour of 1530.

Members of the Division Forward CP left their tents to walk to higher points of advantage overlooking the valley that stretched back toward Naples.

A salvo of heavy guns blasted the quiet twilight and the echo beat back and forth in the Italian mountains.

The barrage of the "Million Dollar Mountain" was launched..

For thirty minutes 600 guns crashed and thundered. The twilight did not fade, for the flashing lights of gun muzzles illuminated the valley. The black and white blast of landing shells marked almost every square yard of Mount Maggiore. Some light howitzers rammed a round a minute for those thirty minutes.

Not since El Alamein had such an array of artillery signalled an attack.

Nightfall brought the rain, the blackness that only an Italian winter seems to have, and the launching of an attack on Mount La Difensa by the newly assigned First Special

Service Force. At 0300 the following morning, the First Battalion of the 142nd Infantry Regiment pushed off from the ridge just west of Mignano and by 0817 had taken the next ridge, known as 370. At 0400 the Second Battalion started the attack which sought to break the hold of the Nazis on their Winter Line. Men under the command of Lt. Col. Samuel S. Graham of Huntsville, Texas, drove through the rocks and over slippery trails with incredible speed, considering the terrain. They occupied Hill 596 by 1130 and by 1700 hours had crossed over Hill 619 to capture the crest of Mount Maggiore. The Third Battalion followed them closely and took up the defense of Hill 596.

By 0420 Colonel Robert T. Frederick's Special Service Force men of Canada and America had stormed the rocky fortress of La Difensa and passed on to hold briefly the adjacent Hill 907.

Early the next day, the 4th of December, the First Special Service Force was forced to withdraw from Hill 907, which they re-took two days later after a bloody battle. The 142nd Infantrymen consolidated their hold, from which they could have seen the famous Abbey de Monte Cassino, had not continuous rain blocked all vision. On 8 December, the First Battalion relieved the First Special Service Force.

The task of supply and evacuation was almost insurmountable, and for the first time, T-Patch men were supplied from the air. Mule packs and man packs took rations and water to the defenders, and gallant litter bearers became bleary eyed and almost walking unconscious men as they worked continuously to evacuate the wounded. From Mount Maggiore to Mignano was a twelve-hour one way trip. The distance was only five kilometers, "as the crow flies," but no crow was found hardy enough to fly it.

Gallant work by such medicos as Private Clarence O. Whately of Snyder, Texas, who dressed wounds under fire and started the evacuation chain, and such "pack men" as Technical Sergeant Shag Garrett of Santa Anna, Texas, who led a pack platoon across the treacherous fire-swept trails to the Second Battalion, won them the undying gratitude of their rifle packing friends and Bronze Star medals.

The 143rd went into action on the night of 7 December and stormed the snowy, sleety heights of Mount Sammucro, famous among the men as "1205." By 1100 hours on the 8th, Sammucro belonged to the men of the First Battalion and the Second and Third battalions had commenced a series of attacks on the fanatically defended fortress city of San Pietro.

If versatility alone had been the price of success, then San Pietro would have been ours for the asking. The 141st Infantry was marked for its dashing courage, the 142nd for its clever maneuver and the 143rd for its rugged and persistent pressure.

Upon this foundation was heaped accurate artillery, gallant fire directed from the rocky slopes with the infantry or by those debonair "cub" observers who played tag with the low flying clouds and the towering mountain peaks.

Add to this basis the point blank fire of the tank destroyers, from positions taken in darkness despite minefields, and the reckless courage of the tankers who drove into action despite the narrow confines, and you have the reason why, by the end of the week, the fortified little village at the foot of Mount Sammucro was ours.

The First Battalion of the 143rd during the early part of the week fiercely clung to the granite crags of 1205 despite fanatical counterattacks by an enemy determined to hold

the Winter Line. In one day alone nine counterattacks were launched and beaten back, and the swirling snow banked around the bodies of once proud "supermen" of Hitler.

This observation taken from the crafty enemy, the Second and Third Battalions of the 143rd launched an attack from the ridge just east of Ceppagna and along the slopes toward San Pietro. This was the first of a multitude of encounters with the German system of fortified villages and cities. The intense automatic fire, barbed wire and mines halted the attack after only a few hundred yards had been gained.

The First Italian Motorized Brigade, operating under "T-Patch" control, had simultaneously charged the barren Mount Lungo, but had been driven to their original positions.

In quick succession, the next few days unfolded a story of aggressive heroism that vies with all the incidents in the colorful history of the Division.

The 142nd Infantry, relieved of their hard gained posts on Mount Maggiore by the British, used the cover of night and crossed the Peccia River to attack Mount Lungo from the left rear. The surprised Germans were caught flat footed. More than a hundred died that way, while 33 trudged back to the POW cage and the end of the war for them. The success was made possible by men like Corporal Jesse D. Hollemon, Jr., of Texas City, Texas, who gave his life in the effort, and Second Lieutenant David O. Gorgol of Binghamton, New York, who charged into an emplaced machine gun and killed its operators with a submachine gun. Both were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

The 143rd maintained its relentless pressure on the east flank of San Pietro, with the Third Battalion high up on the slopes below the cliffs of "1205". The determined, aggressive leadership of such officers as First Lieutenant William J. Langston of Douglas, Georgia, made advances possible under the most adverse circumstances. He was awarded the D S C.

The First Battalion began its sweep west from Mount Sammucro down the Clelle Morello, and the roster of Distinguished Service Crosses mentions almost every company: Private First Class Robert E. Watson of Charlottesville, Virginia; Staff Sergeant William F. Parrott of Rusk, Texas; and Second Lieutenant Melvin F. Wiggins of Paris, Arkansas.

In one of the bloodiest battles fought by the Division, the 141st Infantry charged across the valley from Mount Rotundo to add the third side of pressure against the stone village. Company G, led by Captain Charles M. Beacham of San Antonio, Texas, bore the brunt of this attack. Casualties were heavy. Every man of the company exemplified courage, with the example set by the commander.

Wounded in the face by the shell fragments, he continued to lead the attack. The radio operator was a casualty and Captain Beacham took up the instrument until blood from his wounds seeped into the radio and impaired its operation. Still refusing aid, he moved over the fireswept terrain, reorganizing his company and preparing to resume the attack. Another shell sprayed his entire body with fragments. Weakened from the loss of blood, he turned the company over to his executive. He refused to be carried from the field, but aided another wounded officer and two wounded men through the heavy fire to the battalion aid station.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I was the awards and decorations officer in Division Headquarters at this time and wrote the citation for the D S C which Charley, a close friend

of mine, earned. At one of the Association conventions years later, he and I were having drinks and recalling the Battle of San Pietro.

"Vince," he said, "do you know what I was thinking there in that foxhole with blood all over me?"

"I imagine you were wondering if you'd get out of the damned place," I said.

"No," he said, "I thought to myself: Beacham, you're a goddamned hero. Ole Vince will have a helluva time writing this up!"

Private First Class Robert L. Arnett of Boles, Kentucky, was killed by snipers as he coolly laid covering fire for three comrades who eliminated a machine gun emplacement. Private First Class Dallas D. Prather of Princeton, Illinois, was undeterred by a wound and continued on boldly to draw fire in order to expose enemy positions. Both Arnett and Prather joined Beacham in receiving the D S C.

Blasted from three sides by such extraordinary heroism, the few remaining Germans ran out under cover of night. Patrols at dawn found San Pietro ours. The terrible effects of artillery and aerial bombs completely devastated the little village and it was never rebuilt. The Italians built another San Pietro, identical with the original, just a half mile to the west.

The battle shifted to Clelle Morello and the hilltop stone village of San Vittore.

At this time, the action by Divisional units was confined to slow, bitterly contested ground fighting by the 141st and 143rd regiments. The greatest gain of the week was the capture of the high ground overlooking San Vittore by the First Special Service Force, operating, as was the 504th Parachute Infantry, under the command of the 36th Division.

The 15th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Division relieved the 142nd Infantry Regiment, which assembled as Corps Reserve in the Venafrò area.

Outstanding work during this period was particularly done by the 111th Combat Engineer Battalion. The newly won valley below San Pietro had literally been blown apart. The engineers had the task of restoring roads and bridges and building new roads.

The type of "plain guts" and "stickability" exhibited by these "castle-men" can be exemplified by Private First Class Felix Guss of Company C, whose home was in Windber, Pennsylvania. The Germans were literally shelling the hell out of the area where Guss was working, but he kept doggedly at his job. Then some ME 109's and FW 190's came over, bombing and strafing the road junction. He kept at his job, even though some of the artillery shells were landing within fifty feet of him. A second air raid just after noon caught him still at his post. He was killed. But his work and his inspiration to his fellows carried on. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star.

Despite the fact that he was dazed by the bombing, Private First Class Leroy O. Gloor, medic from Gonzales, Texas, stuck at his job of treating the wounded during the attack. He also won the Silver Star.

The bitter attacks against San Vittore were unsuccessful, although if heroism alone would have won the battle, such men as First Lieutenant James A. Wharton of Baltimore, Maryland, of the 143rd Infantry would have led the way to victory. In offensive action, Lieutenant Wharton was painfully wounded. Battalion Headquarters needed to be advised of the situation. Wharton set out across open and rocky terrain to reach his radio.

En route he was twice again wounded, but he continued until he reached the radio, reported to his Headquarters, then calmly directed mortar fire which knocked out the opposing machine guns. He received the Silver Star.

Combat action over those snow swept hills can be epitomized by the actions of Sergeant Hugh H. Merritt of Snyder, Texas. His citation for the Distinguished Service Cross reads:

"Sergeant Merritt volunteered to join a patrol with the mission of reconnoitering a large draw at the base of a hill. The patrol, after working its way down a trail under intense enemy artillery and mortar fire, advanced cautiously into the draw and suddenly found itself within five yards of a hidden German machine gun nest. Having been surprised by the patrol, a member of the enemy crew attempted to fire the machine gun, but Sergeant Merritt opened fire on the German gunner, killing him. He then charged the remaining four Germans who had opened fire with machine pistols. He shot the commander of the enemy crew, but was unable to prevent others from escaping, because another enemy machine gun nearby opened fire on the patrol. The group successfully accomplished its mission, but while returning to the company post, Sergeant Merritt was fatally wounded by enemy mortar fire."

From just before Thanksgiving through December 1943 Division Forward was located on the slopes of the mountains above the little Italian town of Presenzano. Our offices were tents. We slept in caves up above our office and mess location.

General Walker shared a small cave with General William H. Wilbur and Colonel Clayton P. Kerr. The aides and general staff group slept in a medium cave close to the general's cave. Our cave had been enlarged by man for grape storage. All others slept in a rather large natural cave about three hundred yards east of the general's cave.

Two of the occupants of the general staff cave were Lt Col Fred L. Walker, Jr., the G-3, and his principal assistant Major Robert H. Travis. They were staunch friends and most effective officers.

We normally arose to go down to breakfast at 6:00 o'clock and would stay "down there" through lunch and dinner and walk up the narrow, dark trail to the caves about 10:00 p. m.

I recall one late evening, when "Ace" and "Zilch", as they called themselves, were walking up the trail arm in arm after a difficult day.

"Just think, Ace," Major Travis said. "You have taken this on as a career!"

Ask any old timer about New Years Day of 1943, and if he's from the 142nd Infantry or the 132nd Artillery, he'll shiver and move closer to the fire and tell you to shut up.

If he's from the other T-Patch units, he'll shiver, smile wryly, move closer to the fire and tell you to shut up.

The difference is that for the 142nd boys and their artillery counterparts there was little to smile about on the blizzard swept slopes of Mount Sammucro and the hills overlooking San Vittore. There was a grim sort of humor to the storm that wrecked most of the tents of the rest of the division in the rest area at Alife.

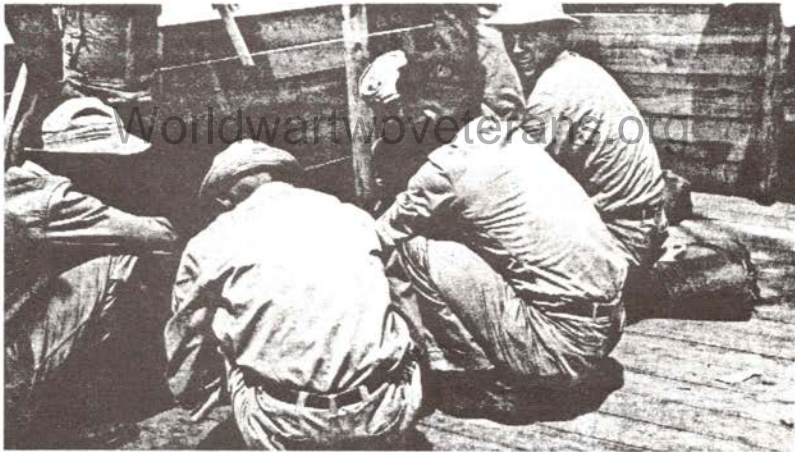
Rear echeloners and combat men alike had a rough time of it as the icy wind howled down out of the Italian hills and ripped out corners of tents, uprooted pegs, and otherwise disturbed what was left of the New Year after the customary celebration.

NEXT INSTALLMENT: The Rapido River.



Bowie
by
Burrage

*At left is 2nd Lt.
Richard M. Burrage
1st Platoon, A-143.
Below, payday crap
game, 1st Bn. 143d
Infantry. April 1941.*

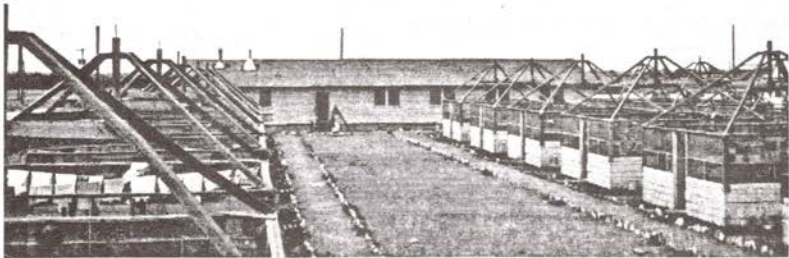




Bowie by Burrage

by Richard Burrage

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HOW I BECAME A MEMBER OF THE 36TH DIVISION

by

Lieut. Colonel James D. Sumner, Jr.

I was a 1st Lieutenant serving as company commander of a heavy weapons company in the 60th Infantry Regiment of the 9th Infantry division in 1942. On the morning of November 8, 1942, my unit made an amphibious landing at Port Lyautey (now known as Kenitra) in French Morocco. Port Lyautey is located on the northwest Atlantic coast of Africa. At the time of the invasion, there was Spanish Morocco and French Morocco. Since 1957 these two areas form the nation of Morocco.

In the invasion I received a battlefield promotion to Captain and was awarded the Silver Star.

Shortly after the fighting ended in French Morocco I was asked by Brigadier General William H. Wilbur to be his Aide-de-Camp. He was a very interesting officer. At one time he was regimental commander of the 60th Infantry. General Wilbur was a West Point Graduate and was in school there with Generals Patton, Eisenhower and Bradley. Furthermore, he was a graduate of Ecole Superior de Guerre in the same class as Charles de Gaulle. He was probably the strictest disciplinarian in the Army and was a fanatic about physical fitness. Wilbur, a colonel at the time of the invasion, had talked General Patton into putting him on his staff for the invasion of North Africa, but had no particular assignment. During the invasion he performed heroic duties over and beyond the call of duty. For these acts he received a battlefield promotion to Brigadier General and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Now that he was a General he was entitled to an Aide de Camp. Unknown to me, General Wilbur had decided that he wanted me for his aide. He knew me well. He had appointed me a company commander when I was a Second Lieutenant in the 60th Infantry Regiment at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The problem was that I was now a Captain, and a Brigadier General is only entitled to a 1st Lieutenant for an aide. General Wilbur talked to General Patton about the problem. General Patton informed Wilbur that he would transfer me to his headquarters in Casablanca and assign me to the G-2 (intelligence section), but that I could be Wilbur's Aide de Camp. General Wilbur approached me about the assignment. At first I was reluctant to accept. However, after much pressure was placed on me I accepted. So in December of 1942 I joined Patton's staff and became General Wilbur's unofficial aide.

At that time General Wilbur and several other staff officers were living with Patton. I likewise took up residence in the same villa with Patton and 7 other officers.

This assignment led to many fascinating and unforgettable experiences. I met all of the world leaders at one time or another, such as President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill,

Charles DeGaulle, General George Marshall, etc. I was also present for the Casablanca (Anfa) Conference.

General Wilbur and I stayed with General Patton in Casablanca and Rabat until General Patton was transferred to Tunisia. Incidentally, this is the starting point in the movie "Patton."

Thereafter, General Wilbur and I were assigned to the headquarters of the 5th Army situated in Oujda, French Morocco. 5th Army was commanded by Lieut. General Mark Clark. While on the staff of 5th Army, General Wilbur and I started a Battle School at Slisson, Morocco, which is near Sidi Bel Abbes (at that time headquarters for the French Foreign Legion). Incidentally, this was the first Battle School that the American Army had ever established. General Fred L. Walker, Commander of the 36th Division, visited the school in July, 1943. Later, over a hundred officers from the 36th Division attended the Battle School.

When the invasion force left Africa to go to Italy, General Wilbur and I went along. He had no particular assignment. I remember that we made the voyage on an LCT (Landing Craft Tank).

General Wilbur and I landed at Salerno (more accurately, at Paestum) on D Day. We had some exciting, historical and frightening experiences upon landing in Italy. (If the editors so desire, I could relate some of these experiences in another article.)

Of course the 36th Division was part of the amphibious landing at Salerno on D Day.

After the fighting had eventually ceased in the Salerno area, the 36th Division was withdrawn from combat.

It is common knowledge that the 36th suffered severe casualties during the invasion. In fact one entire battalion became a casualty through captures, injuries and deaths.

Reorganization of the 36th Division started before fighting at Salerno had ended.

General Wilbur, at one time or another, had commanded several 36th Division units during the fighting at Salerno. General Walker was very impressed by General Wilbur's performance. On September 15, 1943, General Otto F. Lange was relieved of his position as Assistant Division Commander by General Walker. General Wilbur was named Assistant to replace him.

Reorganization of the Division continued after it was pulled out of the fighting. Lt. Colonel Joseph S. Barnett had commanded the 3rd Battalion of the 143rd Infantry Regiment during the amphibious landing. After the fighting, he was relieved of his assignment and Major Howard K. Dodgen of Temple, Texas, was appointed Commander of the 3rd Battalion. He had previously been the Battalion Executive Officer.

I had been General Wilbur's Aide-de-Camp approximately 10 months and I had some fascinating experiences in this position. This assignment was most enjoyable, but it was my desire to return to a combat unit. Several requests to be assigned to a combat unit had been denied, or ignored, in the past. Now my request was granted. Fifth Army Headquarters transferred me to the 36th Division on September 20, 1943. I was then designated by the 36th Division Headquarters to be the Battalion Executive Officer of the 3rd Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment on September 23, 1943. I served with the 3rd

Battalion, from September 20, 1943 until June 24, 1944 when I was wounded in action at Piambino, Italy. At that time, I was the Battalion Commander. My rank was Major.

And that is how James D. Sumner, Jr. became a member of the famous 36th Infantry Division.

SOLDIER ‘CLOSE-CALLS’ REST ON BULLET WITH NO ‘NUMBER’

Worldwartwoveterans.org

by

SGT. JAMES E. FARMER

(The following was written by Army Correspondent James E. Farmer in the Spring of 1944.)

WITH THE 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION IN ITALY — A strange type of German shell or bullet which bears no certain soldier’s “number” has been described here in a grim jesting by infantrymen of the 36th (Texas) Division. This kind of missile bears a number which is either one digit above or one digit below “your number.”

The shells and bullets are those mentioned in the narrow-escape stories of combat veterans. Some sound like tall tales, but they’re all true.

Probably the “Prince of Close Calls” is a Texas Irishman called “Old Folks” by his buddies. He affirms that he has foiled German attempts to do him in with concussion grenades, artillery shells and land mines. And all he has had to show for the experiences have been a few bruises and a hole in his helmet.

Here is Old Folks’ story:

“Our platoon was pinned down behind a ridge by a machinegun. I was sent forward to locate it and knock it out. The moon was so bright you could read a newspaper by it. I crawled over the ridge and up a small incline toward a wall-like structure at the town’s edge.

“All was quiet, strangely quiet. I quit crawling and decided to lie flat, to locate the machinegun’s crew by sound— by waiting and listening. Then I heard something plop at my side. It was an egg-shaped object, a German concussion grenade. I knocked it out of my range with my hand and then it exploded. Another plopped at by my side and I knocked it away, too.

“I knew there must be a German looking down on me from above, carefully tossing grenades at me like he was throwing cards into a hat. The third grenade plopped farther from my side. I picked it up and tossed it in the direction of the German. A fourth grenade landed out of reach. I ducked my head in a shell hole and waited for the explosion.

“There was a ‘bang’ and I felt something hit my leg. It seemed like my leg was partially torn off. I dared not move it. I was afraid it might not be there at all. But when I did feel it, I discovered it was completely whole and only bruised — not even any blood! I aimed where I thought the German was peering over at me and fired. All was quiet again. Then I was ordered to rejoin my platoon.”

Old Folks’ story goes on with him in position on the flat top of a knoll where four German artillery shells hit within a 400-square-foot area. Luckily, they were all duds. Said Old Folks, “I’ve heard of two duds falling in succession. And maybe now and then three duds, one after the other. But that was the first time four ever fell like that.”

His platoon was crossing an open field when a buddy in front of him stepped on a mine. Somehow by instinct Old Folks dropped his head forward as the mine exploded. A fragment hit the front of his helmet, penetrated the steel and inner liner and then stopped just short of entering his forehead.

Another infantryman owes his life to a small Bible he was carrying in his shirt pocket over his heart. A German bullet spent itself in the book’s pages. Similarly, a map saved a signal wireman who had driven through an intense shelling. He stopped his jeep to refer to a map in his hip pocket. Lodged in the folds of the map was a piece of shell fragment.

A shell hit inches away from one “double foxhole” in which two soldiers were lying. It burrowed into the ground under their hole, threw them into the air and then peeked its nose out on the other side of the hole. The shell was a dud. The two shaken GIs offered their thanks to what one called “a worker in the Czechoslovakian ammunition factory.”

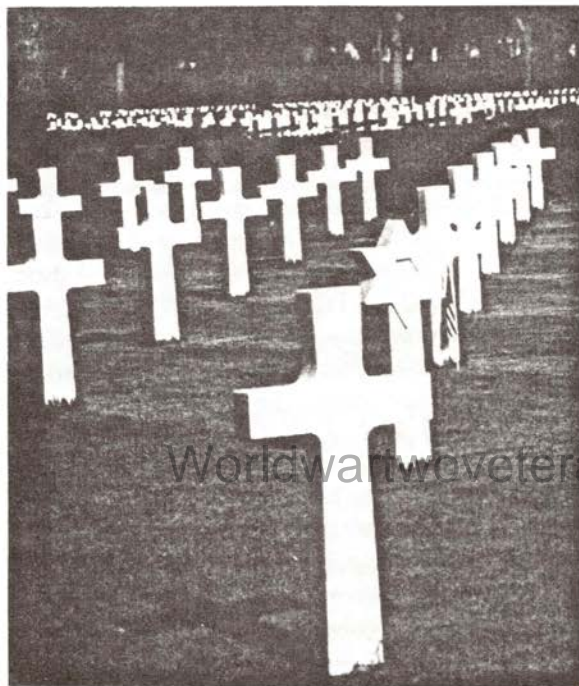
Another dud landed between the legs of an artilleryman who was crawling up a mountain slope to his observation post. The shell came so close it bruised both legs.

By what they called “instinct or just plain luck,” two doughboys told how they were at the right place at the right time. They’d been lying in their front-line foxholes for many hours under many shellings. They decided they’d give their bodies a stretch by crawling a few yards behind them to a building. Another shelling opened up after they reached the building. When they returned to their holes a few minutes later, they discovered a shell had made a direct hit on one hole and that a tree had fallen into the other.

Many soldiers here have marvelled at the luck of Sergeant Charles (Commando) Kelly, the Congressional Medal of Honor winner, who went through more than 70 days of the fiercest combat with no more than a scratch on his nose.

Kelly’s complete lack of fear meant he was “sticking out his chin” at the Germans more often than most soldiers, they rationalized. Once when the Pittsburgh hero was out on a patrol — and closer to the enemy than the buddy who shared a foxhole with him — the pal was killed by a direct shell hit on the hole. At one time his company encountered such deadly resistance, the casualties narrowed down its non-commissioned officer personnel to only Kelly.

Most of the narrow-escape survivors make the same observation as Old Folks: “I don’t know how I could be so near ‘my number’ and yet be so far from it. I really believe a sort of Divine guidance has brought me through.”



MEMORIAL DAY PRAYER

Dallas, TX

Memorial Day, 1993

Fr. Denis O'Brien

National Chaplain,

1st Marine Division Assn.

Almighty and Divine Creator, Loving Father of all mankind, Thee we adore, Thee we thank for every grace and blessing - for life, for the freedom to speak to Thee, each one of us in our own way, wherever we may be. Permit us to bless Thy holy name.

Around us here there does not lie any summer soldier, any sunshine patriot, any craven who fled our nation's shores, and, smirking, abandoned others to survive the unmarked paths of harm's way.

We are in the presence of those who did not run when Uncle Sam said, "I need you." Many fell in combat, many others were called by the Supreme Commander later on. We are honored, and humbled, to be in the presence of those who lie here, who await us, who demand that we speak out, and act, to keep clean the honor of our nation, and that we not forget the majesty of Duty, Honor, Country.

*IT IS THE SOLDIER, not the reporter who has given us freedom of the press.
IT IS THE SOLDIER, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech.;
IT IS THE SOLDIER, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to demonstrate:*

IT IS THE SOLDIER, not the TV evangelist preacher who has given us freedom to worship;

IT IS THE SOLDIER, who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and whose coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag.

God of our fathers - from war's alarms, be Thy strong arm of our ever sure defense. Fill all our lives with love and grace divine, and glory, laud and praise be ever Thine. Amen.

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The Fighting 36th



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