

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

## HISTORICAL Quarterly

THE MAJESTIC white-coated Alpine peaks dazzled in the warmth of May sunshine.



COVER STORY

**It's Over**  
155th Field Artillery Battalion  
History from 10 May to 31 May '45,  
Austria

**VOL. XIII, NO. 2, SUMMER 1993**

Published by  
36th DIVISION ASSOCIATION

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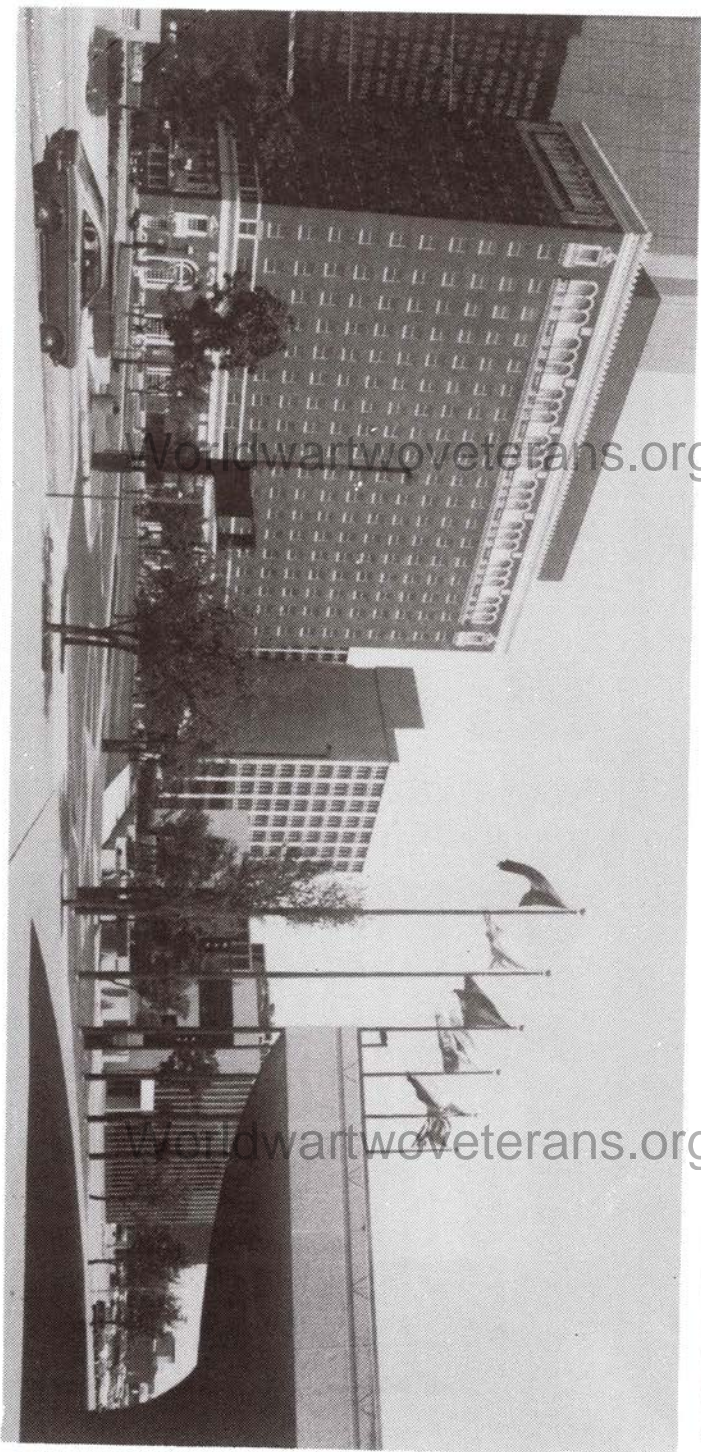
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**SITE OF THE 68TH ANNUAL REUNION -  
SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 3, 1993**



**RADISSON PLAZA HOTEL - FORT WORTH, TEXAS**



## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

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# It's Over

## 155th Field Artillery Battalion History from 10 May to 31 May '45, Austria

From 5 May to 10 May the Battalion was in the vicinity of SPARCHEN, Austria, located about one mile outside of KUFSTEIN, Austria, and organized guard and security details in support of the Military Government. These details included guard of one displaced persons camp, a prisoner of war enclosure, used car lot (captured enemy vehicles), and two roving patrols. The Battalion's Personnel Section was with the 36th Infantry Division Rear Echelon in the city of KUFSTEIN. For off duty hours, recreational facilities were made available at a nearby lake on the outskirts of the town.

The battalion was alerted on 11 May for displacement to an area near SCHWAUBMUNCHEN, move to be made on 14 May. This, however, was changed the following day and reconnaissance was directed by the Battalion Commander to be made by 1st Lieutenant Raymond F. Kent, Lawrence, Mass., Battalion Assistant S-2, to the vicinity of MEMMINGEN, BAVARIA; displacement of the battalion would not take place until 15 May; the battalion was requested by 36th Infantry Division Artillery to furnish 23 trucks to haul personnel of the 141st Infantry Regiment.

On 13 May the Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Clifford M. Snow, of Amarillo, Texas, and Captain August C. Moser Jr., the battalion S-3 of Dallas, Texas, and eighteen enlisted men of the battalion left for the United States. This was the first quota of World War II Veterans of this battalion to return to the United States. In the absence of the Battalion Executive, on leave in the United Kingdom, and Major Lawrence D. Gilmer having been transferred a few days earlier to the 36th Infantry Division Artillery, the departing Battalion Commander directed that Captain William L. Bush, of Cane Hill, Arkansas, Assistant Battalion S-3, assume command of the Battalion, pending the return of major James T. Clarke, of San Antonio, Texas, from England. The same day Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division Artillery orally directed Major Gilmer to rejoin the battalion until the Battalion Executive returned to the unit.

On 15 May the battalion, headed by Captain Sylvan A. Garfunkel, of Savannah, Georgia, marched the battalion to the new area in the vicinity of MEMMINGEN, via KUFSTEIN, DEGENNDORE, MIESBACH, BAD

TOLZ, PENZBERG, SCHONGAU, KAUFBEUREN, BUCHLOE, and MIDELHEIM and closed in at 2230 hours.

The following day, 16 May, by VOGG, 36th Infantry Division Artillery, Major Lawrence D. Gilmer, Houston, Texas, was placed on Special Duty with the battalion as Battalion Commander and Major Burl G. Lassetter, with 36th Infantry Division Artillery. The battalion's mission in this area was guard and policing in the sectors formerly occupied by the 698th Field Artillery Battalion and 451st AAA Battalion, who were relieved by this unit. Guard posts included a displaced persons camp, one monastery, one prisoner of war camp, one red cross supply warehouse, one used car lot and roving patrols, plus local security – all in the vicinity of MEMMINGEN. The Battalion Command Post, Headquarters Battery and Battery "A" were actually located in a suburb of MEMMINGEN (MEMMINGERBERG). The other batteries were in the city of MEMMINGEN.

On 17 May the Battalion Personnel Section moved with the 36th Infantry Division rear to KUAFBEUREN, and the next day Major James T. Clarke returned to the battalion and assumed command, Gilmer as Acting Executive in the absence of Major Lassetter. Battery "C" and Service Battery were moved to the area near Headquarters Battery and a barracks arrangement for all personnel was set up in the group of houses formerly occupied by families of German Air Forces.

Within a day or two, baseball diamonds were made in some of the batteries; these, with boating and swimming at a nearby lake, provided recreational facilities for personnel in off duty hours. Baseball and softball games were scheduled and played within the battalion and with other units of Division Artillery.

On 31 May Battery "A" was relieved of guard duties and began a week of training in accordance with training schedule set up by the Battalion S-3. Battery "B" was moved to the far outskirts of MEMMINGEN in order to be near the displaced persons camp which they were to guard.

Eighteen more enlisted men departed on 22 May for the United States, and Major Lawrence D. Gilmer was transferred back to the battalion from 36th Division Artillery. With Major Gilmer as Executive Officer, the Battalion Commander directed that Captain Walton M. Vines, Pinson, Alabama, Commander of Service Battery and Battalion S-4, be brought to the Battalion Staff and take over the duties of Adjutant, thereby centralizing all administrative matters. This change took place on 27 May. Captain Richard B. Hawk, of Dallas, Texas, returned to the battalion for Temporary Duty in the United States on the 28th and was placed in Service Battery as Commander and S-4. This same day Headquarters and Battery "A" returned to guard duties the night before.



## **Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly**

At the end of each week's training, the respective batteries were inspected by the Battalion Commander and Staff. Inspection was made of quarters, motors, material and kitchens.

Passes for personnel to Paris and furloughs to England were issued through higher echelons, but these were on a smaller scale than when the unit was in combat.

At the end of the month, the Battalion was manning a total of 15 guard posts and security details, which included two displaced persons camps, one prisoner of war stockade, a captured enemy vehicle lot, 5 banks in the city of MEMMINGEN, AMG Headquarters, security check point (coords X785-248), a shoe warehouse, water works and three roving patrols – plus local security within the various organizations. Court duties necessitated the release of Captain Gaffunkel from the Provost Marshal assignment, which was taken over by 1st Lieutenant Raymond F. Kent, Battalion Assistant S-2.

Stanley W. Huth  
WOJG, USA

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





# Combat Soldier

James Estep – Co. E, 142nd Infantry

I remember, as I am sure you do, our first days in service and our first landing on enemy soil. We were gung-ho — we were in action, and our blood was flowing fast! Let's get on with it; let's get it over with! But as the day wore on, and as we saw the toll being taken and the carnage, the idea of survival became the number one priority. They say, and it is true, that if you make it the first twenty-four hours in combat in an Infantry Rifle Company, you are an old veteran. What you have to look forward to after that is being killed, wounded, captured or the war being over.

The reactions of men in combat are not all alike when they face being killed or maimed. Some might scream, some might run, sit and cry, some might shake with a chill, some might even maim or kill themselves. Most, however, even though scared to death, carry on the duty of getting the job done, and the zombie-like motions of survival.

Any man in combat has to face many (not one) death threatening situation every hour, every day, every week, every month or even years or until you or it is over. Every man has to choose flight or fight — live or die. These nerve-breaking decisions are piled on one after another day after day and take their toll on the human nervous system. There is a limit to human endurance, not only from combat alone, but add the elements — the numbing cold in winter, the unbearable heat of the jungle, the biting and gnawing of hunger, the unquenchable thirst, unsanitary conditions, the exhausted zombie-feeling from lack of sleep or rest, the never ending desire to wash your face, brush your teeth and comb your hair, the never ending feeling of loneliness, and the mud, snow, sand, dust, insects, snakes, and the blazing sun — plus the constant crying and moaning “medic, medic I'm hit.” The look in the eyes of begging, hungry, starving children, all take its toll on the human nervous system.

In the infantry during war time, dying is the cost of the real estate, because you are either trying to hold or trying to take. It is a necessary cost of doing business. The infantry is what moves the lines on the map.

We know, and I have seen, those who can stand more than others. How this can be may be more understood if we knew the family upbringing and inherited traits in each individual. So each man going into combat is carrying within himself more things than he is aware or dreamed of.

It has been said that “Discretion is the better part of valor,” which means using good judgement at the right moment to save your life or that of others -- such as in combat.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

But it was soon forgotten in the joy of reliving those dramatic times when leaving for war and risking death were the stuff of which heroes were made. I stood there and listened to my father talk war for the first time. He told about lying, saying he was from Texas, just to get in Company B. He told how they lined dead Germans up and down a street so the general could ride by and see the troops hadn't been wasting time.

I listened and tried to figure out their war. *How did it feel? What was it like?* What about the Nazi armband, the things in your top drawer? He answered my questions by pointing around the room. There's the Coleman sheriff. H.F. Fenton. He was one hell of a soldier. We respected him. We trusted him. You have to trust a man in battle. Hamilton – he was in my platoon. Should have made lieutenant. You ought to talk to these guys. Clevenger still looks the same. Ray Greaves – he was there when I got shot. Took down my name while Magwire lifted the tree off me. Lt. Bland was standing right there chewing tobacco and – *which one's he?* – next thing you know WHAM! He was dead. Shot through the face.

Dempsey Albritton. Youngest man in the company. Harold Cook. Cookie. See Strickland over there? He was captured by the Germans. He's 6-foot-4. Can you imagine a foot soldier that tall? He shot the bazooka if I remember right. *Wait a minute! Captured by the Germans? What happened? How'd he get out?* I dunno. I think it was in 1944. He was caught one day, and I didn't see him again until yesterday.

"You see these guys. I'll never forget them the rest of my life." A man from my father's platoon explains the bond. "It's been 30 years, but we'll always be friends. We faced death together."

"When you've been in a foxhole with somebody and they're shooting over your heads, you don't forget who was there," said my father. "You saw them get killed and wounded, and they came and left every day. It takes a while to remember, but you don't forget."

"You remember a guy named Miles Anthony? He had a picture with him of the most beautiful girl I ever saw," said Strakbein. "We sat there in the hole looking at that picture, and I told him, 'If I was you, I'd walk on over the hill and go home. If I had that waiting for me, I'd go home.'"

*Where is Anthony now? Is he here? Where's the girl?* "Yeah, Anthony. He died at Selestat. Remember? It's crazy, but I've wondered about that girl for 30 years. . . so beautiful."

"Do you guys remember Rome? One more hill, then Rome. One more hill, then Rome. That's what they kept telling us." My father's turn. "Do you remember marching into town? Do you remember how quiet it was, and then they started clapping? I'll never forget. And then it was like thunder? Remember?" *Chills.*

It went on like this for two days. The minds of these men held the war.



The person who says that he is not fearful at certain times is not mentally normal, or he is kidding himself. I have experienced the whole range of emotions -- from fear, anger, despair, hate, love of fellow man, and hope. I have seen the face of terror and felt the stinging cold of fear. As for my way of thinking, they were all heroes, just some more than others.

As any combat soldier knows, miracles do happen, especially on the battlefield. I am sure each and every one of us consider it a miracle that we came out of the war alive and with part of our faculties remaining. We have all witnessed them in our many days of combat.

My wish and prayer is that our children or grandchildren will never have to be put through this test of agony and torment. I feel the same as George L. Skypeck when he wrote "SOLDIER":

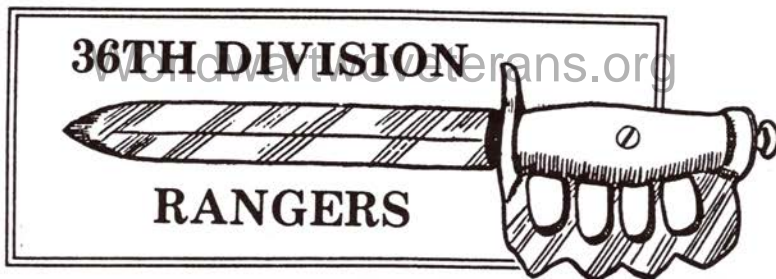
Worldwartwoveterans.org  
I was that which others did not want to be.

I went where others feared to go, and did what others failed to do.  
I asked nothing from those who gave nothing, and reluctantly accepted  
the thought of eternal loneliness... should I fail.  
I have seen the face of terror, felt the stinging cold of fear, and enjoyed  
the sweet taste of a moments love.

I have cried, pained, and hoped... but most of all,  
I have lived times others would say were best forgotten.  
At least someday I will be able to say that I was proud of what I was  
... a soldier."

So when you meet a wearer of the Combat Infantry badge, say a little prayer, for he may have just returned from a battlefield of hell for you, me, old glory and our great country.

Love, respect and honor this great land. Please do not show disrespect for our flag, for you never know when a recipient of the blue badge with the silver wreath may be near by.



## 'HISTORY'S GREATEST JAILBREAK'



5TH ARMY TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT POUR ASHORE AT ANZIO.

U S Army Photo 177-2

Re-printed from  
The Charleston Gazette Mon., June 1, 1959

(Editor's note: Kenneth L. Dixon was with Texas' 36th Division in World War II when it broke out of the Anzio beachhead. He is a former Associated Press staff writer and now is managing editor of the Lake Charles, La., American Press. The following anniversary story of the breakout was written bit by bit in a Galveston, Tex., hospital where Dixon is recuperating from an operation. "I've always felt the guys deserved that this story be told in full some day," Dixon said.

By Kenneth L. Dixon

Fifteen years ago this weekend a comparative handful of Texans — native and adopted spearheaded what came to be known as "history's greatest jailbreak."

They broke the Allied troops out of Anzio beachhead after four months' imprisonment there, and they opened the road to Rome.

**And they did it without firing a single shot — without a single cartridge in a single rifle barrel, for the work that night was done in silence, with knives, bayonets, homemade garrotes and a hand grenade only as a last resort.**

These men of the 36th (Texas) Infantry Division infiltrated the German Alban Hills defense lines, worked their way up and around the key town of Velletri and staged a Wehrmacht retreat that became a rout long before it reached the Tiber.

**IT WAS A** classic infiltration because of its silence, its success and its almost total lack of casualties. Yet it was doomed to obscurity for three reasons.



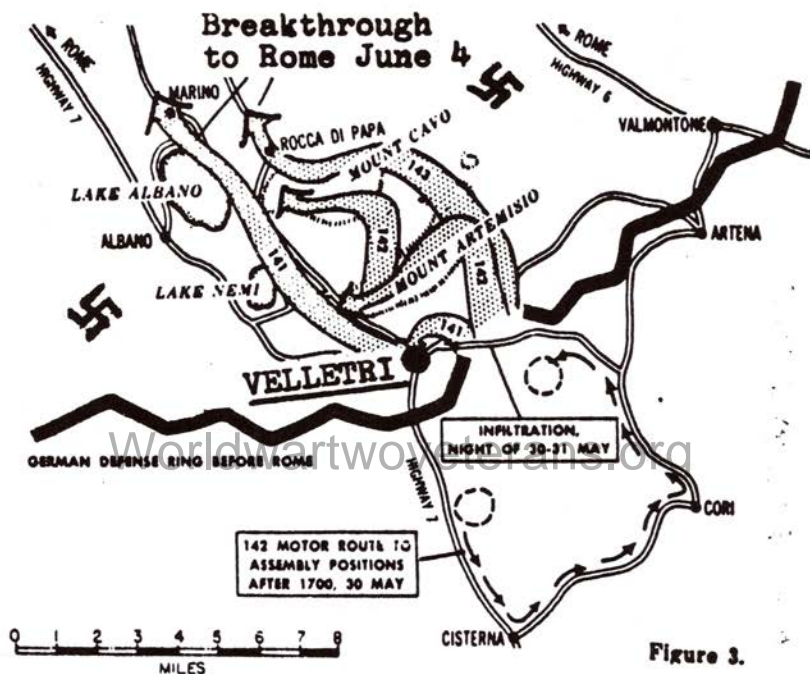
First, Fifth Army Commander Mark Wayne Clark did not believe in identifying individual units under his command. Second, Rome fell right on the heels of the operation. And third, the Normandy invasion caused the world to forget Italy.

But even had we known, none of that would have mattered to those of us dug in on top of the Alban Hills 15 years ago Sunday morning. I was along as an Associated Press war correspondent.

**WE HAD WALKED**, climbed, skulked, crawled and fought our way some eight circuitous miles to gain the ridge, some three miles behind German lines. And behind us, platoon by platoon and company by company, the entire second battalion of the 142nd Regiment had come, slowly spreading out after it crossed the combat lines.

By dawn, the entire regiment was in position — or near it — atop the ridge, and the next regiment was flanking its way up on our right. Before it was done, almost the full effective combat strength of the division had moved through a widening hole where, short hours earlier, a single rifleman could not have walked in safety.

Up there at long last, we were looking down the Germans' throats, and they didn't know it yet. We turned and started down — and what fighting there was to be done was done.



## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

**NERVES TIGHTENED** an hour before dusk when we stated a feint in a swing back away from the lines. The Germans could see every move from the hills.

They grew tighter as we swung toward the combat line at dark. A sniper killed a lieutenant five yards in front of me. They caught the sniper, a man in civilian clothes. Two men took him back into the woods. There was a shot. They came out. The line moved on in silence.

At the checkpoint before crossing the combat line, the regimental commander — a raw-boned bemoustached West Pointer — gave the orders tersely. Not a shot was to be fired. To make certain, all rifle barrels were cleared. Clips and magazines could be full, but not a cartridge in a rifle chamber.

**"GET THIS CLEAR,"** the colonel said, "one shot can ruin the whole operation. This is a night for knife work — knives, bayonets, bare hands, strangling any way you can. As a last resort, you can use a hand grenade; they may mistake it for an on-coming mortar."

**We crawled and climbed almost as much as we talked. There was no smoking and no talking. Once after a brief halt, the man in front signaled to me and pointed. Over against a tree sat a German soldier, wearing two grins in the moonlight — a white one where his teeth were bared, and a red one three inches below . . .**

A planned firefight broke out along the line to our left to distract German attention.

**FLARES PINNED** us down in a vineyard. A dog held up the whole straggling line until one of the scouts silenced him. A scout, sheathing his knife, said, "It must be safe here if you guys from regiment are along."

**We passed one or two exhaustion cases. Weariness became a nightmare. So did nervous strain. One man went berserk and had to be gagged until he calmed.**

So went the Veller infiltration. When the Germans awoke to the fact that a full regiment was above and behind them, they panicked and headed out of Velletri and up the road to Rome. Those who didn't were captured or killed.

The rush to Rome was on. Except for delaying tactics, roadblocks, snipers and occasional resistance pockets, the back of the last German defense before Rome was broken.



# Mr. Coffee

by George Kerrigan

Every squad or platoon has a character or two, and my outfit, Company A 142 infantry, was no exception. But I was proud as hell as my gang could fight like hell and keep a low profile.

Now take "Werzbicke" for instance. He was from Johnston, Pennsylvania. He carried everything possible, including a 6 foot shovel, and a bicycle pump. But, mostly he had a pack loaded with "C" ration coffee. Most everyone threw the small cans away, but Werbilly (as we called him) loved them and said we were all crazy; he loved coffee, and made it whenever possible. In eighteen months I saw him make thousands of cups of coffee, but never saw him fire a shot in combat.

We were in a lot of fights in Italy and France, but one of the wildest fire fights was in France in the "Lyons" area. It grew dark, and after almost fifty years I can still see the tracers and hear the bullets and artillery shells bursting.

Someone yelled "Where's Kerrigan?" and he was screaming so loud that I could hear him between explosions. So I got out of my fox hole and headed toward the screaming, crawling on my belly in the dark.

After about 50 feet, I heard again "Kerrigan" right in from of me. I yelled "Here I am. Who is it?" I heard "Werzbicke."

"Are you hit?" I yelled, and he yelled "No, do you see a light?"

"What in the hell are you talking about," I yelled, until I felt a shelter half. I moved it, and lo and behold, he was pumping a Bunsen Burner making coffee in his fox hole.

Well, I laid there pounding the ground and calling him every curse word that I could think of. Then, I had to crawl back 50 feet in the black of night feeling for my own fox hole with bullets and shrapnel flying in all directions. When the rest of my platoon heard about it the next day, they roared with laughter.

I forgot to say that he asked if I wanted a cup.



# Short History of Camp Mabry

Named after Brigadier General W.H. Mabry, the Adjutant General of Texas from 23 January, 1891, to 4 May, 1898, Camp Mabry is the headquarters of the State Military Forces of Texas. The land for the post was selected by committees established by the Governor and the Adjutant General, composed of prominent citizens, businessmen and Guardsmen. In the 1891 - 1892 period, 90 acres located on an elevated plain overlooking the Colorado River about three miles northwest of the Capitol building in Austin was selected. The land was accepted by Governor J.S. Hogg on behalf of the State in 1892. The same citizen's committee raised and spent about \$25,000 for improvements, including company mess and cook sheds and an attractive grand stand. The Adjutant General's Department had the prerogative of naming the camp, and the choice was given to the 59 companies of the State militia. Fifty-one out of fifty-nine voted to name it Camp Mabry in honor of General Mabry.

Through the years, Camp Mabry was expanded in size by various means and new construction continued. The committees secured permission from the legislature to charge admission for use of the camp grounds for the public, and the militia conducted sham battles for the public to raise money. Horse races and polo games were also conducted. A rifle range, with range up to 600 yards was constructed on the west side of the post in 1906 and was considered the best in the state. The militia held their annual encampments on the post and by 1911, there were more than 400 acres at the Camp Mabry reservation, consisting 80 acres as a gift from the citizens of Austin, 90 acres through the efforts of a citizen's encampment committee from the proceeds of the sham battles and 200 acres purchased by Federal funds. In 1915, the first building ever erected by the State for the National Guard was completed. It was an arsenal. Immediately after its completion, all military stores were removed from the State capitol, where they had been stored for years, and placed in the arsenal. This building stands today on the east side of the post, housing the offices of the Facilities Engineer and a State Guard unit.

When the Texas National Guard was mobilized for World war I, and with the Oklahoma National Guard formed into the 36th Division, Camp Mabry was utilized by the Army as a school for vehicle mechanics.

In November 1940, the 36th Division and the 56th Cavalry Brigade were mobilized for a year; the 36th going to Camp Bowie at Brownwood



and the 56th going to Fort Bliss, El Paso. The 1111th Quartermaster Regiment mustered on the parade ground at Camp Mabry prior to its departure for Camp Bowie. When World War II erupted, Camp Mabry continued in existence as the headquarters of the Texas Defense Guard, the only remaining State Militia. When the war ended, Camp Mabry was again the Headquarters of the State Military Forces and the focal point for the reorganization of the Texas National Guard as well as the Texas State Guard. After the war, the Adjutant General's Office was moved from the State Capitol to Camp Mabry.

The post, as it stands today, will observe its 100th anniversary in 1992. In the past, Camp Mabry has been in the home for the Department of Public Safety training schools, has been host for many visiting military dignitaries, served as a recreation ground for the citizens of Austin, served as a school for Army mechanics and heard the beat of cavalry horse's hooves, the tramp of the infantrymen's feet and the sharp crack of rifle fire. The roar of aircraft engines and the beat of helicopter blades resounded over the post when it was home for the aviation assets of the Army Guard. The shouts of airborne troopers in training resounded through the hills on the western edge of the post bringing back memories of the 36th Airborne Brigade's basic airborne school conducted during the early 1970's. A totem pole was dedicated by the Royal Canadian Air Force in honor of all Texans who served in the RCAF during World War II and the post is the current repository for all the old regimental colors of bygone days.

Currently, the post houses the Texas National Guard Academy, which is the second State building constructed on the post and opened 15 June 1994. The educational facility houses the Officer Candidate School, the Noncommissioned Officer Academy, medical Specialist Course and numerous other specialized schools. Also located on the post is the United States Property and Fiscal office, one of two of the State's Combined Support Maintenance Shops, the Texas National Guard Armory Board, the Headquarters Armory of the 49th Armored Division, a new troop medical clinic, a parachute packing and storage facility and numerous supply and warehouse facilities.

The Adjutant General's office and headquarters is located in building one and just beyond is the LTG Thomas S. Bishop All Faiths Chapel, a chapel dedicated to and built by members of the Texas Army and Air National Guard. Also located on the post is the headquarters of the Texas Air National Guard and the headquarters of the Texas State Guard.



# AUSTIN

## Nineteenth — Post-WWII Reunion

# 1963

### Aug. 30-1st

COMMODORE PERRY HOTEL headquarters for our third visit to Austin. This was a very new hotel then, but slightly too small for our group (years later it was converted to an office building).



John N. Green

John N. 'Pete' Green .....President  
Robert 'Rusty' Murphy .....Secty.-Treas.

Vice-Presidents:

Emil S. Schneider .....141st Inf.  
Samuel S. Graham .....142nd Inf.  
Zerk O. Robertson .....143rd Inf.  
Gaston Howard .....144th Inf.  
Alex L. Griffin .....Spec./Troops  
Amil F. Kohutek .....Div. Artillery

Directors at large:

John J. Garner and William H. Martin

Reunion committees: Mickey Francis, general arrangements chmn. Entertainment — O. B. Jack Franks and Chas. W. Ray. Nominations — Henry W. Gomez, Tom C. Henson, O. L. Oakes, Robt. J. Ritchie and Oran Stovall. Resolutions — James L. Minor, James O. Quick, Marvin A. McCoy, Earl Higginbotham, Whitley L. Bragg and Robt. A. Bewley.

Memorial Service — Victor M. Byrd, Reunion Chaplain, Bernard F. Roemer. Arrangements for the Ladies Auxiliary, Lelia McDugal.

General Assembly guest speaker — Maj. Gen. Thomas S. Bishop, AG of State of Texas. Memorial Service was held at State Capitol grounds with Douglas N. Boyd presiding.

Page Sponsored by:

Hello — T-Patchers . . .

**ALVIN DOMINICI**

Company G, 142nd Infantry

210 Fifth Avenue

Iron River, Mich. 49935

Best wishes to all T-Patchers

**ALVIN AMELUNKE**

143rd Infantry

4601 Westchester,

Waco, TX 76710



# A Review

## A Charter Member Reviews the Twelve Year Run of the Fighting 36th Division Quarterly

by Curt Walthall

My first contributions to the Quarterly were sent to Bill Jary for the then proposed CAMP BOWIE BROWNWOOD 1940-42 book, and one was published in VOL. I BOOK I. (A trace of this will appear below.) Another contributor in that first issue was Del Kendall, who turned out to be the most prolific of us all. Del also reviewed the Quarterly through VOL VII Book 4 in 1987, his 18th article while he was still living. Bill Jary and Bob Wallace, who headed the Historical & Records Committee, put out info sheets to the members asking their opinion on both the Brownwood book and the possibility of printing the Quarterly. Will try to trace this period with excerpts from letters sent me by these energetic stalwarts:

Bill to Curt May '75 Thought I had written, but have been snowed. The Patcher ran about ten days late. Thanks for sending me your autographed Book "WE CAN'T ALL BE HEROES." It is now a vital part of my WWI, WWII, and Civil War library. Have been busy with Maxfield's book which I hope to have ready for the reunion.

Bob & Bill to Curt 1980 This is to acknowledge your order blank in our survey to find out how many troopers want the Brownwood book of those exciting early days 1940-42. Progress reports will be sent to you on a regular basis.

Bill to Curt LENWLK is doing a great job as the new membership chairman and putting out the reunion book. He's on the job and works hard and has done much to rally the 144th troops into the fold. (NOTE: Another publ.)

Curt to Bill Sept. '79 Thanks a million for the two nice writeups in the recent T-Patcher. Over the years you have plugged me almost as often as you have your old bathtub, but I treasure most the informal talks we've had over the years, two old hacks talking about the 36th and history. You still print the greatest association rag in the world. May you be with us forever....

LENWLK to Curt Apr '78 I talked with Bill this past weekend. He has your new address in Florida so that you can get the Patcher. A person has to be really devoted to put out this Div T-Patcher, and as you said in your letter, he's the greatest.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Curt to Bill Jan. '79 In your May '77 issue, Hank Gomes wrote an article entitled "Reunion Reflections" It was filled with emotion about our departed buddies and inspired me to write the enclosed poem, "The Never Ending File Marches Slowly By." I didn't do anything with it, but the recent death of an old buddy drove me to type it up and send to you. Hope you can print it soon. The 144th newsletter will flag-drape the title to use as their Taps column.

Bill to Curt May '80 It's been a long time, and it's my fault. I have been carrying quite a load, and also get tired quicker than I used to. Our H&R committee with Bob Wallace at the helm, will so be in action, when we get our IRS clearance for tax deducts.

Curt to Bill & LENWLK You knew you would not waste your stamps sending me a brochure, and I confirm your faith with a hardy yea for both the Quarterly and the Brownwood book. This avid T-Patcher lives a little far from the action and don't hear much news except the Patcher. Real anxious to hear if you were able to present Inouye a copy of "WCABH" as I include the 442nd in it as a separate regiment. Bill, I would like to send a few historical stories about our mobilization, arrival at Bowie, LA maneuvers, then sudden departure Dec. 9, 1941. Congrats on your 4,000 run. That's an exceptional feat ....

Curt to Bill 6-21-80 Thanks for the nice brochure on Fort Worth history, another fine example of you putting out the T-Patcher while at the same time putting out brochures for your Advertising Co. Tues. afternoon I went by to see Bart Carlson. We have a lot in common, as he was in the 1st Cav. and went to Korea from Japan while I showed up in the Pusan Perimeter a few weeks later from Okinawa. Talk about the gathering storm approaching. The Army was desperately collecting troops from all over Hawaii, Okinawa Japan, and that other Texas Div., the second Indianhead from the mainland to stop the on-rushing horde. Those were sweating days. I missed out on combat in WWII, but I got into this one at the beginning. Really enjoyed our long talk the other day and was real impressed with your huge library and research center. I am sure there are historical documents there that can be found no other place in the world. Most enjoyable time I have ever had with an editor. Looking forward to my next trip to Cowtown.

Jary to Curt 6-24-80 When I get a letter like yours of the 21st, I know that what I do, and all the problems involved, I know that it's worth all the effort that goes with it. My thanks. I have to put a lot into the T-Patcher, 'cause I want it to be the best little rag in Texas, or anywhere else. So that is my contribution to the cause. I certainly enjoyed your 2 hour visit. It is not often that I can communicate with other writers of WWII history. They are rare, but we who do this all have a common bond. Glad you visited with



Bert Carlson. He has one helluva job as Chm of the BIG reunion. Hope to have a joint meeting with him plus LENWLK in the near future. Rite when U kan. It's my pleasure to have you as my friend...

LENWLK to Curt Jan '81 I am sure you know of the "new" book being written by Bill Jary, CAMP BOWIE BROWNWOOD 1940-42. Will you furnish Bill something on the 144th - I feel that you are qualified to do this. I for one feel the 144th should be in his book, as we were a part of the division at that time. Our story of departing, going to the West Coast, then a year later being transferred to the East Coast and spread from North Carolina to Key West, FL., then later transferred to Camp Van Dorn, Miss., Camp Swift, Camp Rucker should be covered. Best to you Curt. Hope you can find time to write this; otherwise we may be left out....

Curt to Bill Jan '81 Am writing some pieces for your new publication about Brownwood. Want to send in a series of events starting with "Our Last Cowtown Parade." 11 Nov '40, which includes all Texas Nat'l Guard troops stationed in Fort Worth. The article also covers our arrival at Bowie. "The 15 Mile Latrine Details takes us to our maneuver area "G." "Two Good Regulars have a stand-off in a Nat'l Guard mess hall." Sgt. Leonard Allen squares off against the 8th Corps Cmdr. General Krueger, an ex-EM himself. Our first amphibian lesson the 100-year rain at Lake Charles, La. "The Capture and Quick Release of MG Yoo-Hoo Lear" - LA Maneuvers. Then I will end the series with our appearance at the Cotton Bowl during their Texas State Fair Oct '41. This was the last "Mock Battle" before WWII., and the 144th departing Camp Bowie, combat loaded Dec. 9, 1941. Best wishes on this new venture... NOTE: The overworked Bill Jary, still working for a living, could not take on both the Brownwood book and the quarterly, so it was decided that the quarterly was the most important as it would be an ongoing book that would allow all T-Patchers to write their own story. But in cancelling the Brownwood book, Bill filed the papers away to clear his desire for this new project. Thusly, with the exception of the 15 Mile Latrine that was published in Vol. I, my other stories would not surface again for years.

Del Kendall to Curt 6-19-'81 Del Kendall here, and greetings from one T-Patcher to another... Your story in the quarterly was a doozy indeed, and glad that there will be more, 'cause it's stories like these that'll make the new quarterly what it should be... read by war buffs wherever they may be. It's off to a good start and Bill Jary et. al did a great job for openers. Note: Del wrote to all the first issue contributors...

Curt to Del 6-28-81 Thanks for your nice letter. I also liked your piece on the little Arab boy and the snake. I agree that Bill did his usual good job of editing this first edition. He explained to me that he was trying to have something from all the units so as not to be accused of favoritism. I told him

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

he showed it in only one way that I could see, four of the writers lived in FL. He hadn't noticed that. Let me hear from you again, Del, as I hope this begets a long friendship.

Del to Curt 9-9-81 I envy you Curt, being a writer, having books published, etc. Me, I've never written anything in my life, except my own personal diary back in Germany of my own WWII days, and that was done just to keep busy and not go nuts while waiting to go home on the point system. Then of course the thought struck me, "Why not write the real American war novel and expose all. Well I never did, as Norm Maille\* and several others did it sooner and much better than I ever could. NOTE: Del did not have to envy me or anyone as he was a writer and wrote 18 stories over the years for the quarterly. All his stories were written with the common language of the WWII American GI. Ernie Pyle was more famous, but Del wrote in that same style. \*Norm Mailer served with the 112th Cav. (a Texas National Guard Unit) in the Philippines and compiled "The Naked and the Dead" from his experiences in that unit.

Curt to Dell 9-15-81 Hey buddy, you're a better writer than you think. Keep those stories going to Bill. I like your style and so does Bill. NOTE: This was a 2 page letter, but I won't bore the readers with rest of chitchat. I just wanted to let this great guy know that he was a more capable writer than he thought. Those who read his articles will agree, I'm sure.

Del to Curt 9-25-81 I'm enclosing a couple of bits that I have done. Have not sent it in to Jary yet, and I wonder if you would give me your thoughts on them. I've told Jary that I'm writing in "sojer talk" even though so much of our language was limited to four letter words; after all that's the way it was, so why change. He never commented on it so I wonder.

Bill to Curt 9-27-81 Ole Del Kendall is a diamond in the rough. His stuff is just great. His "OLE SOJERS" is superb. Have another one in the Fall issue now in galley form, out mid Nov. Then I will get No. 4, (WINTER) out by Jan. 1st. I've been late, but plan to correct that when we get into Vol. 2 for 1982. Doing what we do is most rewarding, that is if you can take the highs and lows and still keep on plugging. I just like my history stuff so much that it is the 'thing' that keeps me mentally alert (in my twilight years) and you'll find you need it. I will leave the 60's on Nov 5th, and if that don't shake you up, I don't know what would. (11-5-11). The Quarterly is beginning to take hold now. More and more of these guys are finally sending in some good stuff. Only last week Sam Canada (736th Ord) sent me a great 8x10 glossy print of the TRUCE at Rapido, when the Germans ask for one, plus Mussolini's slaughter by Italian partisans. They are all gore and blood, but I plan to use them. Let's keep in touch. There's not too many guys like U & I who are doing what we attempt.

Curt to Del 10-18-81 Enjoyed your stories, and I will recommend



them highly to Bill. Think he will surely use the Christmas at San Pietro story as it will be about that time of year when the quarterly comes out. The story tells about GIs being relieved from a hazardous mountain position after months in action and trucked to a "rest area almost as uncomfortable as the battle position, and even then rumors of going right back into the line. A hot meal, first in many weeks, news that nothing but GIs in the closest town, and the warmth of a mixed drink of coke syrup and alcohol. Not much of a reward for weeks of fighting, but they were veteran enough to take it in stride. Make the most of these few moments of "luxury" as tomorrow may bring a trip back to the mountainous front line. Very vividly told, Del.

Del to Curt 11-24-81 I'm enclosing another piece I've yet to send it to Bill Jary. I think I'll call it the "Jackass Brigade." Would like your comments on it.

Curt to Del 11-31-81 Wanted to get back to you about the "Jackass Brigade" and encourage you to send it on in to Bill Jary as I think it is another well written piece and ties in beautifully with the types of stories that he likes to print in the quarterly. If he ever runs out of material he could fill one issue with our stories. Nothing like being prolific.

Del to Curt 12-12-81. Another story that I would like you to read and sometime after the holidays drop me a line and give me your opinion of same, and please tell it like it is, as you and Bill Jary are the only pro's in this business - I'll get it to him sometime next year, which ain't very far off. Have a happy one too... NOTE: Del was quickly becoming a pro himself and really needed no further help from me. This story was titled "The Second Time Around." It was about a trip back to the Riviera. He writes a paragraph in present tense and then flashes back to 1944. He did this for 9 paragraphs.

Bill to Curt 1-23-83 I think I am going crazy. Too much to do, too old, and then I forget, or don't take the time to contact old friends like U. I had filed away in a box marked CAMP BOWIE BROWNWOOD everything pertaining to that era for the 'proposed' book that Bob Wallace wanted me to do. That was 2 years ago. Of course I couldn't do it. I did not at that time have the quarterly. Anyhow your "Square dissolves into a triangle," 3 pages and have 2 pixs which I shall use. Your story tells it like it was without a lot of small unnecessary details. I am using 2 pixs "Alerted For Unknown Destination" and San Francisco coast 1942. Now if you have some others pertaining to Dec 7, 1941, and the days thereafter send them to me. Rite when U can...

Curt to Bill 1-30-83 Glad you found the box with my musty old stories, but even with the two year delay at least you didn't file 13 the stuff like plenty of other editors I have known. If you have not already put the issue to bed, please add my appeal to the 144th men who wore the T-Patch.



## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

So here we are in 1993. The first issue of the quarterly was Vol. 47 No. 1, SPRING 1981 and we are now eagerly awaiting for VOL. XIII. NO. I. SPRING 1993. Hope you have enjoyed my writing up our hectic beginning. I am eternally grateful to my old friend Bill Jary for keeping this rag going until his death in 1988, and I am equally grateful to Hicks Turner for keeping his pledge in VOL VIII NO. 3 FALL 1988 to serve the association in the tradition established by Bill Jary. Hicks, you have passed the test, and we should all be thankful for you carrying on a fine tradition. Now a word to all you T-Patchers that have kept your story to yourselves all these years. Please get them to Hicks Turner while you are still able to do so. You do not have to be a Hemingway. Fancy language is not needed. What we want is, what Del Kendall called "Sojer Talk." Come on now and flood Hicks with your down to earth yarns so we can keep this "RAG," as Bill Jary called it in newspaper jargon, going in the years to come. We owe it to all the many T-Patchers who were not able to return to their homes after WWII. What they gave is more than any of us still alive have been asked to give. All we want is a little of your time to put your memories down on paper and send to Hicks. That way you will be a historian leaving something for future generations to admire the men who work the T.

Thanks to all,  
Curt



# World War II Stories

by Al Dietrick, Co. B, 141st Inf.  
**Salerno Baptismal of Fire? Ha!**

It was spring time 1942, in Camp Blanding, Fla. A school class was being held on the 37MM antitank gun. It happened during a 10 minute break. Some of the GI's were examining and exploring the gun. Most of these men were from rifle Cs's. Three shells were on display. A blank shell for practicing shell for exhibition. By mistake, a live shell was placed into the chamber. [WorldWarTwoVeterans.org](http://WorldWarTwoVeterans.org) Tragic mistake. The lanyard was pulled; the gun went off. One soldier killed and several injured.

Near Arzew, Africa, 1943, B Co. 141 Inf. was training for street fighting in a mock village. Practice grenades were being used. Our platoon was first to go. Squads lined up on each side of the street. Scouts approached the first bldg., tossed in a grenade. After the explosion, the soldier remained on the ground. He appeared to be hurt. He was bleeding at the side of his face. On his helmet was a hole about the size of a match stick. He died. Medical report indicated a piece of metal from the rim of the grenade cannister or a nail from the flimsy wood wall penetrated his helmet and killed him.

A week later, again undergoing the baptismal of artillery fire with everyone in a prone position, artillery fire began to come overhead. The first salvo landed about 1,000 yards in front of us; second salvo about 750 yards in front; third salvo about 400 yards in front; fourth salvo less than 200 yards. Realizing something wrong, several officers ordered everyone to stay in the prone position. I lay next to some brush about 8 to 10 ft. high. I began to raise to see what was going on. As I did, the brush next to me was bent down and forward by an unseen force. Simultaneously, a shell exploded in front of me, no more than 15 yards and into a machine gun emplacement. Result: 1 man killed and 2 wounded.

[WorldWarTwoVeterans.org](http://WorldWarTwoVeterans.org) During same period C Co. 141 Inf. was on the beach near Arzew practicing landings in 8 man rubber rafts. The strong currents and winds capsized some boats. Results: 3 men drowned. One boat with 6 men finally beached 18 miles from where they had launched. I'm sure other units suffered casualties that I never heard of at the time. Many units had felt the sting of death before actual combat. Let the record speak for itself. Like

## **Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly**

General Walker wrote in his book From Texas to Rome "As I've said before, training for war can be dangerous." Amen to that.

### **A World War II Story The Last Supper**

The day was Sept. 6, 1943 aboard the USS Jefferson. We're laying in the Bay of Salerno. They've already told us we're to invade Italy early next morning under a cover of darkness. I'm Sgt. Al Dietrick, B Co, 141 Inf.

Our Ammo has been issued, received our orders, and we've been assigned station numbers. The number 34 rings a bell in my ear when I think about it. An announcement comes over the speaker system that the Italian Govt, has surrendered. That's good news – at least for now.

Our Company Commander gathers us on deck for one last pep talk and to take the Italian surrender lightly because there are still Germans out there.

The sun is setting, and we go to the Galley, Mess Hall or whatever they call it on ship, for supper. A good meal was served. I recall pork chops with trimmings and apple pie for dessert. Some commented, "If this is the way the Navy eats, we're in the wrong outfit." We've been eating field rations since we arrived April 13 in Africa, so this was a feast. I said to myself "They're feeding us for the kill."

After the meal the troops sat around the floor playing cards, shooting dice and talking about back home – doing everything to everything to keep from thinking about tomorrow.

At about midnight we're called to return to our quarter areas, not to rest, but to wait the call over the speakers that will say, "Report to Station 34" to embark.

It crossed my mind, and I guess many others, that this would be "The Last Supper," among many other things, for some of us.

### **Fire in the Hole**

The time was Fall 1942. The place was Cape Cod, Mass, The 141 Inf. Regt. was bivouacked in the woods. A beautiful time of the year on Cape Cod.

We were living in pyraminal tents and conditions call for outdoor kitchens and Latrine facilities. This calls for stop pits and latrine pits that require digging. So it was done.

One noontime while waiting for chow call, one of our recent recruits, Pvt. P— walked into our tent. He had a big smile on his face, almost a laugh. We asked what was so funny. Well, he had been put on detail, a detail that is cherished by all GIs. It doesn't come often, but eventually it catches up with most of them. That detail is "Officers Latrine Orderly."



Here is when the newest and lowest recruit in the army is his own boss and he is in charge of the premises within 10 ft. of the Officers Latrine.

Well as Pvt. P— related he had policed the area new rolls of tissue, scrubbed down the wooden latrine boxes, opened up all the lids, poured the prescribed fuel into the pit to burn out – whatever. He was ready to light a piece of paper and throw it into the pit when a Shavetail (Ahhhhhhhm 2nd. Lt.) comes in a big hurry. He really had to go. The GI started to explain with “Sir I’m...” The Lt., as he dropped his pants and shorts, sat down, barked out, “Don’t mind me soldier. Carry on.”

Now here is a soldier who has just come out of Basic Training and has had it drummed into his head that he will willfully and automatically and without hesitation OBEY AND CARRY OUT ALL ORDERS OF HIS SUPERIORS!”

So he lit the paper and dropped it into the pit. VA-BOOM. The Lt. had been christened under fire and emerged shaken but unscathed.

Pvt. P— died at Salerno on D-Day. I’m sure he died carrying out his orders.

### **The Day I Cut It Short**

It was mid November 1943. B 141 was dug in at the base of Mt. Retondo. We’d been there about a week. Because of the high ground the Germans held on Mt. Lungo, we had to stay put in our fox holes. About the only exercise you’d get was if you were unlucky enough to get to go on patrol duty.

A small problem I had on front line duty was constipation. I say small because on the front there are other things more important than just taking a “dump.”

About 5 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. the Germans would send in an artillery barrage. It was almost like clockwork. This day I got an “urge.” Being about that time, I decided to wait for the usual artillery to come in. It didn’t come. I thought, “well maybe they’re not firing today.” I crawled out of my foxhole. This is winter and we’re dressed for cold weather. I proceeded to take off my combat jacket, then my combat jumper, drop my OD wool trousers followed by my longjohns and finally my cotton shorts. Neatly bundled around my ankles I proceeded to squat and do my business. Constipated I was. I grunted, labored and moaned. Finally, I began to feel the “sweet smell of success!” It was a tough one. Felt like the bark of a tree. I don’t know how much there was to go or how much was out, but suddenly, here comes the artillery. With one giant muscle spasm I CUT IT OFF and dove into my fox hole half way angry, yet laughing to myself.

# Greetings - Welcome to the Army and to the 36th

By David Arvizu, Co. "B" 143rd Infantry

PREFACE. The following is a short story of my journey from a legal resident alien in the United States from Mexico and subsequently drafted into the Army and later assigned to Company B 143rd Infantry Regiment of the 36th Infantry Division. I was born in the City of Dolores Hidalgo, Guanajuato, Mexico, on 7 January 1920. My father left Mexico and entered the United States when the civil war broke out in the early 1920's. He belonged and was a sympathizer of the political party that was losing the civil war and knew that if he did not leave Mexico his days were numbered. Shortly thereafter, my mother joined him in the city of San Antonio, Texas. My older sister, brother and I stayed with my Uncle and Aunt in Dolores Hidalgo until my father could make the necessary arrangements for the three of us to enter the United States. When the entry visas were approved, the three of us entered the United States at Laredo, Texas, on the 11th of April 1928. My father picked us up at the border and after processing through Immigration went on to San Antonio. About this time the Great Depression was beginning, and after many odd jobs, the family worked its way North to Michigan. I was nine years old when I first attended one of those one room country schools that had students from first through eighth grade. It was quite an experience, since my sister brother and I could not speak English. We took a lot of hassle from the other kids, but we survived it and later ended up with some good friends. As anyone with who lived or grew up during these years, it was difficult to make ends meet, and every member of the family worked from dawn to dusk doing back breaking work just to survive. We worked the farms doing mostly "migrant" seasonal work, sugar beets, picking fruit, harvesting potatoes and so on. In 1937 my father, mother and three younger sisters left the United States and returned to Mexico. My brother Maurilio and I did not want to go to Mexico and remained with my older sister who was married.

In the latter part of 1939, some of the young men of Polish descent enlisted for duty in the Armed services after Hitler invaded Poland. Some were former schoolmates or close neighbors in the farms around the Saginaw - St. Charles part of Michigan. One Monday morning after most of the seasonal work was over, I decided that I would also try to enlist in the Army. I was there early in the morning and told the NCO that I wanted



to enlist in the Army. He appeared to have had a night on the town and smelled of liquor and seemed in a bad mood. He gave me some forms to fill out and went back to his desk. After filling out the forms as best I could, I turned them in to him. He reviewed them and then looked up at me and said to me "You can't enlist into the Army, you are not an American citizen." Needless to say, I was surprised, felt badly and his attitude made me angry.

In the fall of 1941 I received a letter from the Local Draft Board Number 5, with the all too familiar "Greetings." I was told to report to the induction station for examination and entry into military service. I sent the notice back telling the board of my experience in 1939 when I wanted to enlist and had been rejected and since I was not good enough to serve then, then they could go to Hell!

That winter I moved to Texas and did not return to Michigan until the Spring of 1943. About the middle of July, while working in the sugar beet fields, a US Marshal came and took me into custody for violation of the Selective Service Act of 1940. Now I was a "draft dodger." I was locked up in the county jail pending trial. When my day in court came, I was given the opportunity to speak up, and I certainly did. The judge, bless his soul, was a kind gentleman. He explained to me that the Selective Service Act included everyone residing in the United States that was of legal age for the draft. I was a resident alien, because my father and mother had never become naturalized United States citizens. He went on to say that he sympathized with my situation, but that the law was the law and that I could go to prison for five years and possibly a \$5,000 fine unless I reported for induction when the next notice was sent to me by the local draft board. All of this seemed unfair and confusing, but I agreed to report for induction when directed. After the necessary formalities, I was released, placed on three years probation and sent home to await my induction notice.

I received my notice and reported to the Induction Station at Detroit, Michigan, on 1 September 1943. I passed the physical examination and the Navy wanted me to volunteer for submarine duty. I wanted no part of that because if I was to "croak," I wanted it to be on dry land, not on the bottom of the sea. I was placed in the Active Reserve and told to report for Active Duty on 10 October, 1943, at Fort Custer, Michigan. As with all draftees, I was given all the required administrative processing. Of all these steps, one has always been on the back of my mind - the swearing in part where we were told to "repeat after me - To defend the Constitution of the United States - etc." I was a Mexican citizen at this time. Was this procedure proper or legal? Who knows or cares when Uncle Sam needed "warm bodies."

After processing I was assigned to Company A, 12th Battalion, 8th



## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

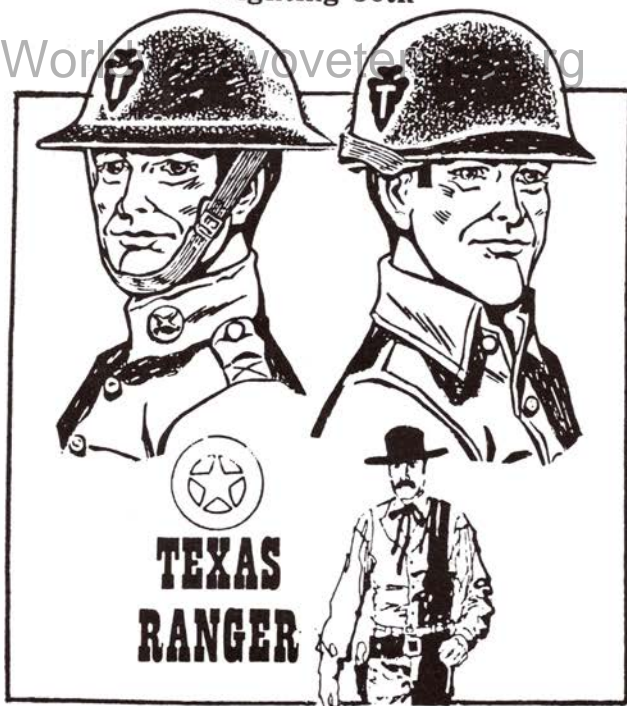
Training Regiment at Fort McClellan, Alabama. After all the hardships I had endured during the Great Depression – backbreaking work from sun up to sun down from age nine in burning hot summers or freezing cold wet winters, basic training was no big deal. At 5 feet 4 inches tall, I was all solid muscle and bone, weighing 125 pound and in top physical condition. 200 pound six foot recruits would drop out and some would even “pass out,” but for me it was just another day’s training. I did have some difficulties – learning my left foot from my right. A Corporal Bell, who was as tall as me would snap the side of the sole of his shoe on my left shin and would tell me that as long as I could feel the pain to remember that “that” was my left foot. Bayonet drill would tire my arms because I was not used to those moves. Another problem was the rifle range, my bones and muscles were too stiff to assume the proper firing position, especially the prone position. I could not assume the proper firing position because my instep would not lay flat on the ground for stability. Our rifle instructor who was also our platoon sergeant would step on my heels to get my instep flat on the ground. It was painful, but as soon as he would step away my heels would come back up again. Finally he gave up. On the other hand, I was very good during field training, especially during squad tactics day and night and scouting and patrolling.

After seventeen weeks of intensive basic training, I was an excellent Infantry replacement. From Fort McClellan I was sent to the overseas replacement center near George G. Meade (New Port News). After more processing a large group of us was loaded on a Liberty troop ship and left for “destination unknown.” After about a week and a lot of drills in the event of submarine attack we arrived at Oran in North Africa. We disembarked carrying two duffel bags, full field packs on a hot blistering day. After more processing, two days later we were loaded on a British ship, an old “relic” with wooden decks and two meals a day of bully beef and tea, and sailed off for Naples. At Naples we unloaded and marched off to a replacement center. That night the Krauts bombed Naples harbor and sank the ship we had arrived on. A group of us were processed, loaded on trucks and set out for the units to which we had been assigned.

It was late at night when the truck I was in stopped and dropped me off. The driver said that I was a replacement for company B 143rd Infantry Regiment, got back on his truck and drove off. It was dark, raining and cold. Apparently, everyone was “sacked out” and with no one to tell me where to go, I spent the night sitting on my duffel bag trying to keep warm and dry. The next morning an NCO, rank SFC called my name and as usual did not pronounce it right. He told me I was to be assigned to the First Platoon, and pointed in the direction of the tent, and shuffled off as only Billy Sunday can.

I went to the tent and called "hello." Someone inside said, "What do you want, come on in." I went into the tent and said "I'm David Arvizu a new replacement." The usual welcome greeting "Fresh meat" were the first welcome words from some of the men who would later become beloved comrades. I was introduced all around, and one of the NCOs told me that I was to be the lead scout for the 1st Squad of the First Platoon. This was the last step of my journey from resident alien civilian to a member of a combat infantry unit, the 1st squad, 1st platoon, 1st Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment of the 36th Infantry Division.

**Tradition Of The  
TEXAS RANGERS  
Carried On By The  
Fighting 36th**



The famous Texas Rangers have an old motto — coined 100 years ago: "ONE RIOT, ONE RANGER."

So as all red-blooded T-Patchers might add to this — **TWO WARS, "TWO MEN,** the battered old "Fighting 36th" ... got their share of Krauts of the Kaiser and Madman Hitler.



## Historic abbey was reduced to rubble 39 years ago

# Death — and rebirth of Cassino

• Tuesday, March 1, 1983 • THE STARS AND STRIPES

By **BRAD DURFEE**  
Staff writer

Reprint

As one travels throughout Europe viewing some of the most tranquil and scenic sites in the world, it's hard to imagine the devastation of the war-torn continent just a few decades ago.

The Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino, overlooking the city of Cassino on the Rapido River in central Italy, is a classic example.

Today, it appears as serene as the monks who live there, but, 39 years ago, on Feb. 15, 1944, the Abbey was reduced to rubble by an Allied air attack.

The Abbey had been destroyed three times previously — by the Lombards in 581, by the Arabs in 883, and by an earthquake in 1349 — but this was the most devastating.

### **German garrison**

The Allies said it was necessary because a German garrison was using the abbey as a fortress.

In the early years of World War II, the Germans had declared the monastery a battle-free territory, putting it off limits to their troops because of the reverence the Italians attached to it.

Although the abbey and the art treasures it housed were destroyed, the monks were able to salvage a collection of historic manuscripts.

### **No Germans there**

Although some Allied generals thought German troops were using the abbey, **war historians claim the only people in Monte Cassino were 200 monks and 800 refugees.** In a radio interview after the bombing, the abbot said there were no Germans in the abbey.

Ironically, after the bombing raid destroyed the abbey and its neutral status, a regiment of German paratroopers moved in amidst the rubble and held out for 45 days.

After concentrated ground attacks and attempts to divert German troops by landings at Anzio and Nettuno, the Allies finally captured it in May 1944.



### **Most-devastated city**

The assault on Cassino, the Italian city most devastated by the war, was opened the night of Jan. 20, 1944, by the U.S. 36th (Texas) Div. Against the unseen enemy, the slick riverbanks, mines, mortars and artillery, they were pinned down. Only those who could swim made it back across the river. In 48 hours the 36th Div lost 1,681 men.



Only rubble remained of the Abbey after the Feb. 15, 1944 bombing attack by American aircraft.

Prior to a second assault, Gen. Mark Clark reluctantly agreed to one of the most controversial decisions of World War II — the order to bomb the monastery.

Leaflets were dropped on Feb. 14 warning of the attack. The following day the bombs fell.

Twenty years after the attack, a 78-year-old Italian was asked by a reporter for *The Stars and Stripes* about her feelings and experiences.

She replied: "What do you want me to tell you? About the hunger? About the fear and terror? About the dead? About the months of bombings which left my home a pile of rocks? About living for weeks like animals in a grotto beneath the abbey where the monks used to keep their rabbits? About the noise that wouldn't let you sleep?"

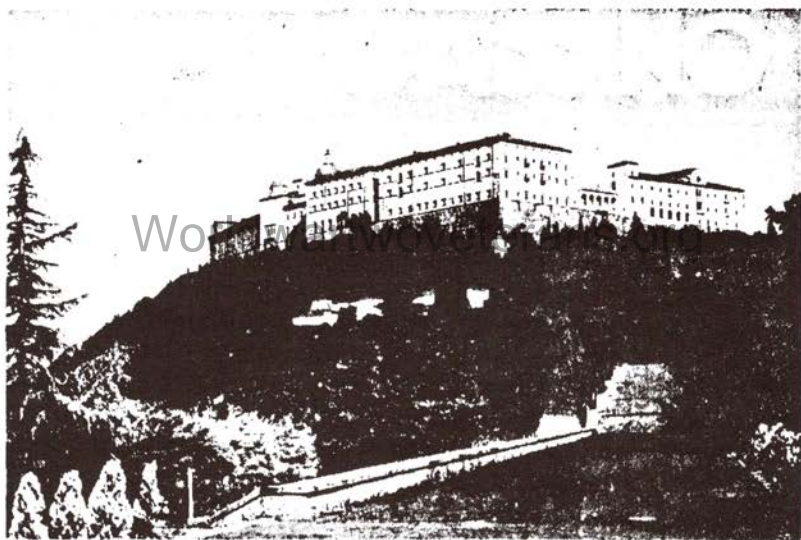
### **Second land battle**

The second assault took place the night of the 15th, when British troops backed up by New Zealand and Indian troops attacked. In two nights of fighting the British were cut to pieces by machine-gun fire

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

and grenades. The British lost 162 men out of 313, the New Zealanders lost 128 men and the Indians 196.

The third attempt was undertaken by New Zealanders and Indians at noon on March 15. For five days and nights they battled. At the end, the Germans were still in command. The Allies lost 1,500 New Zealanders and 3,000 Indians.



Completely re-built Abbey Monte Cassino again sits atop its 1,800 foot elevation (funded by U.S.), is popular attraction for tourist from around the world. It's only a 90 mile drive from Rome or Naples.

The fourth assault was conducted by the Polish II Corps, when two divisions attacked on the night of May 11.

Waves of Poles swarmed over machine-gun emplacements and engaged in hand-to-hand combat at the approaches to the abbey. Savage bombardment drove the Poles back down the mountain.

They reorganized, and 12,000 Moroccan troops joined them and infiltrated from the right flank. The Poles assaulted the hill May 17. Ignoring casualties, the Poles charged in waves. The German paratroopers were driven off the mountain, and Polish colors were raised above the rubble May 18, ending the five-month battle and opening the road to Rome, some 75 miles away.

Military men throughout the ages realized the importance of holding the high ground, and the Allies participating in this struggle were no exception.

In his book, "The Battle of Cassino," author Fred Majdalany, writing from first-hand experience as a British army officer who served at Cassino, said, "The relationship between the summit of Monte Cassino and the important main route which it commands is so exceptional that it invariably impresses military men as the finest observation post they have ever seen."



The abbey, seat of the Benedictine order, was founded in 529 by St. Benedict of Nursia.

Throughout the centuries it has developed a reputation as one of the great centers of Christian learning.

The only remains of the original abbey, known as San Germano, are the tomb of St. Benedict (built before the Lombard invasion), which contains his remains and those of his sister, St. Scholastica, and the tower.

Tourists from around the world flock to the abbey, about a 90-minute drive from Rome or Naples, especially in the summer months.

Northwest of the abbey, off the Autostrada del Sol, there is a cemetery to the memory of 1,100 Poles who died attacking the abbey. Visiting hours are from 7 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and from 3:15 p.m. to sunset or 7 p.m. in the summer months.



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



# My Father's War

by Peter B. Gallagher

Sent in by Pete Constant – Co. B, 142nd Infantry

*The hills are quiet now. The soft snow has covered the shell-scorched earth, the half-dug foxholes, the graves. The war has moved somewhere else.*

—Ralph Martin

The top drawer of my father's dresser holds the strangest memories of childhood. Hidden beneath his socks and folded white handkerchiefs are his things from the war. Shining medals and colorful ribbons, patches and pins, a red swastika armband and little yellowed pictures of soldiers posing with cocky smiles. Just things from the war, he told his children. We shouldn't be bothered with them. They were from the war. And the war was gone before we were born.

He never moved those war things. My mother says they are in that top drawer to this day. Yet he must have known we boys went through that drawer when he wasn't around. We pinned on the medals and slipped on the armband and looked at ourselves in the mirror. And we wondered. God, we wondered about war. *What was the war all about? How did it feel? Did he kill any Germans?*

War is mystical and incomprehensible to children. Just the other day my little brother asked my father, as we had asked him years ago, "How'd you get to be a buck sergeant, Dad?" His reply: "Somebody died." *Déjà vu.* My brother was quiet after that, and I knew there were strange thoughts swirling in his mind. *How? Why? How many Germans did you kill?*

There never came a time when we could discuss the items in that drawer and what they represented to him. When I reached an age of reason, there came the conflicts in Asia; and war, as he knew it, became a totally different concept. War was evil. We were afraid, ashamed, unsure about serving our country. He didn't agree with all this. World War II was never like this. We didn't talk about it. I would come home from college, though, and sneak a look in that drawer.

My grandmother has provided a few insights into what that drawer represented. From her, I knew my father had served in Italy, France and Germany with the 36th Infantry Division. He had lost friends on the battlefield. He'd been shot. You could see the indentation in his leg when he wore a bathing suit. Two of his medals were Purple Hearts. One a Bronze Star. But, he rarely talked about those days. A few times he brought

out pictures to show certain friends, my mother says. But I don't remember those times.

It all changed one day when the phone rang and Company B found my father. His name had been inadvertently dropped off the list and, although Company B had been having reunions for years, he had never known about them. Soon after that, I got a call. "You ought to make the one in Coleman, Texas," he said. "You'll find out what the war was all about."

Coleman, deep in the heart of Texas. Instead of "Abel, Baker, Charley, Dog," Ike let the Texas boys say "Abilene, Brownwood, Coleman, Denison" a story repeated more than once that weekend. From all over the United States they came to the armory on the outskirts of Coleman. Immediately the stories began. *A-tennnn-shun! The war!*

The T-patchers, T for Texas, where most of the men were from. Italy's Rapido River ran red with their blood. Men who had trained in the silt-darkened Pee Dee River of South Carolina, who had punctured the bleeding boot of Italy in five days and put the war at Hitler's front door. Proud men. A former battalion commander – Middleton – said out loud what everyone hoped was true: "If we hadn't stopped Hitler, we would not be here today." Damn straight. If there is a theme for these reunions, a reason for these reunions, that is it. *If we hadn't stopped Hitler, we would not be here today.*

My father met his old soldiers with a slowly tightening handshake, peering into their eyes, naming French cities and foxhole buddies, searching for some twitch, some factor of resemblance – Charles Hoffman? Charlie Hoffman. It's coming back. Grenoble? No. Anzio? Your hair was different. Hell, it's been 32 years. Hoffman. I remember you. The handshake tightened. You were in my platoon.

They lined up and posed for pictures, trying to duplicate the wartime poses they all carried in albums and shirt pockets. Faces were just as cocky in hot, dry Coleman as they were defiant before the ruins of St. Croix. There were moments of revelry when reminiscences thundered about the cavernous reunion hall. There were heads bowed in silence for the dead of Company B, and the bugler blew the Army bugle that hit the beach at Salerno. And they marched.

Down the main street of Coleman, old soldiers lifting legs in unison for the first time in 30 years. Some heads were bald, some gray, some suits baggy some physiques frumpy and misaligned, but all marched to the courthouse steps. Col. Sisco led them calling cadence. A wreath was laid upon the monument. *Sssh.* Silence. Only a few curious onlookers watched, wondering why these men were doing this. The old soldier's fear – have they forgotten? – flashed over everyone's faces at march's end. *If we hadn't stopped Hitler, they wouldn't be able to line the streets.* Anger. All part of war and soldiers.



## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

The drawer held ribbons and medals. Dewey Mann, who became a lieutenant when somebody died, took me aside at the end. "You be proud of your father. He was a damn fine soldier." He was perhaps the 20th man to say that. Men who didn't even know my father told me that. They wanted to make sure I knew his war. Their war. But I understood. The spirit of these men had been in my father's top drawer for years.

# "Grizzled gladiators" of 36th Division in World War II

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

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

## Tragedy, intrigue, heroism

The famed 36th (T-Patch) Division was mobilized into active federal service on Nov. 25, 1940. The division trained at Camp Bowie, (Brownwood) as a square division up until Pearl Harbor Day (Dec. 7, 1941.) Two units, the 144th Infantry and 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery were quickly dispatched to defend the West Coast area in event of an invasion. The 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery was sent on to the South Pacific and were later captured in Java. The men who survived spent over two years as POWs in Burma and Japan.

The remainder of the 36th Division departed for overseas in early 1943 landing in North Africa. The division was the first American unit to invade Hitler's European Fortress, by landing at Salerno, Italy

on Sept. 9, 1943. The division later captured Rome, Italy on June 5, 1944 and made the Southern France invasion on Aug. 15, 1944, and fought through France and Germany until the war's end on May 5, 1945.

The 36th Division suffered over 27,000 casualties, the third highest of any World War II division. The men earned 15 Congressional Medal of Honor, 80 D.S.C.'s, 2,354 Silver Stars, 5,407 Bronze Star Medals for Valor and 12 Presidential Unit Citations.

It is the only military unit known to have had fighting men in the Pacific and Europe at the same time during WW II, as military records were never changed to relieve the 2nd Bn, 131 F.A. from the rolls of the 36th Division.



Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

# Church Had Nazi Rats in Belfry

Walter Ray Smith, "M" Co. 142nd. Infantry



Worldwarveterans.org

For more reasons than ever, a lot of folks are looking up to him. His husky six foot-five stature looks well in a fighting uniform. But on the left breast of his blouse now is a notable collection of honor insignia. That first one is "before Pearl Harbor" service. Then a good conduct medal. Then the ribbons for three invasions — Africa, Sicily, and Italy. Another for the American theater of war. A Star for the major engagement at Salerno, and the Purple Heart. "There it is," he said displaying the beautiful gold medal by request. "That's something. Reckon you know what that means to me". One thing it means to him for keeps is a purple-patterned scar on his left knee. On the fifth morning in Italy, a chunk of shrapnel hit the leg just above the knee and embedded itself against the bone. By the time the operation for removal was performed several weeks later in the United States, the fragment had worked itself downward to a point below the kneecap. It took him out of the action last Sept. 14th. It's all right now, he says, but he is classified for limited service. "I'm ready to go back in if they need me, but unless they do, I've had enough over there." "I trained in Florida, California, in Tunisia and fought in Italy, but give me Texas. This is the place." Smith joined up with the old 142nd Infantry Co. "M" of the Texas National Guard in 1939. He went to Camp Bowie with them in January 1941, joining the 36th Division there. Subsequent training was in Florida, North Carolina, Massachusetts, the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and then North Africa. He reached North Africa on April 13 and received extensive amphibian training. Before daybreak of Sept. 9th. they leaped from their landing boats into the surf near Salerno to launch the invasion of Italy. — *Interview published by a Wichita Falls newspaper while I was on furlough following release from the hospital:*

Things were simplified somewhat at Salerno in Sept. 1943 for my part of the invasion when they knocked down a little hilltop church which had rats in its belfry.

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These were Nazi rats. From the steeple of that church a few miles inland German intelligence was observing the landing of our 36th Division, was relaying accurate range information to German gunners and thereby was making the beach an inferno for the American invaders. After two days of that, the Texans spotted the range-finders. A squad wormed its way forward to plant their mortars within range of the Italian church. There was the church and there was the steeple, and they both came down with their Nazi people. About three well placed shots did the business.

The Germans knew that terrain, that was one big trouble. They had trained there, and they knew every little hill. And they knew we were coming. There was a narrow beach, maybe fifty yards wide, then the land began to be hilly. A few miles of that brought us up to the mountains. Nearly all Italian families had moved out. Those that remained had large white flags posted before their little houses. Our first wave hit the beach about 3:00 a.m. It must have been 6:30 before all our lines had reached shore. Our front stretched out over fifteen or twenty miles probably. The Germans had 88mm and mortars planted in the hills, beginning about a mile inland. They were tough.

Despite heavy losses, we moved in several miles the first two days. Then German tanks in large numbers came into play, before any of the Allied artillery, tanks or other heavy armament had been brought ashore.

For the first two days our air superiority had enabled us to move in, but the tanks drove us back. They had machine guns which lay down a sweeping fire of heavy stuff. The 45th Division, made up mostly of Texas and Oklahoma and Kansas boys, had arrived by this time, but we were all backed up against the beach again.

Then the naval units got going. Sure was a good sight to see those tin cans swinging into position, up and down the coast behind us, just a mile or two off shore. We gave the range to a water-front post, and he gave it to the destroyers. Brother, they hit the mark with their guns. Give them the range and with about two shots they made a bull's eye. When a tank took one of those shots, from then on it was just a pile of iron. That gave us a new start. Our own heavy stuff came ashore under protection of the destroyers' guns and the line moved inland again.

It was on the morning of Sept. 14th that I had my left leg knocked from under me. Some two weeks later, I was in a big army hospital at Oran, North Africa. There was a lot of German prisoners there too. About three out of every ten seemed to be strong for Hitler. The rest of them were sick of it and were in the war only because they had to be.

Operations on wounded joints, particularly the knee, are not performed in North Africa, because it had been discovered that joints remain still for long periods, sometimes indefinitely, after such operations there. The climate, apparently, was responsible. So back to Valley Forge General Hospital in Pennsylvania, for the removal of my ugly souvenir.

I didn't get to stay long, but there's a lot of satisfaction in remembering how our mortars leveled that little church and how the German's target-shooting immediately lost its punch.

FOOTNOTE: I was one of nearly two hundred 36th Division veterans who returned to Italy in Oct. 1984. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would return to see places that I had been as a twenty-one year old youngster. After forty years, naturally things were changed, but to stand on the sandy beach where I had been as a much younger man was unbelievable. I was only there for five days before being wounded, but memories came back as I saw the church on the hill in Altavilla and was certain that I could pinpoint almost the exact spot in a ravine where I was on that 14th day of Sept. 1943.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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141st Infantry Regiment  
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# The Fighting Irishman

## Sgt. Burt Evans, YANK Staff Correspondent

And T/Sgt. Charles Kelly was still a pfc. after 16 months' service when he killed 35 Germans in Italy with four BARs a few mortar shells and a bazooka.

WITH THE FIFTH ARMY IN ITALY [By Radio] There must be some kind of an unwritten Article of War that says you can't win the Medal of Honor unless you've been a private more than a year.

Lt. Gerry Kisters, hero of Tunisia and Sicily, was a private for his first 18 months in the service. T/Sgt. Charles Edward Kelly was only a pfc. when he earned the Medal of Honor by killing some 35 Germans single-handedly near Salerno, although he had been in the Army for 16 months.

Kelly is not the picture book type of hero. He has initiative, courage, calmness under fire, and a certain amount of plain luck, but these are almost incidental. The main reason for his success, the thing that makes him a live and not a dead hero, is that he has not forgotten the primary business of a soldier: to load, aim and fire weapons that kill Germans.

Kelly tells about a new replacement who turned and asked him — in the heat of the Rapido River action with Germans 10 yards away — “How do you load this thing?”

“This thing” only happened to be an M1, the basic weapon of the infantryman.

“Make sure they know how to load and fire,” says Kelly, now a platoon sergeant, “and we'll teach them the rest.”

Kelly quit Pittsburgh's Latimer High School when he was 16, two years before graduation, to take a job in a bottling works at \$18 a week. He turned over \$15 out of every week's pay to help support his nearly blind, widowed mother and his eight brothers. (Six of them are in the armed forces now.)

Enlisting in the Army a few months after Pearl Harbor, Kelly took his basic at Camp Wheeler, Ga., and then worked a transfer to the paratroopers at Fort Banning. But he was kicked out of the troops for going over the hill twice to see his mother and his girl, Mae Connally. Then, he transferred to the 36th (Texas) Division.

Shipping to Africa with his new outfit, he underwent intensive infantry training there. On Sept. 9, 1943, he landed before dawn near Paestum, Italy, as a BAR man in the division's reserve infantry regiment.



## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

In the first stages of establishing the Salerno beachhead, Kelly's battalion held a position above Altavilla. This little mountain city, some 22 miles inland from Salerno, was cans – they're Germans – and they're strongly entrenched."

Kelly volunteered again for a patrol that wiped out two of the entrenched machine-gun positions. With his BAR ammunition exhausted, he returned to find his company withdrawing from Altavilla in fierce, hand-to-hand street fighting. He crawled through heavy fire to get more ammunition from a dump located near a three-story storehouse on the extreme flank of his regiment's position. The Germans were attacking fiercely at this point as Kelly got his ammunition. He was ordered to stand guard at the rear of the storehouse. That detail lasted all night.

The real show began next morning, when "all the Germans in the world" resumed their attack. Kelly was pulled inside to keep from drawing fire and was posted at an open window on the third floor where a machine gunner had been killed and several other soldiers wounded.

Firing continuously and effectively from that window, Kelly burned out four automatic rifles. "Those BARs were so hot from continuous firing," he says, "that the locks came out the sides. That sure was a hot spot. When the third floor got too hot, we went to the first floor. Then we went back up to the third floor again."

The Germans were still closing in, but with the four BARs burned out, Kelly had no gun. Looking around the room, he saw some 60-mm mortar shells. He waited until the Germans were directly below his window, dislodged the safety pins from these shells by knocking them against the floor, then tossed them like footballs at the Krauts. Most of the shells failed to explode but some did. One killed five Germans.

But the Germans were still coming, and Kelly's sergeant decided to withdraw his little detachment. Although his sergeant argued against the idea, Kelly, who had found a bazooka in another room in the meantime, decided to stay and cover their withdrawal. The last glimpse the withdrawing squad had of Kelly, he was all alone, firing the two-man bazooka from a window. It was the last glimpse, that is, until he sauntered into his outfit's bivouac area a few hours later. He had fired the last three bazooka shells and then "got out while the getting was good."

Since that first show, Kelly has killed five more Germans and has put in more than 100 days of active combat. He fought as squad corporal in the actions at Mount Camino and Mount Maggiore and then as section sergeant when his battalion battled for the heights around San Pietro. He has also done a turn at Mount Cairo and Cassino.

Kelly is at his best in combat patrols, diverting the enemy with a harassing fire. When he goes out on patrol, he travels as light as possible



– just a rifle and ammunition. He doesn't bother with a pack or rations. Though he likes an M1, he says, "from now on I'm going to carry a carbine. You need one against German automatic pistols."

He doesn't smoke – night fighting cured him – but he chews tobacco. When he runs out of plugs, he will chew a cigarette. His only wounds are a small scrape on his nose from a shell fragment and brush burns on his hands.

Correspondents have called Kelly "Commando," the "Fighting Irishman," the "One-Man Army" and other flattering terms suggesting that he is a fearless fighter, but the men in his outfit call him "Charley," which somehow seems more appropriate. As for being fearless, Kelly says "I don't think there is a man in the Army who isn't scared in every battle after his first one."

What does Kelly want? "Just one thing... to get back to the States. I don't want another damned thing but that. These medals will just be a lot of brass after the war, and I'll just be another ex-soldier."

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## World War II Mural Revealed

By Barbara Kingsbery

SANTA ANNA: Patrons at the recently-opened Wagonwheel Restaurant in Santa Anna have an opportunity to see some World War II memorabilia - an unexpected experience in this small community.

Remodeling work at the old building at the corner of North Seventh Street and Wallis Avenue revealed a life-sized mural of American soldiers in a Pacific battle. The only notation on the painting is "Cpl. Edgar R. Aberman, August 1943".

Located on the busy main street through Santa Anna, the structure was originally purchased by Mrs. Erin Day in 1948 and moved from Camp Bowie. According to Mrs. Day's son, Clint, now owner and operator of the local Western Auto Store, the building was said to have been a portion of the NCO Club at Camp Bowie.

The structure was remodeled for a grocery store, with sheetrock installed on the interior. Shelves for the grocery stock were added.

Several years later the business was changed to the Clover Grill Restaurant, and although the shelving was removed, the sheetrock remained to cover the painting.

A great deal of interest was created several years ago by murals at the Camp Bowie Senior Citizens Center at Brownwood, but that artist was of another name and was said to be a German prisoner of war. That building was used as the officers dining room and recreation center while troops were stationed there. Some local army veterans who were stationed at Camp Bowie during World War II have mentioned murals in other buildings at the camp.

Thought you might be interested in the inclosed clipping, from Coleman - Chronicle & Democrat Voice, of 1 Jul 86.

Best from Co B.

  
W.J. BAXTER

Box 961, Coleman TX 76834

# A Lucky S.O.B. Of A First Sergeant

By Christopher C. Gillis, First Sergeant William  
Bandorick of the 36th Division, 141st Infantry  
Regiment, Company A, 1st Battalion

On December 16, 1944, First Sergeant William "Ban" Bandorick of the 36th Division, 141st Infantry Regiment Company A, 1st Battalion, was offered a forty-eight hour pass to Paris by his C.O. He had to make a quick decision as the truck was ready to leave. The young men of his battalion, who he looked after as if they were his own children, encouraged him to go and sent plenty of shopping lists with him.

Ban was considered to be the old man of the group. He had already served fifteen years in the Regular Army Infantry in assignment throughout the United States and Panama. In 1942, he had also trained on special assignment with the British Commandos in England. He was hardened to the conditions the infantry met in Europe when coming against the Jerries. Without sleep, he and his men fought the Jerries across northern France and into Belgium in twenty-four, thirty-six, and forty-eight hour stretches as they pushed toward Germany.

The men came from all areas within the United States and were often nicknamed for the cities and states from which they originated. For instance, "Chicago" was described as a very proud soldier willing to fight for the entire outfit if necessary. He was also about as "windy" as the city from which he came. "Alabama" first thought the battalion had too many Yankees, but a few good times with "Irish" from Boston forged his attachment to the group. These young men needed the Sergeant's emotional as well as his military guidance. Ban would see Paris for them and they looked forward to his return.

Little did Ban know that on the following day, December 17, the Germans would begin one of their last offensives, the Rundstedt Push. Meanwhile, Paris meant plenty of good food and drinks, hot baths and clean sheets. He visited the Eiffel Tower and the Cathedral of Notre Dame, which as a young man he had only read about in books. In Paris, he purchased a little pink dress for his two-year-old daughter and some perfume for his wife. He also did not forget the shopping lists of his men back on the snowy front-lines. Ban had accumulated a duffel bag full of gifts.



After his forty-eight hour pass, he returned by truck back to the front. At the division CP, he reported for duty to Company A of the 1st Battalion, but everyone looked at him strangely. He learned that after two days of the Rundstelt Push, everyone in Company A, including the C.O., had either been killed or captured.

Ralph Martin, correspondent for Stars and Strips, called him "the man who came back... to find all wiped out." In an interview with Martin on January 8, 1945, Ban told of his experience and the loss of his men. "It was like telling a guy that his home had been bombed, or his family had been killed. It's different when an outfit gets chopped up a little at a time. You expect that. But not all at once, not everybody."

First Sergeant Bandorick did not have time to dwell on the grave incident, because replacement troops by the truckload were making their way toward the front. He had to help reorganize the outfit and orient the new men. However, Ban would never forget his return from Paris. The loss of his men would be part of him forever.



# Can You Crawl into Your Steel Helmet? Of Course you can — If you believe it

By David Arvizu, Co. "B," 143rd Infantry

For those of us who had the "honor" of being the "point" man in an infantry squad, life could be very interesting. Those of us who had that "honor" would usually ask ourselves, "Why Me?" Perhaps it was some unwritten policy that was followed by the infantry combat unit in WWII. The newest replacement would be assigned as the point man when he joined an infantry squad. If you survived, eventually you would work your way to a less dangerous place further back. I was "point" man when I joined the 1st squad, 1st platoon, 1st Boon of Co. "B" 143rd Infantry in Italy during the 2nd week of March in 1944. I saw my first combat action when the 36th moved to Anzio and began the drive leading to the capture of the Alban hills at Velletri and on to the City of Rome and then north to Piombino. I was still point man when we invaded Southern France. I was promoted from PFC to S/SGT in October, 1944, and took over the 1st squad. Maybe I was a "good scout," with a sixth sense, because I did survive that long as the point man.

During the first week of September, 1944, we were hot on Jerry's tail. After the battle for Montelimar, the Germans were in full retreat trying to get to good defensive positions in the hilly area of Alsace-Lorraine in northeastern France. During this period the action consisted mostly of roadblocks and delaying tactics by the enemy. Most were usually quickly overrun or bypassed. Just before capturing Besancon, Company B-14 with our squad as the point ran into an enemy position along a tree line. When the enemy opened fire, we quickly dismounted from the M's and began to cross an open field. I was in the lead and about 250 yards from the tree line when the enemy opened fire on our platoon from their position along the treeline. Rifle fire and a machine gun grazing fire made everyone in the platoon hit the dirt and look for the nearest ground cover. I hit the ground and looked around for cover. There was no ground cover near me. I was on the forward slope of a small mound in the open field. The machine gun was firing right at me. I could hear the bullets snapping over my head. I tried to crawl backwards but could not do it. A souvenir German Luger pistol on my belt would snag in the dirt and would not let me crawl backwards. That machine gunner could see me moving and was deter-



mined to get me. Luckily for me something prevented the gunner from lowering the gun, because the bullets were barely missing me.

Then things got worse. The enemy started dropping small caliber mortar rounds on top of us. At this time I recalled an incident that happened when we were on the outskirts of Rome in Italy. Our unit was deployed alongside a small ditch. Colonel Adams, our Regimental CO, drove up in his jeep and wanted us to move forward. The enemy was dropping mortar rounds right in front of our position, and we were not about to move. Colonel Adams said, "Those are only small mortars; move on out." About this time one round fell very close to his jeep, and he and his driver left. Anyway he did have a point. The mortar rounds falling around me were hitting soft dirt, and the cone of dispersion from the shrapnel was not wide. It would almost take a direct hit for one to get me.

I decided that my only chance was to somehow get down lower. And with this in mind, the only thing at hand was my steel helmet. I figured that by using the steel helmet, I could dig a small shallow trench by pushing the helmet into the ground and pushing the dirt forward in front of me. I began working on this and the soft dirt helped. I finally got a trench about six inches deep and long enough to get my chest and belly down lower. But that machine gun would not leave me alone! Dick Hupman, our platoon sergeant had crawled forward behind a small tree stump to my right rear, and I could hear him yelling encouragement for me to hang on until our mortars could fire on the enemy position. The enemy mortars continued to fire, and one round landed about six feet to my right. I could hear Dick Hupman yelling "ZU, are you all right?" I yelled back that I was OK. By this time I was desperate. I thought maybe if I make a dash for the rear I could find some cover. I decided not to do it. I would make a better target for the enemy machine gun. Then I thought that if I could just get my head into the steel helmet I would be OK. I pushed my head into the helmet as hard as I could. Mentally I had the idea that maybe if I could get myself into that steel helmet I could ride this problem out. Perhaps the idea that I could do it gave me more confidence.

Then I heard Dick Hupman hollaring that our mortars were almost ready to fire on the enemy. He said that as soon as our mortars fired on the treeline the Germans would take cover and that would be the time for me to run to where he was. Shortly thereafter, I heard our mortars open up and after a couple of salvos. I heard Dick yell, "Now ZU, Go, Go!" And go I did and took cover along side Dick. He asked me if I had been hit by that mortar round that had landed so close to me. I told him that I was OK. He thought I had been hit because that round had thrown dirt all over me. All

this activity had taken only 10-12 minutes, but for me it seemed like a lifetime. I took off my steel helmet and patted it gently, for giving me the chance to survive another close one. Another unit took over the lead, and our company fell to the rear of the column and the 143rd continued to chase the enemy.

**History of Operation  
"Avalanche" And Invasion of  
Italy, South of Salerno  
9 September, 1943 to 21  
September, 1943**

**Headquarters Company, 36th  
Infantry Division**

**APO 36, U.S. Army**

The personnel of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 36th Infantry Division, left the bivouac area about six miles east of Port Aux Poules, Algeria at about 1330, 3 September, 1943, by truck convoy enroute to Port of Oran, Algeria, for the purpose of embarking on transports to participate in the Operation Avalanche. The company, carrying combat packs with bedrolls consisting of shelter half, blanket, five tent pins, one tent pole, tent rope, one suit of fatigues, and carrying side arms, arrived at Port of Oran about 1600 and immediately began loading on boats. The organization was divided so that about half the company boarded the USS Samuel Chaos and the other half boarded the USS Frederick Funston with the exception of 36 enlisted men, 1st lieutenant Aniello F. De Stefano, 2nd lieutenant John M. O'Keefe, and Warrant Officer Thomas W. Bynum, Jr., who had about two weeks previously been sent to Algiers, Algeria, by motor vehicles which were loaded with organizational equipment and which came on a delayed convoy. In addition, 2nd Lieutenant Harold E. Johnson and 7 enlisted men of the postal section, Captain Lowell E. Sitton, Warrant Officer Robert K. McLemore, 15 enlisted men of the Finance section, 7 truck drivers with their trucks, which were loaded with kitchen equipment, and section equipment which was used as late as possible at the old area, were left at the area six miles east of Port Aux Poules to come on another delayed convoy. Five enlisted men of the Adjutant General's Section were left at the old area to look after the AG Section equipment which was left behind. Staff Sergeant Grover W. Lightfoot and Private



Warren H. Freeman remained at the old area also for the purpose of bringing the General's Packard and Ford Sedans on a delayed convoy.

Some of the ships were anchored at the docks some a few hundred yards out in the harbor; therefore, personnel was loaded into LCVPs and taken out to board the latter. Shortly after boarding the transports, supper was served to troops and officers. The men were delighted with the meals which were served during the entire voyage. There seemed to be plenty of fresh fruit and butter which is a rare treat to army personnel overseas.

On the morning of 4 September all the French North African money was taken up by a company officer on each ship and exchanged with a Class B Agent Officer for gold seal American money. Most of 4 September was spent in getting officers and troops billeted in the proper places and getting various guard and kitchen police details organized.

The convoy was in the process of being formed most of the day of 5 September. The portion of the convoy of which this organization was a part sailed at about 1600. Major General Walker, the 36th Infantry Division Commander, boarded the USS Samuel Chase on 4 September.

The route taken was close to the shore of Africa to Bizerte, then the convoy swung northeast across the Mediterranean Sea to the coast of Sicily, following the coastline of Sicily and remained near the coast line of Italy travelling north in the Tyrrhenian Sea up to the point of the invasion. Everybody appeared to be in fine spirits during the entire voyage; we were now approaching the long anticipated change to prove ourselves in actual combat. For the most part, the troops were confident, not overconfident, but realizing that the assigned task would be one involving many hardships and extra difficulties, and knowing that the assignment would be accomplished.

The troops were given all the information as to the objective, which was to take and hold the high ground south of the Sele River on the right flank of the British X Corps and extending south to Agripoli, thus securing the Salerno plain as a beach-head for more troops and supplies to be landed. Maps were diligently studied and lectures were given all troops by the officers in order that every man would know what to do in order to successfully complete the mission.

The weather for the voyage, 5 September, 1943, to D Day, 9 September, was beautiful and the moon was not yet full. Most everyone numerous air raids, but until the 8th there were no air raids. The convoy was very large, and a large convoy was in the harbor at Bizerte. Church services were held daily by the various chaplains of the 36th Infantry Division and attendance was surprisingly large.

In the late afternoon of 8 September, a convoy could be seen to the north. This was the British X Corps coming into position to strike

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

simultaneously with the 36th Infantry Division and attachments on D Day at H Hour, 0330. That night there were a few air raids, but none of the ships in our convoy appeared to have been hit. The enemy coastal positions above the Sele River received a terrific shelling from the naval guns during the night prior to the British X Corps landing at 0330 on D Day. Large fires were observed in that sector and anti-aircraft guns could be heard all during the night.

At about 1900, 8 September, news arrived that Italy had accepted the terms of General Eisenhower and had surrendered unconditionally. Everybody was very elated to receive this news, but some didn't know quite how to accept the fact. At 2100, it was officially announced that Italy had surrendered unconditionally, turning all arms, equipment, and personnel over to the Allies and had agreed to help the Allies drive all Germans from Italy. It was further stated that, due to the large number of German troops in Italy, that the invasion would be executed as planned at H Hour on D Day and attention was called to the fact that many Italians would have not yet heard of Italy's surrender, and that if any Italians put forth resistance, they must be dealt with accordingly.

Elements of Headquarters Company began to land shortly after daylight on D Day, 9 September, 1943, the first going ashore with Major Puck, Commanding officer as part of Major General Walker's command party and landed on Red Beach. German 88 shells were landing in the water near the shore and on the beach and one casualty was suffered - Pvt Leonard L. Bay, driver of Major General Walker's radio jeep was killed by an 88 shell fragment. A moment later, the jeep, then driven by Sergeant Joe Miller, 36th Signal Company, radio operator, hit a mine and was blown up. Sergeant Miller suffered a broken ear-drum and was severely shaken, but otherwise not injured. The General's command party under shellfire while making their way to the first assembly points, which was the railroad track east of Paestum. Upon arrival at the railroad tracks, the shelling became so severe that we had to take shelter in an old brick section house. This was at about 0830. We noticed that advance elements of the 3rd Battalion, 143rd Infantry were crossing the railroad track going east during this shelling. After the shelling had ceased, we made our way north along the railroad tracks to a large tobacco warehouse. During the rest of D Day the rest of the organization was landed. As the beach was shelled and bombed considerably, the personnel of the company had some exciting and dangerous experiences. Corporal Willis E. Bell, Major General Walker's orderly, drove the General's command car off the landing craft. Pfc Walter G. Draper, orderly for Colonel Kerr, Chief of Staff, was riding, in the car with Bell. The right front wheel of the car hit a teller mine demolishing the right front portion of the car. Draper suffered a broken leg,



arm and shock, and was evacuated to the USS Samuel Chase. Corporal Bell received some slight cuts and bruises and was badly shaken, but managed to get another vehicle and come to the Division Command Post.

The first 36th Infantry Division Command Post was established in a huge tobacco warehouse on the east side of the railroad track northeast of Paestum at about 1000, 9 September, 1943. The General's command group immediately began functioning and as other members of Division Headquarters and Headquarters Company began arriving; it was not long until things began to run. At 1330, some enemy tanks broke through north of Paestum and caused us to evacuate the tobacco warehouse and take cover in ditches along side the track. While in these ditches, we saw a battery of the 151st Field Artillery Battalion (105 hz) 34th Infantry Division, taking out three; the remainder fled. We moved back into the tobacco warehouse, and at 1245 more enemy repeated attacking. We again abandoned the warehouse until the tanks were driven off. This time two were knocked out and three fled. Returning again to the warehouses, we again established a command post and this time were not driven out. By dark, nearly all of the company had arrived. All of the personnel had been under shell fire between the beach and the tobacco warehouse, and some had undergone bombing on the beach, so all had quite an experience, this being our baptism of fire. During the night, Sergeant John W. Clay, General Walker's driver came off a landing craft in an Engineer Battalion jeep pulling the General's trailer, ran into a mine field and had to wait several hours before an exit from the beach could be cleared.

On the night of 9 September, troops bivouacked in the vicinity of the large tobacco warehouse. Most of them slept in holes dug for the purpose. Enemy aircraft made frequent raids on troop landings at the beach and on ships anchored several miles off shore.

10 September personnel reported to their various sections for duty and section equipment was set up, and personnel began carrying on their regular duties. Morale of troops was excellent and everyone was in fine spirits confident that the mission would be accomplished. Private James R. Horn was sent on a mission to drive Captain Stuart of the British Army to contact the British Corps. Captain Stuart and Pvt Horn have not been heard of since. The command and reconnaissance car in which they were riding was later found north of the Sele River where it had been burned, Captain Charles A. Toliver and a few enlisted men disembarked from the USS Samuel Chase bringing bedrolls, company records, and certain section equipment which had not been unloaded on D Day. When they had reached the beach, Captain Toliver and his group immediately dug slit trenches and were subjected to strafing and bombing by enemy which struck at supply dumps on the beaches.

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Many of the officers and men slept on the ground floor of a three-story reinforced concrete building in the area of the tobacco warehouse. During the night a large bomb hit a short distance from the building with such tremendous force that the earth trembled for a considerable distance. The company supply ration dump was set up behind an Italian house about 150 yards east of the tobacco warehouse. During the bombing raids anti-aircraft fire was terrific, and many times flack shrapnel landed in and around the slit trenches. The men appreciated the anti-aircraft fire for many reasons, mainly it was an excellent means of teaching them to identify readily enemy aircraft and the enemy aircraft were kept high above installations.

The forward echelon consisting of the Commanding General and his general staff officers and enlisted personnel, Headquarters Commandant, Defence Platoon and personnel necessary for minor details and chauffeurs moved to a new command post located about four miles northeast of Paestum on 11 September. The rear echelon, consisting of Adjutant General's Section, Special Service Section, and all Personnel Sections of the Division, remained at the large tobacco warehouse about 2 miles northeast of Paestum. Air raid alerts were frequent, but the enemy craft seemed to strike at the supply dumps and ships anchored in the bay. The Defense Platoon set up their guns and formed a line of defense for the command post. Enemy troopers were expected during the night; therefore, men not actually on duty were reclaimed by Colonel Kerr, chief of staff, to form an all around defence line in case of an attack. During the first three days and nights, air raids were so frequent and heavy that the troops did not remove clothes, and almost everyone slept in slit trenches.

A Division cemetery was formed 12 September just north of the tobacco warehouse, and the Division Chaplain, Lt. Col. Herbert E. MacCombie and the Division Graves Registration Officer, 1st Lt. Lee F. Allison, began burying the dead. A few prisoners who were available helped to dig the graves. Headquarters Company furnished the personnel available to help bury the dead and assist in gathering and listing the personal effects. There were the usual air raids and the troops were becoming accustomed to aerial bombardment and by this time knew that enemy air raids could be expected at or about 0400, 0700, 1200, 1800, and 2200 daily.

Pfc Robert A. Delgado and Pvt Wallace E. Richards were on emergency traffic control duty on 13 September at Highway No. 18 at Sele River and were subjected continuously over a period of eight hours to artillery and aerial bombardment. Their conduct and manner of performance of duty under fire is typical of the high standards of services rendered by American soldiers. Late in the afternoon of 13 September, it was reported that German tanks had broken through positions north and west of Altavilla and were threatening to split our forces and destroy our beach-head. The Defense Platoon under 1st Lieutenant Frank E. Burgher



and 2nd Lieutenant Edgar O. Kamphoefner made new reconnaissances and took up new defense positions against a possible attack from the north. During the night tank destroyers from the 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion and 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion and tanks from our tank battalions moved up and our infantry units were drawn back and consolidated their positions along a new line designated by Major General Walker. We held on throughout the night and for the next 72 hours, and the beach-head was held secure.

Technician Grade 4 Glen W. Gooch, mess sergeant of the rear echelon received a slight flesh wound of the face when he was struck by a piece of flack scrapnel from an anti-aircraft shell during an air raid at about 1100, 14 September; however, after receiving medical treatment, he returned to his post and continued issuing and drawing rations.

A group of men were working in the Division cemetery near the tobacco warehouse when at 0945, 15 September, they were strafed by enemy aircraft, and Technician Grade 5, Charles G. Schwartz, Jr., received a wound in his thigh by a machine gun bullet. He was evacuated to the 95th Evacuation Hospital as slightly wounded. T/5 Schwartz is a clerk for the Division Chaplain, and he recently submitted his application for direct appointment on 2nd Lieutenant Infantry, for which he was highly recommended.

On the afternoon of 16 September, the forward Division Command Post was moved about 1 mile from its old location which was about 4 miles northeast of Paestum and was located in a large reinforced concrete three-story building about 5 miles northeast of Paestum. The Defense Platoon set up a line of defense for the new command post.

At 1230 17 September during an air raid a 20 millimeter shell, presumably from friendly anti-aircraft gun crashed through the roof of the tobacco warehouse, struck the concrete floor and exploded; two pieces of the shrapnel lightly wounded T/5 John T. Horan 736th Ordnance Company, a member of the Division Ordnance Office personnel, in the chest and abdomen. T/5 Horan was taken to the 111th Clearing Company where he remained for two days and returned to duty.

The delayed convoy from Algiers, Algeria, D-7, carrying vehicles, personnel, and company and section equipment arrived and was in the process of being unloaded commencing 18 September. Personnel which rejoined included 1st Lt. Aniello, F. De Stefano, 2nd Lt. John M. O'Keefe, Warrant Officer Bynum, and 33 enlisted men. At about 2200 17 September while His Majesty's Ship Tarantia was anchored in the bay with personnel

and equipment of the Company on it, Pvt Robert H. Brashears started down the stairs to a lower deck, when upon reaching the bottom of the stairs he stepped off into open space where the hatch had been removed and fell approximately 25 feet down into the hold where it was reported that his back struck a piece of timber about the 4" x 6" variety. He sustained a severe back injury and appeared to be paralyzed from his waist to his feet.

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He was evacuated by a destroyer to the hospital ship.

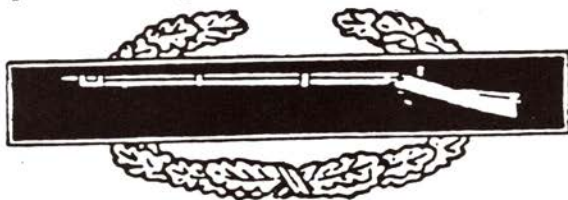
Unloading equipment from ships of the D-7 convoy was carried out under difficulty due to the vehicles and due to enemy aerial bombardment; however, the vehicles and equipment were transported to shore and then to the company bivouac area in vicinity of the tobacco warehouse without loss. The motor pool was established in a peach orchard about 350 yards east of the company supply where the vehicles were scattered and camouflaged.

Rations, water and supplies were hauled from the supply dumps at the beach to the Headquarters Company Supply. Personal of the company also went daily to the beach to search for section and company supplies and equipment which had not been received. The transfer of supplies and equipment from the ships to the beach thence to the company was carried out in a satisfactory manner – even though men were subjected to numerous aerial bombardments while accomplishing the above. Rations and ammunition were taken daily by the mess sergeant from the rear echelon to the forward echelon where the mess sergeant got any reports of changes which had occurred during the past 24 hours. Headquarters Company was then drawing rations for about 530 officers and men.

The afternoon of 20 September was devoted to preparing the section equipment, and policing the area of the rear echelon in view of an anticipated move on 21 September. All sections were instructed to be ready to move immediately and to have one man ready to go to a new location to be used as a guide to direct each section to its assigned location.

The objective having been reached, the Division was ordered to withdraw from the front lines 21 September and enter a bivouac for a period to be re-equipped and to get reorganized.

The forward echelon left its old command post about 3 miles northeast of Paestum at 1300 hours for the new bivouac area located 2 miles west of Altavilla moving by truck convoy and arrived at about 1400. The rear echelon left its old area at the tobacco warehouse 2 miles northeast of Paestum at 1600 travelling by truck convoy and arrived at the new bivouac area 2 miles west of Altavilla at 1700, thereby rejoining the two echelons. There were no casualties. The forward echelon having moved earlier in the day, picked locations for the various sections under the supervision of the Headquarters Commandant, and had a large number of the command post tents erected when the rear echelon arrived. The men were assigned places to bivouac and then dug slit trenches for the night. The Defense Platoon set its guns in position forming a line of defense.





# To All Veterans Since WWII

by Joe F. Presnall – Hq. 143rd Infantry

If you were in or close to a combat zone in a war since 1940, did you ever wonder why you had a chance to come back home when there were so many men that did not have that chance?

Every time I look at my family, I have the feeling that was what I was sent back for. When we left camp Edwards, Mass., on April 1, 1943, I told my wife I wasn't going to let "a little old war get me down." I did not have any idea how big and long that little old war was going to be.

Did you ever get the feeling that you would not get the chance to come back home? I had two men tell me that they would not live through the war in Europe! A premonition? I think that is what they had, and I had one also. I never did get the feeling that I would not come back. We have been to Europe and Italy four times and attended memorial services on each trip, and I still have a guilty feeling that I had the chance to come home, and all the men under the white crosses did not. After being in 5 major combat zones and 335 days in combat, I still wonder why I did not get a scratch.

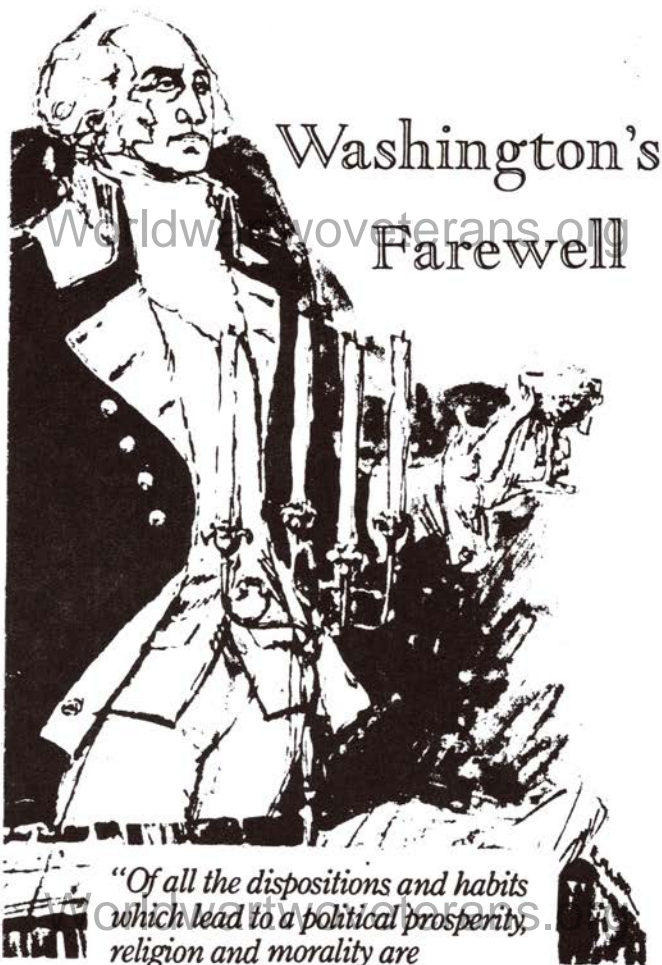
During the battle of San Pietro in Italy, I was sent on a special mission to set up a 1/2 million candle power light to guide the bombers in. (Thank the Lord the planes never came because of inclement weather.) No one told me that the Germans still occupied Mt. Lungo! Each time I turned the light on, here came the artillery! They never did knock my light out. When I got back to Regional Headquarters, the first thing I found out was that Major Reemstma was dead. If I hadn't been sent on the special mission, I would have been in the same place he got hit. A coincidence? Maybe!!

In Northern France, I was sent on another special mission. I was temporarily sent to 36th Division Hdqtrs. as Liaison Officer. One morning we were carrying the General's orders to the 143rd Regimental Commander, and I told the jeep driver, "Grady got killed last night?" He looked at me like, "How do you know." After delivering the Colonel's orders, I went to Hdqtrs. Company. The first thing I saw was a group of men standing around a flat-bed truck. I went around to the front to lift the blanket and see who it was. A man said, "Lt., don't look under there, it is Grady." Our First Sgt. was Grady Sandlin from Marlin & Kossee, Texas, one of my closest friends in W.W.II. If I hadn't been on special assignment, I would have been in the same room when he got hit.

Did you ever wonder why we have so many wars? The fulfillment of

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the Bible and maybe the only way the Lord has to control the population of the world. I don't think the politicians should let the ladies serve in the ground forces that fight the wars. I still have a guilty feeling when I think of all the men laying under the white crosses. In our next life, I think we will have a large reunion with our friends and loved ones. Thank you again, Lord, for letting me be on your side fighting the devil. I hope the best for you & your families!



## Washington's Farewell

*"Of all the dispositions and habits  
which lead to a political prosperity,  
religion and morality are  
indispensable supports. In vain  
would that man claim the tribute  
of Patriotism, who should  
labour to subvert these great  
pillars of human happiness . . ."*

George Washington  
Farewell Address  
September 19, 1796



## A SWEEP FROM THE SOUTH



Wild Texans Invade Again . . .  
SALERNO AVENGED!



Reprint

**T**HE troops that had fought for Naples, had spent their rest periods and pay there, were leaving Italy through that same city. Naples had been taken ten months before by the Allied Fifth Army. Now its liberators were going, as they had come, by sea, to strike a second blow across the water bulwark of the continent. It is not recorded with what emotions the men left Italy: Very few had ever liked the place particularly, for their primary associations had not been with pseudo-prosperous Naples, but with the numbered hills and the blood-soaked valleys and the shell-raped fields and the stinking rubble towns.

The night preceding the departure had been spent north of the city, in a fertile, dust-surfaced area near Gualiano, the same place which they had left to sail for the Anzio beachhead. The atmosphere had been unwarlike; the men had sat around and joked and played cards. Some had written letters, but very few; because that had been done before. Most of them had tried to act very normal, but even veteran troops are nervous before attempting the unknown. They had sat around by their packs and rifles and gas-masks and done the same routine things they had done twenty times before and would do twenty times again.

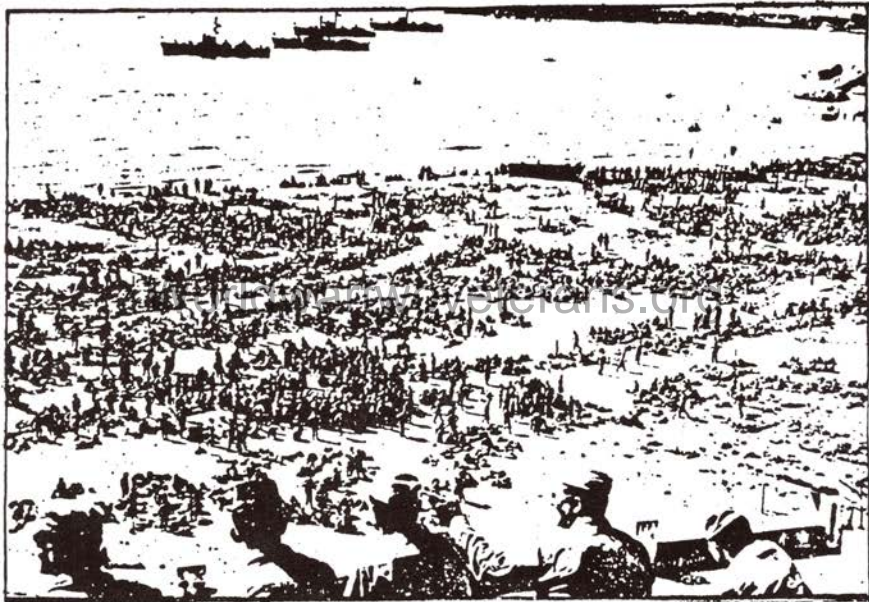
But, despite the unspoken excitement, the majority of the men had slept. The day had been long and there had been a lot accomplished. They had slept and got up to early whistles, eaten hurriedly, mounted the trucks and waited as the tree-high dust clouds settled and the sun got hot.

As always, there was waiting. Then the long convoys jerked and rolled down to the docks, and the troops got out and lined up on the docks, trying to act casual, and waited some more.

The columns were checked, as they had been double-checked before. Then the men arranged themselves and their loads, climbed the gangways of the LST's and LCI's and troop carriers, and went into the holds.

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If there were any regrets for the departure, the troops felt them as they lined the rails of their vessels and watched the coral-green-grey shore, or the slowly assembling fleet, each ship taking its place and signaling its final message. Venturing out into the uncertain is always



POZZUOLI - north of Naples was the staging area for the Southern France Invasion (same place we used for the Anzio caper). T-Patchers get ready to line up in columns, climb the gangways of the LST's, LCI's and larger troop transports, carried their loads across decks, and went into stuff holds.

a chore after any sort of familiarity, and Italy, foreign, disliked Italy, the home of eleven months of discomfort, could not have appeared as lovely before as it did to those men gathered on the decks.

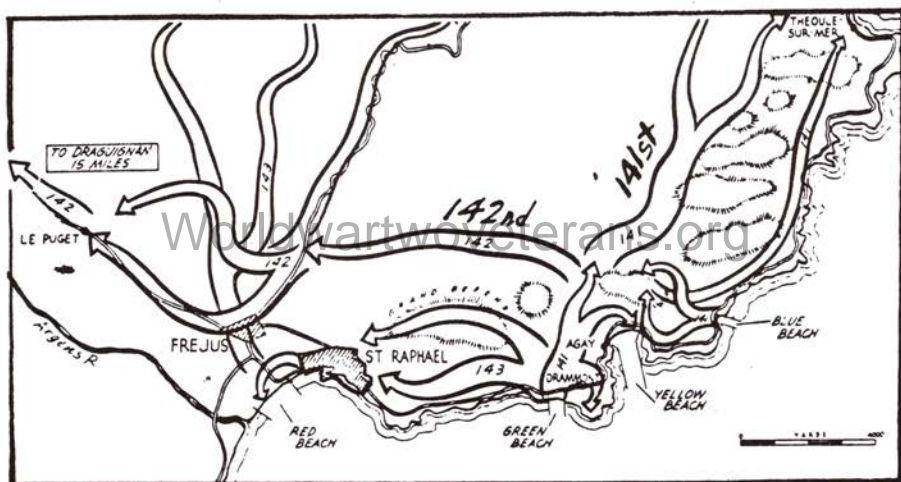
The 36th Division was afloat the eleventh of August. The men learned of their destination on the thirteenth. For the first days, as the ordered assembly of vessels moved out across the sea, the tension subsided. Navy men and soldiers met and compared rumors. GI's sunned themselves and read or performed their shipboard duties, slept in the shadows of small landing craft, between the complicated gear, and in the stacked, cramped beds that filled the hot holds. The ships passed between Corsica and Sardinia to enter the last leg of the invasion journey. The tension slipped in again. Maps and charts and aerial photos were studied; scale models of the approaches and beaches were examined. The complicated briefings were begun, platoon by platoon. The months of planning and the weeks of filling in every detail were



brought down to the final phase, with every squad learning its mission, every man discovering the smallest part of his participation in the most precise of all military operations.

Even the greatest of intangibles had not been overlooked, for the selected divisions were not of any uncertain quality, but composed of

### Initial Attack Waves of Alpha, Delta And Camel Touch Down At 0800, 0802 & 0803



men who, during campaigns which have since been described as the most terrible through which American soldiers have ever fought, had been tested, who knew their power, whose groups were unified; these were the finest veteran troops.

ON AUGUST 13, the following message was flashed to Major General John Ernest Dahlquist in his war room aboard the command ship:

D-day, 15 August 1944; H-hour, 0800 hours saw the 141st Infantry Regiment land on the extreme right flank of the Seventh Army, spearheading the 36th Division.

There were three Division beaches, identified only as Red, Green, and Blue. Reconnaissance had shown the presence of many formidable underwater obstacles, a shoreline encrusted with casements, an ingenious defense mesh calculated to intercept a landing at its most vulnerable point—when supporting fire had lifted and before the infantry could bring its weapons into play.

Red Beach, sandy and admirably situated in the San Raphael bay, was the finest landing site.

## Fighting 36th Historical Quarterly

Farther east, Green Beach was a potential trap, flanked by an abrupt cliff and stone retaining wall on the left, a jutting barren rock formation on the right. There was only a single narrow dirt road leading to the main coastal road, which ran under a railroad bridge; blowing the bridge would jam all vehicular traffic. Behind the beach rose an irregular slope, broken by an easily-defended granite quarry.

Blue Beach was little more than a deeply-indented cove, behind which rose the Rastel D'Agay, razor-edged and formidable, a precipitous formation which commanded the entire Division landing area.

The 141st landed on beaches Blue and Green. The Germans, good troops with a leavening of second-rate forces, possessed excellent defensive positions. Not all of them had been knocked out by the preliminary naval and air bombardments, and those that were left fought tenaciously, making full use of their advantageous positions. There was bitter fighting through the streets of the small towns and up the exposed slopes to root out the well-entrenched enemy.

The 143rd Infantry Regiment followed the first assault waves onto Green Beach as soon as its immediate defense positions had been cleared. Disregarding the battle raging not five hundred yards away, it swung off the beach to the west and the pastel-colored summer resort towns on the road to San Raphael. Its mission was to pinch off the defenders there as the 142nd Infantry Regiment sailed in to Red Beach.

The 142nd never landed on Red Beach. The demolition boats were unable to force a passage through the underwater obstacles that lined the bay. The formations of landing craft were forced to put about and make for Green Beach.

Beach Green became the only Division landing site. In less than ten hours, twenty thousand troops were finally put ashore there, over a boulder-strewn area less than eight hundred yards long and fifty yards deep; the entire strength of an infantry division, reinforced by heavy artillery and combat engineers, tank and tank destroyer battalions, signal and quartermaster attachments, was landed on Green Beach.

It was a magnificent accomplishment, for the landing strip and its approaches were too small and too shallow to afford adequate space for other than the assault echelons and their immediate reserves. Shuttle convoys of small vessels and dukws raced in and out, bringing in material, while the larger ships edged in one and two at a time to land their heavier cargos. On this one beach rested the success of the Division's invasion and across it were put every vehicle, every gun, every piece of necessary equipment, all the tons of supplies.



There were casualties. With the landings so confined, the Germans were able to mass their forces, but the Riviera invasion was not the debacle of Salerno, where the 36th received its baptism under fire. The regiments cleared their first objectives by 1600. Nine hours after the initial landings, the beaches were secure.

The strongest opposition came at the flanks of the beachhead. The 143rd had driven to the left, towards San Raphael. Easy and Love Companies ran into trouble.

Easy Company found the Germans barricaded in a large courtyard. They had machine gun nests all over. Behind these were heavy concertinas of barbed wire fronting a house which sheltered mortar positions. It was impossible to get at them without presenting a silhouetted target. Pfc. Lewis H. Rose, Conneault, Ohio, climbed the high stone wall in front of the court and fired twelve boxes of ammunition at the enemy, thirty yards away. Cradling his machine gun in his arms, he fired until his gun barrel burned out and his heavy leather gloves caught fire.

Pfc. John Neves, Fairhaven, Mass., led a tank up to the wall. When it was halted by a trap, he blew out the obstacle with twelve pounds of dynamite. For six hours, the mortar and tank support and the riflemen fired away, literally blasting the Germans from behind the wall. The courtyard fell and the company stormed into San Raphael.

Love Company edged into position near German barracks on the outskirts of the town. Capt. Zerk Robertson, Merkel, Tex., worked his platoons forward until they had surrounded the encampment. The next morning, after a short fire fight, a German battalion commander surrendered with one hundred of his men. But a large group had slipped out of the trap and set up positions several hundred yards away. There was constant activity and firing. Tech. Sgt. Thomas Wooldridge, Royse City, Tex., squeezed the enemy out, with one squad to supply a solid base of fire while the others worked their way in from the flanks. For three hours they fought. Then the Germans surrendered. Love Company had killed a dozen of the enemy, knocked out two machine gun nests, taken 244 prisoners.

Meanwhile, on Green Beach heavy artillery, ammunition, special units were unloaded as rapidly as the ships could be brought into the limited landing space. At dusk, the Germans staged their only successful air raid on the fleet standing offshore. A glider bomb from a low-flying plane caught an ammunition-loaded LST. The ship blazed up rapidly. Shouting to his engineers to stay away, Capt. Thomas B. Gautier, Charlestown, S.C., raced into the water to give aid, braving exploding ammunition and fire and flying hot steel. His men followed and from sundown to midnight they worked, swimming, using

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Official U. S. Navy Photograph

UNLOADING on Green Beach of Camel Assault Area — photo shows two LCTs, two LCMs and a DUKW. Note beach markers, barrage balloons, and first aid station on beach. The hill beyond the steep embankment and quarry were heavily cratered by Allied bombardments against Nazi casements facing to seaward.

makeshift rates to get to the ship and back with over one hundred injured men.

CAMPAIGNS MAY MOVE BY WEEKS OR MONTHS, but invasions move by hours and days. No matter how successful may be the outcome, the first few days of a landing are like the first seconds of aerial flight; they determine the success of the operation. There is no comparative success in an invasion. It is, tactically speaking, either a success or a failure. So, on August 16, although the beaches had been secured and the inland positions consolidated, the battle for the primary objective, the establishment of a firm beachhead, was still on.

Red Beach was reported open for clearing parties; Frejus was taken; the 143rd Infantry Regiment cleared a road block at Bourlouis after a stiff fight with infantry and tanks. Contact was made with the 45th Infantry Division beachhead, on the left flank. On the right flank, the 141st Infantry Regiment continued to press eastward to make contact with a force of French commandos operating in the Cannes area.

NINETEEN HUNDRED PRISONERS had been taken by noon, August 17, and, as the lines extended, growing numbers were brought into the Division cages. They were taken under many varied circumstances.

A large number were taken at Callian, at the eastern tip of the beachhead. Item and Baker Companies of the 141st were in the town, straddling the only major route along which the Germans could bring reinforcements from their reserves near Cannes. They had a fight on their hands protecting the flanks. Supported by tanks on the line, by tank destroyers, by naval artillery and heavy land guns, they had fought house-to-house through part of Callian, been forced to



withdraw, then fought their way back. Only after two days of bloody close combat was Callian secured. Its garrison, except for six officers and two hundred men who chose the PW cages, was wiped out.

Many prisoners were taken more easily, however.

Company A of the 143rd Infantry Regiment, led by Lt. Henry Kahn, Allentown, Pa., attacked German positions in a valley. Concentrated fire greeted the T-Patchers as they jockeyed into commanding positions. Then every gun on the hills – machine guns, mortars, rifles, tommy guns – opened up simultaneously on the enemy. Pvt. Heinrich J. Strohaecker, New York City, called to the Germans to surrender. There was no reply. The barrage continued for another quarter-hour. Even the ammunition carriers popped away with captured pistols. That was too much for the Germans, and their commander sent word

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German P.O.W.'s being marched off Green Beach . . . LST 49, in background was 'first LST's to hit the beach on D-Day, with Commander J.P. Graff USN (now retired) C.O. of the 8th Naval Beach Battalion. (photo by Cliff L. Legerton, Norfolk VA). Cliff is an associate member of the 36th Div. Assn.

that he was willing to surrender provided that the Americans treated him with the respect due his rank.

"What the hell," said Lt. Kahn. "We've got nothing to lose being nice to a first lieutenant. Tell him to come up."

He came up.

"Holy cow," gasped Lt. Kahn. Able Company had bagged a full colonel. The colonel was followed by a major, who was followed by three captains, who were followed by a string of lieutenants and one hundred and fifty men.

THE SEVENTH ARMY BEACHHEAD, firmly consolidated along its entire span, sprang into violent life when Task Force Butler pounded north towards Lyons. Hastily organized on D-plus-three, Task Force Butler was made up largely of 36th Division components:

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the Second Battalion, 143rd Infantry Regiment; Baker and Charlie Companies, 753rd Tank Battalion; Charlie Company, 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion; and one collecting platoon and clearing platoon of the 111th Medical Battalion, plus reconnaissance, armored artillery, and ordnance units.

The 36th Division charged after it, carrying the right flank of the army around like a hinge to block the only German escape routes to the northeast. Under the command of Brigadier General Robert I. Stack, two battalions of infantry and a battalion of artillery—the advance guard for the Division as it drove parallel to the Rhone River



SAN RAPHAEL, target for the 36th at the Invasion of Southern France, Aug. 15, 1944 - and the many celebrations by the French citizens cheer the men of 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion (attached to the 36th) roll through the downtown streets. In foreground is a member of the 36th MP Platoon who handled traffic. (Photo by T-Patch Staff Photographer).





# When Our Doughboys Become Men

*Green And Untried One Moment They Emerge Fast As  
Veterans On Italian Front*

Worldwartwoveterans.org  
By Sgt. James E. Farmer

*(The following is a reprinting of a story filed by Army Correspondent James E. Farmer from Italy in April, 1944, which was printed by The Indianapolis Star.)*

WITH THE 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION IN ITALY --  
Doughboys of this 36th Division have learned through hard battle experience that a change from garrison soldier to combat soldier is in fact a transition from boy to man.

On September 9, 1943, under an early morning mist these soldiers stormed the shores of Salerno, Italy. They were green, untried. Yet this baptism of fire transformed them into gritty combatmen.

They pushed inland — infantrymen with bazookas and rifles fighting tanks; mortarmen on the flat shoreline terrain combatting well-emplaced 88mm cannons in the hills. In 13 days, they made secure the first American beachhead on Fortress Europa.

Reactions to first combat were varied.

"I felt like I was on maneuvers," said one private. "But when I saw my closest buddies getting wounded and killed right at my side, I said to myself, 'Hell, this ain't maneuvers!'"

A sergeant recalled, "I was climbing over a barbed-wire entanglement and my pants got caught. I tried to free them carefully from the wire. A machine gun opened up and I felt bullets whizzing by my ears. 'Look at yourself, Mike,' I said. 'Watching out for your pants when your life is at stake.' I plunged forward over the wire and tore the entire leg off the pants. But, here I am today."

"Salerno was something of an adventure to me," said another

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private. "That was because I didn't really know what I was going into. I was told on the ship what my outfit was to do. I did my part in that. I didn't think much about it until after the 13 days were over -- then I felt rather scared."

Since those early days, these doughboys have seen action that has challenged more of the man in them.

One infantry man was trapped in Altavilla, a mountain city, considered as a "no-man's land" at the time. He lived to tell about tremendous bombardments he underwent there. These included four days of firing by combined Allied ground and naval artillery, German artillery, and a dive-bombing attack by 60 American planes. This same infantryman since has experienced artillery concentrations in the mountains around Cassino. He considers the latter more severe.

Men of one infantry company went 72 hours without more than the food and water they had on hand -- rations for three meals. German artillery had knocked out their mule supply train. Rain water was caught in C-ration cans and helmets for drinking purposes. The food was made to last.

An artist in civilian life, one soldier recalled experiences during rugged mountain operations. He said, "I was in my fighting hole for two days. It was cold. My feet were in two inches of icy water. My sergeant told me to go on a patrol. I was so tired I thought I couldn't move. Somehow, I got up and left. Before that time, I didn't realize my body could stand so much."

Growth into man for some has meant more than the personal risks of warfare and the personal privations of climate and terrain. To the platoon sergeant and the squad leader, self-preservation has become second nature. Responsibility has made him develop a knack for looking out for others — the members of his combat group.

"Out in the field you've got to think six different ways from Sunday," one platoon sergeant explained. "You're moving up a slope in attack. A machine gun opens up. You've got to think; see where the best cover is; where and how close the German gun is; how it can be knocked out; where Joe is with the automatic rifle, and Bob and Tom with hand grenades; where to place the other guys to protect flanks and rear. You have no time to get scared yourself."

Doughboys of the 36th have the habit of referring to a soldier who's experienced several combat operations as an old man. "He may have just passed 20 years but they consider him old because of what he knows about battle tactics.

By this self-invented expression, they are recognizing their own transitions from boys to men.



# Rounding up P.O.W.s After WWII

by Joe Presnall, Hq. 143rd Infantry

Did you ever see a prisoner of war camp in your vicinity during and after World War II? There was one on the east side of Hwy. 146 between Baytown and Mont Belvieu. Two of my neighbors, C.T. Joseph II and Cecil Winfree, used German P.O.W.s for labor on their rice fields during the war. I never did see one, but I understand they were real good workers in the field.

My friend Charles Joseph II corresponded with one of the prisoners after he returned to Germany for several years.

Robert Nowell and I mobilized with F Co. on November 25, 1940, 143rd Infantry, Texas 36th Division, for a year's training. While going to Sam Houston State, we moved to Brownwood in January, 1941. I saw Bob on our last trip to Europe in September of last year. Bob was always called upon to hold the memorial services at our memorial dedications at the American cemeteries in Italy and France. I will never forget one of the services at Neuttno, out from Anzio, that he was called on to hold the service. With more than 8,000 Americans laying under white crosses, extemporaneously. When he finished, there was not a dry eye in the crowd. In fact, I have asked Bob to hold my services if he outlives me. (Nina, please don't forget?)

On the trip to Europe last year, I asked Bob what he did after the war, and he said he worked for the government for a while rounding up prisoners and sending them back to Germany. He said on one trip up in east Texas to a small place called Wells, he was sent to send back 10 prisoners that were working for a man named Rube Sessions. He had a cotton gin, a sawmill, a planer and the commissary. Bob said he had 2 sons that he thought he was going to have to whip before they would turn the prisoners loose! I don't know what their name was. I asked if it was Homer and Clint? He looked at me like "How do you know so much about Wells!?" I said you are talking about my brother's wife's kinfolks! Rube Sessions was my sister-in-law's grandpa! Wells was one of my old stomping grounds when I was growing up. Then Bob told me how hard it was to borrow a school

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bus from a neighboring town named Forest to carry the prisoners to Palestine and get back in time to carry the school children home.

After Bob got the prisoners sent back to Germany, he went back into the service to help reorganize the Texas 36th Division into the Armored 49th Division. He retired as a major.

On our last night in Frankfort, Germany, last September, we had our final meal at the Holiday Inn. There was a German soldier attending. He made one of the best speeches that I have ever heard. It seemed that he had to serve in the service like so many Americans did, through the draft. He disagreed with so many things that Adolf Hitler did, especially operating those extermination camps.

Have you ever thought about why we have had so many wars? I don't know either, except it must be the fulfillment of the Bible, and I thank the Lord every day for being on His side instead of the Devil's side.

I think the biggest problem we have on earth is that so many people are following the wrong leader!!

We Have Recorded Stories Related by Our  
Own Troopers . . . a total of 1,600 Pages of  
Combat History by the Men Who Were There  
and now

## We Have Not Yet Begun To WRITE . . .

Yes, we are still looking for your story of a time and place which stands out in your memory of the days in combat. Tragic, funny or in between, we WANT YOUR STORY.

We've said it many times — **"There's 8 Millions Stories i the 36th,"** and we have 7,856,000 to go. **WE NEED YOURS.** In the past five years, several of our contributors have passed on, yet we have their story preserved for the future historians. Don't be bashful. Just tell it like it was, warts and all. Your editor would appreciate it, IF you have it TYPED, doubled-spaced, with ample margin on left.

World War II, as we knew it, will never be repeated in that form, so historians of the 21st Century will continue to write about it for the next 100 years in space shuttles.

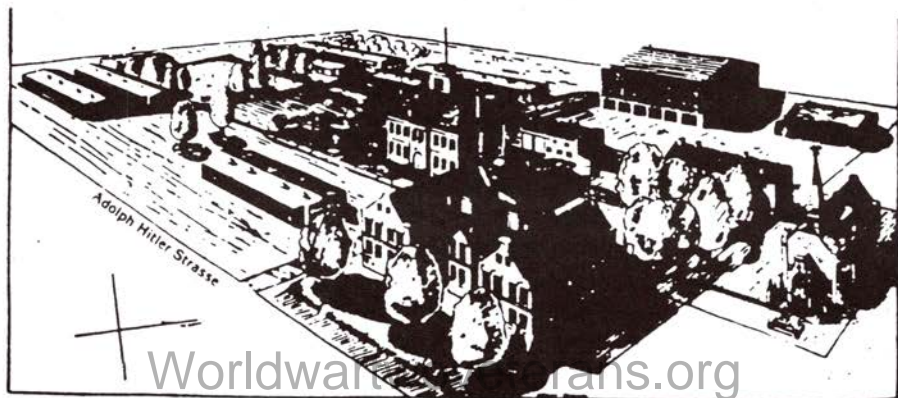


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# Kriegsgefangener 3074 (Prisoner of War)

Clarence Ferguson  
Groesbeck, Texas

Clarence Ferguson was inducted as a 2nd Lieutenant into the Army of the United States when his unit, Company B, 143rd Infantry, 36th Infantry Division was mobilized and ordered to active duty on October 25, 1940. He served as a platoon leader, company executive officer, company commander, and battallion operation officer prior to his capture by the Germans at Persano, Italy on September 13, 1943. He was returned to inactive duty at the end of 1945 with the rank of Major.



Prisoner James Bicker's drawing of Oflag 64. The drawing does not show the barbed wire fence surrounding the camp.

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### Chapter XL

We lost Colonel Gooler as our barrack's commander. He became ill and was sent to the hospital. We later found out he had a very serious heart condition and would have to be quiet and limit any physical exercise. He was moved to a small room on the ground floor of the Big House where he could get maximum rest. All of us regreted to see him go, and we transferred his meager belongings to his new abode.

He was a celebrity not only by being the first American captured by the Axis powers, but also by being one of those alert, intellectuals who had not lost the common touch. He was hard as nails, caustic if necessary, and yet as kind and considerate to younger men as a father. He could, and often did, read an average-length book in a day and retain what he had read. He was most considerate of others but impatient with himself.

He had a genuine humor and accepted teasing about his bad chess playing in a way that delighted us all. He was a man of great strength, character and ability. His untimely capture denied our army one of our greatest military strategists. By reason of captivity he would never rise about the rank of colonel.

He was gone; and although we could and did visit him, it was different from his being our leader in the barracks.

Colonel Drake was notified by the Germans that he would be repatriated. He was in bad health, but it was unbelievable that Hitler would approve the return of any Allied officer, especially one of Drake's reputation.

The colonel was a career officer, who in commanding a battalion in World War I, had been decorated with the Distinguished Medal of Honor. He had remained in the army and was one of the first regular army officers to be assigned to one of the National Guard Units which spearheaded our invasion of North Africa.

Together with some of the finest soldiers America would ever train, Drake was captured at the Casserine Pass fiasco. Doubtless embittered by this restriction on his future military career, he was nevertheless determined that his captors would not enjoy the detention of this, a component of the enemy personnel.

He was a student of history and understood the national personalities of the countries we were fighting in Europe. He understood characteristics of the German army and the philosophy practiced by the Nazis to acquire and hold power.

He also knew their weaknesses; and although he could no longer deal with them in battle, he was determined to cause as much disruption possible consistent with remaining alive.

Sometimes though I suspected him of entertaining a death wish in some of the things he did. He knew every term of the Treaty and constantly directed attention to its slightest infraction to the attention of both the Swiss government and the German Foreign Office.



One day I sat with him in his little cramped room, discussing a letter we would write about one of the more insignificant violations. He indicated that it was of little importance except to keep pressure on the Germans.

We had just finished, and I was about to leave when one of the younger German officers appeared at the door. He saluted, "Good afternoon, Colonel Drake."

It was apparent that he had come to deliver a message. Among other things Drake demanded strict protocol in that he accepted no messages from enlisted men. Any message to him had to be delivered by a German officer.

As he stood there awaiting the return of his salute, the German officer realized that Drake was about to make a statement. He waited. Without rising, Drake looked up, returned the salute, with his cold piercing eyes searching every feature of the German's face. "Are you one of those Goddamn Nazis?"

"No," replied the perplexed officer.

"I hope not, because I like you; but I believe you are," was the colonel's unbelievable reply.

"No, I'm not a Nazi, colonel," he reiterated without emotion.

"Well, this war will sometime be over, and we're going to win." The colonel seemed to be lost in reverie. "And when we do, we're going to hang every one of you Nazis to those trees out there. Yes, you'll get a fair trial, but we'll hang every one of you Goddamn Nazis when it's over."

The officer appeared nervous but showed no sign of anger. He delivered his message and excused himself.

I, too, left not knowing what had provoked the irritation. I would never know but could only wonder if it were the nebulous vapors of a misunderstood mysticism sometimes called a death wish.

On another occasion when we had completed a rather vitriolic denunciation of mistreatment at the hands of our captors, I told Drake that I thought he was subjecting himself to the possibility of excessive retribution because of his harsh attitude toward the Germans.

"Colonel, they are going to take you out of here and kill you," I said.

"Ferguson, if they do that, they'll be admitting that I'm right."

As he worked from day to day to cajole, embarrass, frighten, and persuade the Germans to give us at least the necessities for survival, it was a burden that taxed him more than any other person there. Some never realized the enormity of his responsibilities.

In my contact with him, he never indulged in self-pity nor did he ever waiver in doing what he thought was in the best interest of this unusual command. He was a man much alone, and without a doubt it affected his health.

I thought we should take a posture of more negotiation and less hard-line demands. I discussed this with him in an almost emotional plea. He patiently heard me out. Then without patronizing or effrontery, he said, "The way you think will work with most people and under most circumstances. But with these people it is different. Unless you threaten and constantly keep the pressure on them, they will really abuse you."

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I was not convinced he was right, but after he was gone, we did attempt negotiation, which resulted exactly as he had predicted.

His constant pressure caused the Foreign Minister to come to see him shortly before he was notified he would be repatriated. He was courageous and adamant in his demands that the American soldier be treated with dignity.

On one occasion Schneider, who sometimes resorted to Hitleristic tantrums called Drake to his office and began a diatribe on American POWs. When Drake sought to question him about the cause of this uproar, the Oberst attacked him in a screaming denunciation.

Drake arose from his chair and in a firmness said, "Oberst Schneider, until such time when we can discuss this problem as officers and gentlemen, I refuse to talk with you or remain in your presence."

Without giving Schneider time to reply, Drake turned to the guard and said, "Guard, take me back to my quarters immediately."

Hours later Schneider again sent for him and when he arrived, apologized for his ungentlemanly conduct. Never again did he attempt a temper tantrum on Colonel Drake.

The order came from Berlin that he be returned to the United States, but I suspect his protests were beginning to receive some notoriety in international circles. The day before his departure an emissary from the commandant's office notified him that he would leave the camp at 0400 hours the next day. The messenger further said, "Colonel, the commandant told me to remind you that the order requiring all prisoners to walk in the street will apply, even though you will leave early in the morning."

"You tell Oberst Schneider that I will not do it," was his reply. The meeting was over!

All day different members of Schneider's staff came to the Big House and conferred with Drake. The texts of these meetings were not made known but it was understood that the problem was whether or not Drake would walk in the street. One emissary would leave and within two hours another came.

Late in the afternoon it was learned that Drake was still adamant in his refusal to walk in the street. The Germans were equally uncompromising in excusing him from the order. Schneider's representatives remonstrated with Drake, pointing out that he was going home to enjoy a time of rest. And at each approach Drake reminded his negotiator that at all times he had refused to leave the camp for any purpose since the humiliating order had been published. No amount of persuasion would change his position in this matter.

Sometime during the day a messenger notified the colonel that if he would not agree to obey the order, his repatriation would be cancelled. Again he refused to change his position. Just before sundown a messenger came with a personal appeal from Schneider saying that the government had refused to withdraw the orders for his repatriation and had specifically instructed the guards to shoot Drake if he refused to comply with the order.



"That's what you'll have to do. I'll refuse to walk in the street," was his reply.

Shortly after the lights were out that night a messenger came to Drake's quarters and told him that since some baggage had to be moved from the camp to the depot that morning, it would not be necessary for him to walk. He would ride in the truck. The next morning when we were summoned for appell, Drake was no longer with us. His unrelenting tenacity had maintained his dignity and honor.

## Chapter XLI

The days of what the Polish people called summer were over. Being reared in a country with a long growing season, we never appreciated the meaning of the term 'autumn' as a time of harvest.

We would now begin to harvest some of the vegetables we had so tenderly cared for during the short summer. Our yield was not great because we could not get fertilizer. Individually, we would not receive all the production from our gardens because daily receipt of additional prisoners was fierce. We divided with them what we had grown.

Pete Straight's and my attention to our five tomato plants paid off, though. We were able to get through the black market some concentrated fertilizer which helped our yield.

For a short time we got the taste of fresh vegetables, and there is no way of describing their savor. Food parcels were now being issued intermittently and we were on the verge of starvation. We did not realize this, of course, because during the past months our stomachs had shrunk to where we needed only a fraction of the food we usually required. The production of our gardens helped appreciably.

Having completed our maintenance of the nursery for the young plants, John and I again turned our hothouse into the production of flowers. We were not as enthusiastic as we had been before, though. We were preoccupied in hoping the war would soon end. Also our food supply was not giving us enough calories to have much energy.

John was also spending a lot of time on the tunnel. Even though the decision had been made for no more escapes, the work on the tunnel continued until the place was reached where it could be complete within an hour or two if necessary.

About this time our radio operators had surreptitiously acquired another radio. We were also experiencing an increase in searches. This radio was not particularly needed, but it was important as a spare if the other one was found. John and I volunteered to hide it. In the remaining months we could have produced news or music by a BBC station which appeared to emanate from a clay pot in which grew a gorgeous geranium.

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Thanksgiving came with relatively good news from the western front, but the fighting in the east was too far away for us to realize its significance. Hitler had again gained complete control of the political situation and was following a policy more brutal than ever. His ferrets had sought out and killed many people. Censorship had become so restrictive that very little information was getting to the Allies. There was no question that he did not intend to surrender, and that he would order all POWs executed before the war was over.

Soap was a very scarce item in the Third Reich, and we were reliably informed that experiments were now being made to render human bodies into soap. It was sobering to think that there was a reasonable probability that each of us might be a necessary ingredient in a bar of soap before the year was over.

Even so, somehow we were able to maintain a sense of humor. Sometimes you would hear someone say, "Fellow, don't mess with me. Next year I may be washing my hands with you."

By great sacrifice, we did save enough food to celebrate Thanksgiving. The Germans, at least, made a special effort and the day before Thanksgiving we received a food parcel for the first time in several weeks. Although the day was celebrated, it lacked the spark of festivity of the year before.

During this time we received word that an unannounced search by the Gestapo could be expected. This within itself was of very little concern because we had gone through many of these, but we were told that this time they were not doing a security check. Instead, they were gathering clothing and identification cards. The informant did not know what use was to be made of these, but they would confiscate every piece of clothing left in the barracks when we fell out for appell. They would be looking for identification cards, rank insignia and used outer clothing.

I immediately buried my card in the ground just outside the barracks. Many of the others did the same. Some burned theirs.

We redistributed our clothing so that persons who had more than they could put on at one time would loan them to another person. Our clothing supply was so meager that this created no problem. There was only one extra pair of trousers in the barracks and very few extra shirts. Underwear and socks were treated in the same way. Now we were ready. On all the appells thereafter we left nothing in the barracks.

As informed, one day we were summoned to a special appell. We were hurried out of our quarters, and a large number of Gestapo descended on us. A truck stood by to take the loot they expected to recover.

They were surprised not to find anything of value. When they inquired about the scarcity of surplus clothing, we appealed to them to assist us in getting more for the winter to come. I am sure they did not realize we had been tipped off. Instead they left empty handed, believing that this camp was poorly clothed. Our plan worked.

A pall of gloom overshadowed our Christmas season. The Battle of the Bulge made all hopes for an early liberation untenable. Propaganda constantly reminded us that this was a turning point in the war, and that soon Germany would be victorious.



Hitler was again proclaimed as supernatural. It was broadcast by radio and in the newspapers that he had additional secret weapons which would soon be introduced, and that Germany would soon be victorious over the Jewish-dominated armies of the Allies.

The encouragement from the Russian attacks in November and December had gone sour. Russian armies had advanced to positions just east of Warsaw and stopped. Encouraged by these advances, the Polish underground had come to life and were fighting courageously in the former capital. With a little help, they could have liberated Warsaw in a short time, but Russia refused to do it and instead allowed them to run out of ammunition and food. In desperation the Polish appealed for help. In response a flight of American planes flew over our camp in route to try to supply them. The 'bird' later told us that these supplies when dropped, missed the area occupied by the liberators, and after super-human efforts, the German occupying-force annihilated them.

An officer of the underground army in Warsaw told me that men, women and children were herded into narrow streets, doused with gasoline and burned. Sometimes people were herded into a compact group where a cable was used to encircle them. They were cinched much like a shock of grain and were sprayed with gasoline and set a fire.

Russia had played its hand in Warsaw, looking to the political future. The Poles had rallied under the leadership of General Bor, and there was no doubt he would unify all of Poland if he had been successful. But Stalin had plans for Poland. He had no intention that a strong leader would survive. Instead he let the Germans destroy the nucleus of patriotic Poles. It was the prelude of events to come.

We celebrated the birth of the Christ Child with songs and prayers and frivolity hiding as much as we could our feelings of despair. We were old men, tired and hungry, in whom the extremities of emotion had emaciated our spirits. Even the food parcels did little to stimulate us. We now realized that an end was near, probably two ends—of each of us and of the war.



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# Kerrigan's Commandos

By: George J. Kerrigan, Company A,  
142nd Infantry



WorldwarVeterans.org

As anybody who was in Italy in the Cassino area knows, that almost unbearable condition existed every day and night. We had blankets and overcoats and shelter halves, but as we scaled the steepest mountains, quite often under fire, almost everyone had to take off their overcoats and discard them along with their packs. Then, when we finally reached the top, all we had was our rifles and ammunition. There was nothing but rock and boulders. Every man picked a place to hide, which was his home for about 30 days and nights. It was like laying in a bath tub full of water at night. But after a half hour, when our body would heat the water, it didn't seem too bad.

It seems crazy when you think of all the artillery that Jerry was sending up to us. We got as low as we could unless you were on watch. And, of course, we had dead Germans spread around us. I think they were there 'till the end of the hostilities. The only ones that got down were the wounded (Americans included), and as our feet were always wet due to the rainy season, quite a few men had trench feet. But, nothing was done until gangrene set in, and men lost toes and feet that had to be amputated. Then, some of the sufferers were sent to a hospital, but the medics didn't know what else to do with them outside of rubbing Lanolin on them.

So, after quite a few mountains, we were relieved for a rest. Then, off to Anzio for the big break out (May 27, 1944). The 3rd and 45th divisions along with the 82nd airborne put 17 weeks of living hell up there, and we thought we were doing all the suffering. But, we busted out (with plenty of help) and were shocked to see that we were going to fight on level ground, and we were going to move for a change. My gang was itching for a fight (with someone we could see eye to eye for a change), and, of course, pull a few tricks while we were at it.

We moved fast and furiously, and even when we got to Velettri, where the 141 & 143 did all the fighting and lost a lot of good men, we had the



good fortune to be sent over the mountain (Mt. Artissimo) during the night to cut the Germans off from the rear, cutting communications and setting up road blocks, etc. It was scary as hell at first. Then, when things went much better than we thought possible, we loosened up and went into our bag of tricks for a few laughs.

After Velletri we traveled fast and furiously (of course while we were lucky, men were running into rough fights and getting hurt), but I was lucky to have a bunch of guys that fought hard when they had to. But when there was a laugh to have, they took advantage of it, even if the target was to be their sergeant (me).

Well, this day we were doing good in a lot of small fire fights north of Rome when we heard a jeep at a distance. So, I looked through my glasses and saw that it was a war correspondent about 50 years old heading on a path directly toward us. So, someone said, "Let's scare the hell out of him." I said okay.

We hid as he drove slowly down the path, looking all around nervously as there was shooting heard all over. When he reached our position, two guys jumped in front of the jeep, and he jammed on the brakes. Five of my motley looking crew jumped on the jeep and held a trench knife to his throat yelling, "Kill the bum. Cut his throat." And, as no one had shaved in three weeks, they sure were vicious looking.

The poor guy was in a state of shock, and when he heard the talk said, "Don't kill me. I'm an American, a correspondent."

I said, "Cut it out. We know you're a Jerry." Al D. Allegro, from Newark, N.J., had a trench knife between his teeth, took it out and said, "Let me kill him, please."

Skip Brandt said, "What the hell are you asking the sergeant for? Kill him."

Then I said, "He is a little old to be a combat man. Maybe I better check to make sure." Then, the poor guy got all excited and said, "Check my papers and my camera in the back." So I said, "He speaks pretty good English."

One wise guy said, "Anyone speaks better English than you do." Just because I have a Brooklyn accent, they think I'm ignorant. Anyway, I asked him all crazy questions about America. Then, Skipper Brandt asked him who the mayor of Dubuque, Iowa, was, and when he didn't know I said, "Told you he was a Jerry. Kill him."

Anyway, I checked his papers and said I believed him. One guy said, "He would believe Hitler." Finally, I said, "Let him go."

Well, the poor guy was so happy to hear that he said, "Boy, I never saw a tougher bunch of men. Could I write about this incident and send it back to the States?" (He was with one of the big news services.) So I said, "OK,

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but make it fast. We have a war to fight.” He got the camera ready, then got his writing pad and said to me “What is your name and rank, sir?”

I started to say that I was a sergeant, when some Jerrys came over a rise, opened up as we spotted them and took off immediately with us after them. I told the old guy to get under the jeep and stay there as we ran.

It has been many a year since we pulled that gag, but I still laugh like hell when I think of how we scared that fellow. But, there was no doubt that we would have scared even Hitler’s S.S. Troops. Col. Jim Minor (my old captain) always said I had the scurviest crew he had ever laid eyes on, but he admitted (years later) that we could fight.

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