



Joujours Prêt

351st Infantry Regiment

HISTORY

of the

351st INFANTRY REGIMENT

WORLD WAR II

July 1942

July 1945

Dedication

It is our sincere wish that this document will secure and hold some small measure of the magnificent gallantry of those brave men formerly with us who, by offering their lives, consummated total victory in Europe. Each of us had buddies who fell at our sides during the numerous bloody battles of this second World War. It is to them that not only we, but all freedom-loving Americans, owe so much. Theirs was the real, the full, the noble sacrifice. We soldiers of the 351st Infantry Regiment can never forget their supreme contribution; and we propose that no future generation shall ever forget the evil that caused all this suffering and death.

With all humility and with full conception of the unending debt we owe them, this very incomplete record of the battles, the hardships, and the experiences of the regiment is dedicated to the fallen heroes of the 351st Infantry Regiment.

HEADQUARTERS 351st INFANTRY

U. S. ARMY

APO 88

TO: The Officers and Enlisted Men of the 351st Infantry.

You wrote this book. This is your history. You know the men who died at Cassino, at Santa Maria, at Laiatico, and in the grim days of the Gothic line. You remember the wounded who did not return. You know the price that was paid.

You have fought proudly and with distinction beside the finest units of the British, French, and American Armies. You met and defeated the toughest divisions in the German Army. To you at Lake San Cristoforo the 1st Parachute Corps, last well-organized unit in the German Armies in Italy, surrendered unconditionally. Your Spearhead name was not won easily.

This book was compiled from the official records of this headquarters and from the memories of those who survived the fighting. It is a record of tremendous achievement in perhaps the most unfavorable terrain in the world over a skillful, fierce, experienced enemy. You Infantrymen, aided by the Artillery, the Armored Forces, Engineers, and the Medical Corps who so ably supported you, are the creators of each splendid, terrible scene.

To have commanded you through your last battles makes me at once humble and very proud. May God guide and guard you always.

Franklin P. Miller

FRANKLIN P. MILLER
Colonel, Infantry
Commanding

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BORGO
BASSANO
VICENZA
OSTIGLIA
BOLOGNA
LOIANO
MT GRANDE
CASTEL DEL RIO
MT CAPPELLO
FIRENZUOLA
FLORENCE
LAIATICO
ROME
ANZIO
ITRI
CASSINO
SANTA MARIA
MINTURNO
NAPLES

bogart



Introduction

This is a story of one of the "Queens of Battle", the 351st Infantry Regiment. It is an endeavor to proclaim a proud record won in the long and bitter Italian fighting. From CASSINO to the ALPS, this regiment battled its way—almost without pause—for more than a year. It was not an easy struggle, for the Wehrmacht had sent its best divisions to Italy, many of them veterans of the Russian and African campaigns. The defeat of German Arms in Italy required heartbreaking toil, blood, guts, sweat, and American lives. It demanded of those who fought, utmost determination in the face of a fanatical enemy who was a master in the art of warfare. Our bombardment, artillery fire, and the use of armor sometimes softened the foe and made the advance more rapid; but the final decisions resulted from those countless violent infantry assaults in which men were pitted against each other with the terrible realization that survival meant to destroy the enemy. And all these seemingly small, insignificant, nearly-forgotten actions when totaled spelled victory in Europe. The men and officers of this regiment by their heroic fighting contributed immeasurably to this overwhelming victory.

As the twig is Bent

The story of the 351st Infantry's success in battle goes back to the 15th of July 1942 when the 88th Division and the regiment were activated at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. There Major General John E. Sloan, Commanding General of the 88th Infantry Division, made a byword of his statement, "We are training for our first battle." From that time on the men and officers of the 351st bent themselves to the task of moulding a fighting team out of the civilian-soldiers who poured into the regiment from every State in the Union. Under the command and supervision of their beloved and

respected Commanding Officer, Colonel Arthur S. Champeny, the men of the 351st Infantry found the key to successful combat—hard work, good soldiering, and magnificent esprit de corps. Some will remember the parade ground at Camp Gruber, the RCT and "D" series field problems, and the bus trips to Muskogee. They were days of adjustment and experimentation as men learned their jobs and acquired the polish of well-trained, well-equipped fighting soldiers. The President of The United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt bade Godspeed to the men of the 88th in a full division review on the completion of their basic training, and he expressed full confidence in the 351st Infantry Regiment and its fighting teammates in days to come.

It was on Third Army's Louisiana Maneuvers that the 351st Infantry distinguished itself and gave notice to all of its prowess as a hard-driving team. In July 1943 the regiment broke all records by marching sixty-two miles in less than forty-eight hours to win commendation from General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army. There were sore feet, dusty roads, and speculations about the future, but it was here in Louisiana that the 351st learned to maneuver, to live in the field, and to look upon itself with pride. The Sabine River, Leesville, Alexandria, Nachitoches, and Shreveport are names reminiscent of many good times and carefree summer days. Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, put the regiment back on garrison standards and gave the men and officers their last opportunity to enjoy city life, American style, before the 351st moved to war.

At Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, and on the Liberty ships at sea the 351st Infantry met for the first time the restriction, loneliness, impersonality of a war machine, and many who stood at the ship's rails and watched America pass out of view beneath the horizon will never return. Some of the troopships landed at Casablanca and others at Oran, North Africa, and the regiment concentrated at Magenta in December 1943. The 351st was now in a combat zone and talk of air raids, scenes of the earlier North African fighting, and the squalor of the native villages and cities brought sharply to the attention of all how fortunate we Americans are.

Mountain climbing and physical conditioning filled the brief interim in Algeria before embarking for Italy.

351 Infantry Meets The Enemy

Unbelievable destruction and a hungry population was the vista at Naples as the soldiers carried their heavy duffel bags down the gangplanks. Hundreds of Army trucks moving through the congested port area and soldiers of many nations made newcomers seem small and insignificant in comparison with the veterans of several campaigns. But the men of the 351st were willing to learn, and more important, they were eager to meet the German on his own ground. In the night the blinking of artillery flashes along the horizon toward Cassino served as a constant reminder of how close the enemy was. It was early February 1944 at Faicchio and the men slept in tents without cots during the rainy season. Although it was not a pleasant stay, the Americans soon learned how to drink a little vino and speak Italian with the local population. From this unfamiliar environment men of the 351st moved into the line.

On 27 February 1944 the Second Battalion moved by truck to San Michele, then climbed rocky Mount CASALONE in a driving rainstorm to relieve battleweary men of the 36th Division. Here in sight of Cassino Lieutenant Colonel Raymond E. Kendall led his battalion into battle—the first all Selective Service unit to face the enemy. The doughboys saw for the first time the power of their team mates, the 913th Field Artillery, in action. In seven days on line the 351st also came to know the price of freedom and victory, for nineteen men gave their lives in patrolling and securing this cruel mountain. These men were but the first of hundreds to follow them to a soldier's grave before the regiment could consider its job in Europe completed. Theirs was the greatest sacrifice—they answered a call to duty which neither we who are living nor America can ever repay.

Early in March the 351st Infantry Regiment assembled, moved to the costal sector near MINTURNO and TUFO and relieved the 201st Guards

Brigade. The Tommies had been halted in January 1944 when they had encountered the formidable GUSTAV LINE. They had crossed the GARGLIANO RIVER and had taken the nearby hills only after repeated and desperate attacks. Throughout March and April, except for brief rest periods in bivouacs near CARINOLA, the regiment manned these defenses, incessantly probed enemy positions with patrols, and endured intermittent German artillery and mortar fire which took a daily toll of casualties. The vineyards and hillsides were deadly to enter for the enemy had sown countless mines, but 351st Infantry patrols went forward with characteristic determination and completed their missions. Living under combat conditions meant foxholes, dangers, mud, cold, hardships and personal danger—the final battle indoctrination.

On 3 May 1944 Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark addressed the officers and men of the 351st Infantry in a natural amphitheater near CARINOLA. He expressed in a natural and informal manner his confidence in the combat ability of the regiment and he promised the 88th Division an important role in the coming offensive. General Clark then pinned the Distinguished Service Cross on Second Lieutenant John T. Lamb of Company K for his magnificent hand-to-hand fighting while on patrol. Colonel Champeny then addressed the regiment, praising the men and officers for the fine job they had done in defensive operations.

Field Order Number 6, Headquarters 88th Infantry Division, reached the 351st up in the foxholes on 9 May. This order outlined the part to be played by the regiment in the coming drive and indicated the supporting fires to be expected. The mission of the United States II Corps was to attack west with divisions abreast, the 88th Division on the right and the 85th Division on the left, to secure AUSONIA and to cut the PICO-ITRI road in the vicinity of ITRI. Corps artillery would fire counter-battery missions, while the 6th Field Artillery Group and the 639th Field Artillery Battalion were placed in direct support of the 88th Division. Also attached to the division were the First Armored Group, the 804 Tank Destroyer Battalion, the 601st Field Artillery Battalion, the 91st Reconnaissance

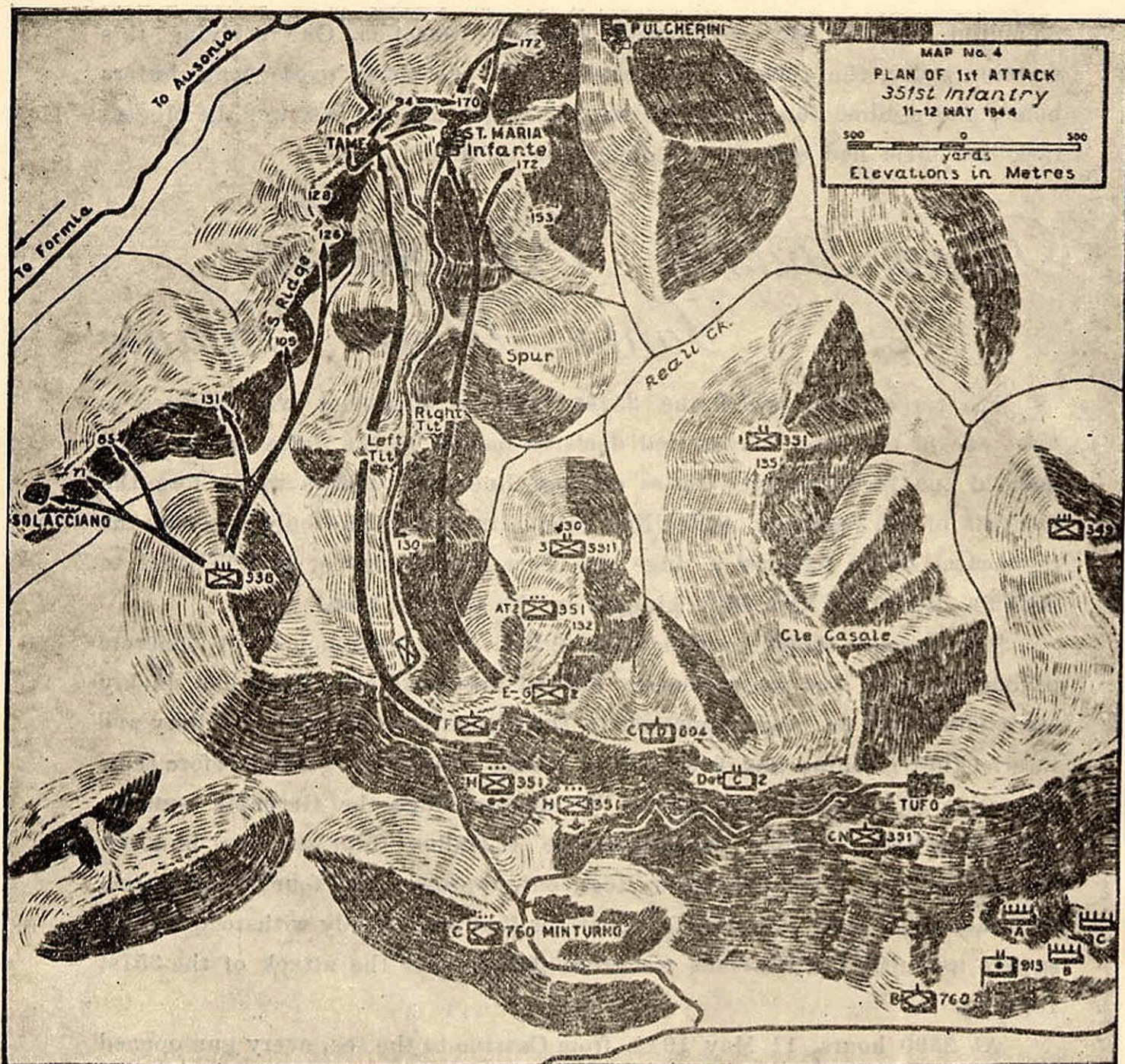
Squadron, and the Second Chemical Weapons Battalion. On receiving this warning order, the riflemen re-cleaned their weapons, wrote long letters home, and studied the ground before them—for here at last was the biggest task the 351st had ever been called upon to face.

Blood, Guts & A Reputation *- Santa Maria Infante*

The terrain over which the 351st Infantry Regiment was destined to fight one of the most savage and decisive battles in the drive on Rome is gnarled and furrowed by a series of ridge lines and valleys which form the foothills of the imposing AURUNCI mountain range. The only road in the regimental sector followed a ridge line from the vicinity of MINTURNO to SANTA MARIA INFANTE, kingpin in the Gustav Line.

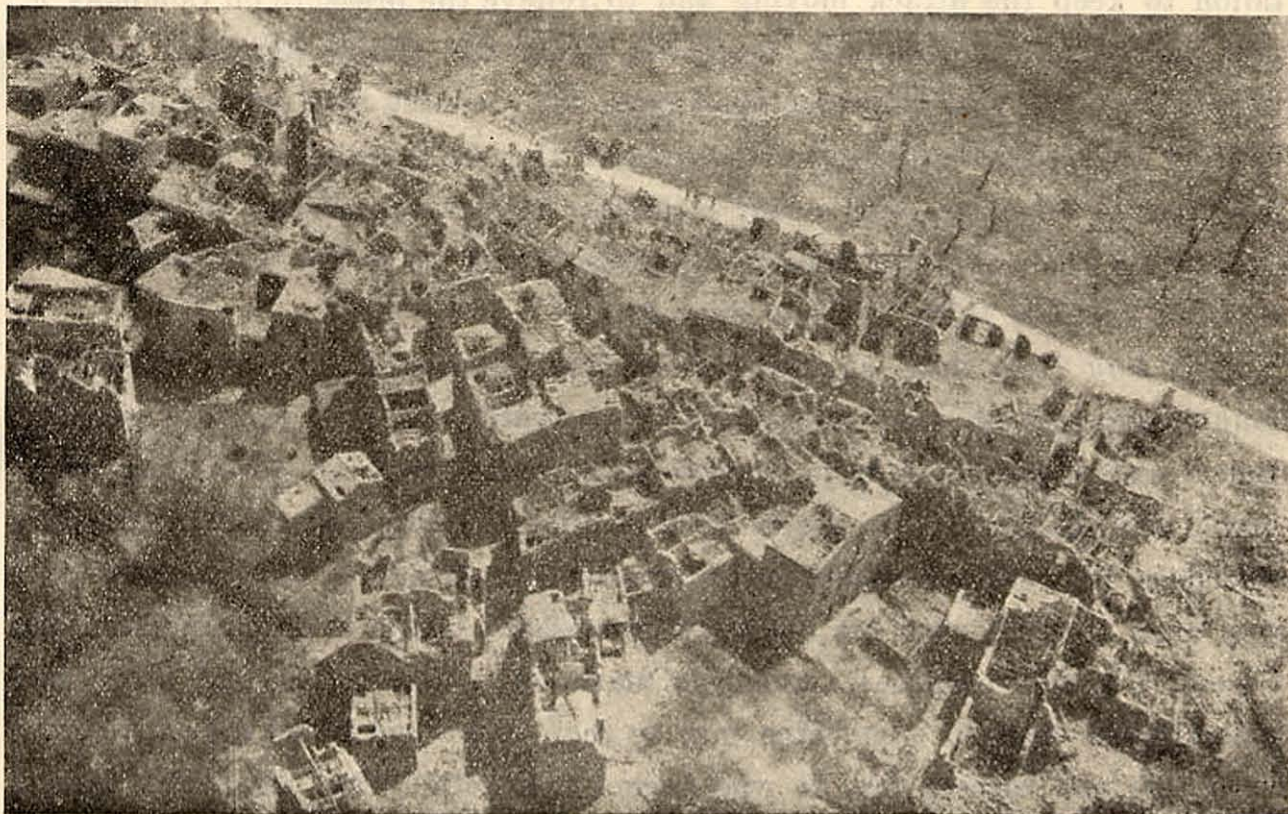
The German forces manning this terrain were entrenched in concrete pillboxes, caves, and emplacements blasted into solid rock. They had thickly sown minefields on every approach to their positions, and their artillery and interlocking machine gun fire made a killing zone of the ground before their main line of resistance. Along the "S" shaped ridge the Germans concentrated the 94th Fusilier Reconnaissance Battalion (four to five hundred strong) and the 267th Grenadier Regiment, approximately four hundred men. Entrenched in their powerful fortifications that had already withstood several savage assaults, the Germans waited confidently for the attack of the 351st Infantry.

At 2300 hours, 11 May 1944, from Cassino to the sea, every gun opened fire in one of the greatest artillery barrages in history and continued with undiminished fury for one hour. Six full battalions of field artillery: the familiar 913th under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Franklin P. Miller, the 339th, 631st, and the 5th Armored Group (three battalions strong) directly supported the assault of the 351st Infantry Regiment. Shells screamed across no-man's land—streams of tracers floated lazily in the air—flares of all



colors burst into the sky, illuminating the field of battle like a magnificent display of fireworks. In the rear, repeated flashes of artillery stabbed through the smoke and darkness. The sounds of battle intermingled, roared down the valley to die away in the distance, bringing word to those at ANZIO that the drive for ROME had begun.

12 May 1944 Companies E and F of the Second Battalion led the initial attack along the main north-south ridge line. First resistance in the form of heavy machine gun fire from HILL 130 struck Company F on the left side of the ridge, but the doughboys quickly overcame the enemy and carried forward to the terrain feature known as the "tits". Riflemen of Company E kept pace on the right, and both companies came abreast of the "tits". On learning that the Commander of Company E had been wounded, Lieutenant Colonel Kendall moved forward and assumed command of the company to keep the attack from stalling. He immediately organized a two platoon attack and led a bayonet assault on two elaborate machine gun positions, permitting the company to advance. Once on the forward slope of the next terrain feature, the "spur", the attack was again stopped by machine gun fire from the front and both flanks, while murderous artillery fire steadily increased the casualty list. Colonel Kendall led a squad of riflemen from the second platoon in a rush on the right machine gun, which was in a stone



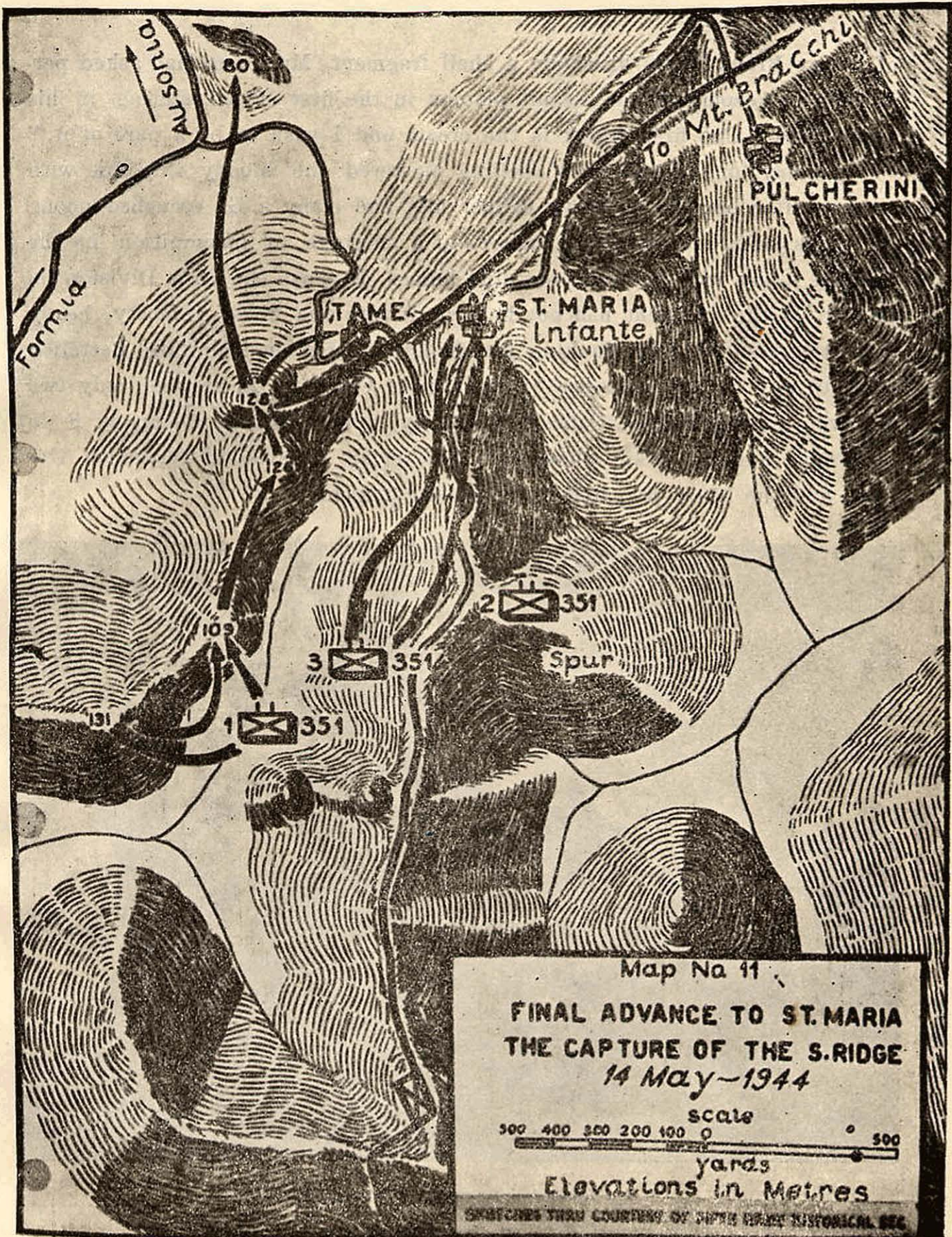
Bird's eye view of Santa Maria

house. Calling to his men to follow him, Colonel Kendall rushed the house, killing several of the enemy and silencing the gun with two hand grenades—but as he crouched to look around the corner of the building he was killed instantly by another machine gun not seventy-five yards away. Thus died one of the finest officers of the United States Army.

Inspired by Colonel Kendall's gallantry, Company E captured the "spur" and held it for several hours until reinforcements arrived, then pushed into the outskirts of SANTA MARIA INFANTE. Here a strong German counter-attack almost overwhelmed the company and they were forced to fall back to the "spur".

While Company E hurled itself against the Germans to the right of the ridge, Company F forged ahead on the left and reached a position near TAME, where crossfire from pillboxes pinned the company to the ground. Colonel Champeny ordered the Third Battalion, Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Charles P. Furr, to move forward and pass through the Second Battalion to keep the attack moving and to relieve the pressure on Company F, now isolated and surrounded. Daybreak found the Third Battalion pushing forward against very stubborn resistance. In the first twenty-four hours of fighting the Germans clearly demonstrated that they intended to hold their positions at all costs, and enemy soldiers frequently refused to surrender even when their position became hopeless. It was up to the 351st riflemen to close in and kill them in their dugouts.

13 May 1944 From sunrise until sunset the Second and Third Battalions fought savagely to gain and hold scant yards of this precious terrain. Beleagured Company F beat off repeated attacks from all directions while brave men died trying to reach them. Although badly wounded, Lieutenant Theodore W. Noon, commanding Company G, refused to be evacuated and continued to fight with his company throughout the day. Captain Heitman, Second Battalion Adjutant, took command of Company E and with two gallant men charged a machine gun to their front and killed the entire crew with rifle and carbine fire. It was during this action that Frederick Faust, Harpers Magazine War Correspondent and better known under the pen name



Map No 11
FINAL ADVANCE TO ST. MARIA
THE CAPTURE OF THE S. RIDGE
14 May-1944
 scale
 500 400 300 200 100 0 500
 yards
 Elevations in Metres
 SPETCHES FROM COURTESY OF THE GREAT HISTORICAL SEC.

of "Max Brand" was killed by a shell fragment. Mr. Faust had asked permission to accompany an assault platoon in the first attack, stating in his own words, "The first attack is the cream and I wish to be a part of it."

All day long the German shelling plastered the bloody ridgeline with barrage after barrage of heavy caliber fire, and many a GI crouched among the rocks remarked about the reports of a shortage of ammunition in the German Army with typical front-line humor. Because the 85th Division on the left of the regiment had not kept pace with the 351st Infantry, heavy casualties resulted from flanking fire from that direction. The Third Battalion beat its way to the last reported position of Company F, to find only two survivors of that ordeal. Colonel Champeny ordered a new Company F to be formed under Captain Charles J. Radosevich, Regimental Personnel Officer, and the 351st prepared to renew the attack.



I & R men look for snipers in Santa Maria

14 May 1944 Seriously hampered by the 85th Division's failure to capture the ridge in their zone, Colonel Champeny ordered the First Battalion to move out of the regimental zone and do the job. With typical 351st spirit the men of Company B stormed HILL 131 and the ridge line to the right of it, silencing the murderous flanking fire that had cost the other battalions so dearly. In the early hours before daybreak the First Battalion distinguished itself by eliminating all resistance from the flanking positions, although they, too, paid a high price in blood.

The final crushing attack was launched at 0800 hours, with the Second and Third Battalions attacking abreast directly toward SANTA MARIA INFANTE and TAME. Grim riflemen who had been fighting for forty-eight hours without pause gripped their weapons and came out of their foxholes to close with the hated enemy. This time they would not be stopped. After smashing their way through the streets of the two towns, those men of the 351st drove the stunned Germans up the AUSONIA-SPIGNO road and into the mountains beyond. Although they had paid a staggering price, losing many veteran soldiers and leaders, they had blasted the first gap in the vaunted GUSTAV LINE and had opened the road to ROME. This epic struggle of the 351st Infantry was characterized by gallant, heroic action of companies, platoons, squads, and individual soldiers.

Besides breaching the GUSTAV LINE, the 351st Infantry had other grounds for pride in its accomplishment. For the first time most of its men were tested in battle and they were not found wanting. They lived intimately with death, pinned down in shell-holes, in ditches, even on the open ground for whole days at a time while shells screamed overhead and machine gun bullets kicked up the dirt only a few feet away. Members of the first American all Selective Service Division to go into combat had distinguished themselves on the most difficult of all proving grounds—the battle field.

The Spear Strikes

Having smashed the German defenses at SANTA MARIA the next regimental objective was MOUNT LACIVITA, with the First and Third Battalions vigorously pushing forward against intense artillery, but light infantry resistance. Colonel Champeny was quick to sense a possible breakthrough and accordingly he ordered the advance to be pushed with utmost determination. The terrain north of SPIGNO is as high and rugged as is to be found in Italy, and it was directly over the crest of this mountain barrier that the 351st launched its spearhead attack. With the incomparable French Goumiers on their right the doughboys of the 351st Infantry fulfilled the highest expectations predicted by General Clark at CARINOLA. Mount PASSABBRA, Mount SAN ANGELO, Mount RUAZZO, Mount PERETTA, and Mount GRANDE fell to the regiment in five days of skirmish and maneuver. So rapid was our pace and so relentless our pursuit that the German never had opportunity to regain his balance. The First Battalion scored a 'first' by overrunning a complete German pack artillery battery, and morale soared among the men, who were used to grinding assaults in the face of organized resistance. Far ahead of the 85th Division in the costal sector, our troops received artillery fire from the left flank on many occasions. At no other time has the regiment had such a grandstand seat to watch German Artillery batteries in action, Allied naval units shelling the coast, and aircraft strafing and bombing the plains below. This was a perfect breakthrough.

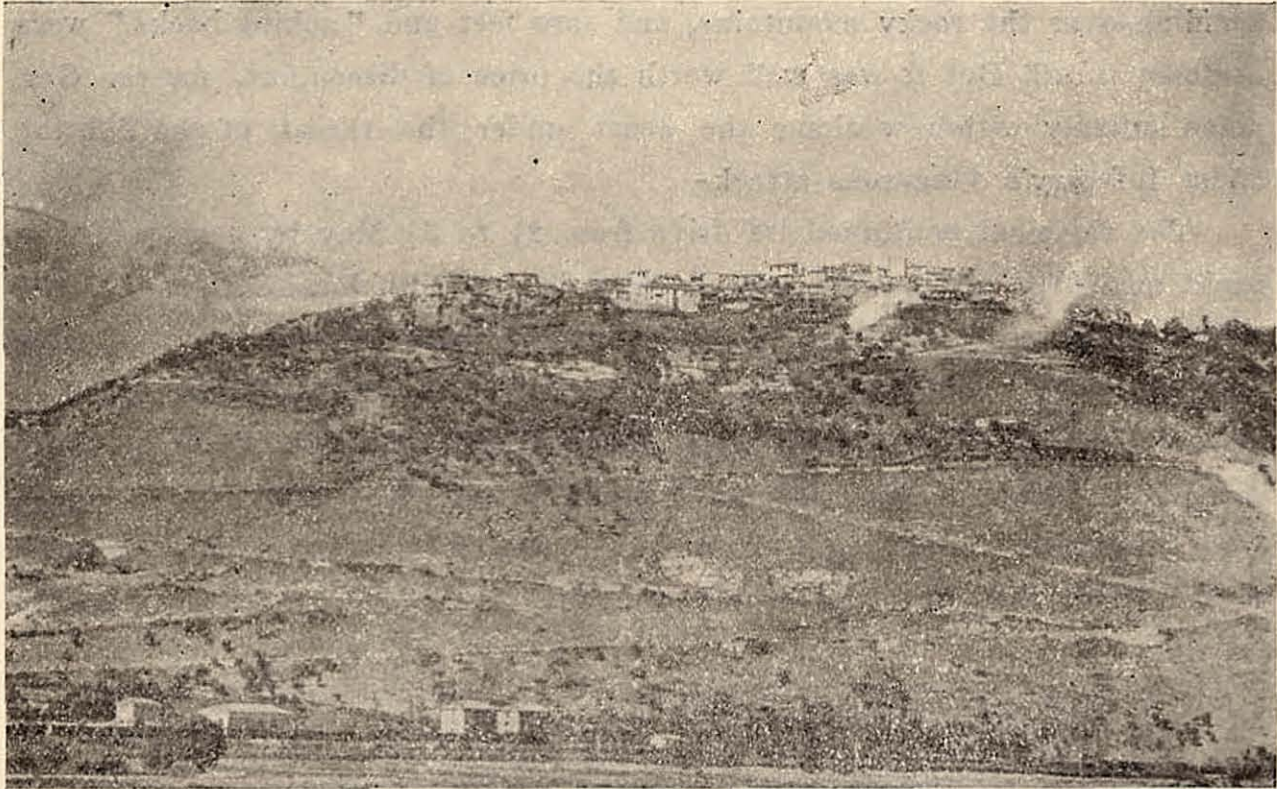
The story of this advance is not complete without a word of praise and commendation for the service and supply units who struggled over slippery mountain trails with mule trains bringing shoes, ammunition, and rations for the GI's up front. The Medical Detachment worked wonders in care and evacuation of the wounded, while Anti-Tank Company stored its weapons, rolled up its sleeves, and carried supplies to the rifle battalions. Many a soldier will remember how his shoes wore out completely in ten days of

scuffling over the rocky mountains, and sore feet and "aching backs" were common to all. But it was well worth the price of discomfort, for the Germans sullenly withdrew along the coast under the threat of the fighting 351st Infantry's dangerous attack.

The regiment continued its drive from 21 to 31 May by continuing the rapid maneuver and pursuit, occasionally fighting stiff local actions—battles which never made headlines but which were certainly important to the heroic men who fought and died. ITRI, Mount VALLONA, Mount PASSIGNANO, MONSICARDI, Mount CHAIVINO, Mount PIZZUTO, SEZZE, Mount SAN ANGELO, Mount NERO, and other peaks on the right flank of II Corps were mileposts in the long trek to Rome. For a few hours the regiment rested inside the old Anzio beachhead, but the weary troops had hardly



Doughboys move up on the road to Rome



German shells hit Sezze shortly after its capture

filled their helmets to wash and shave when the order to load-up came through. Moving by truck through CORI to VALMONTONE, the 351st relieved the 338th Infantry of the 85th Division and initiated a drive to cut Highway 6.

At the End of the Rainbow - Rome

Together, the Second and Third Battalions pushed off to cut vital Highway 6 on the morning of 1 June 1944, destroying several enemy tanks and self-propelled guns enroute. Road blocks were established to protect the flanks of the regiment from the retreating Germans who were pushing toward Rome by vehicle and on foot to escape our crushing penetrations. One of these blocks, set up by a platoon of Company G under the command of Second Lieutenant Andrew Salynski in the village of SAN CASAREO had a field day, knocking out twenty-five German vehicles and killing all their

occupants without a single casualty. Private Asa Farmer provided the main punch with his bazooka, for with seven rounds he completely destroyed seven enemy trucks and half-tracks. Private Farmer never missed. Sometimes moving by truck or riding tanks, but most of the time on foot, the 351st Infantry struck for the Eternal City.

Across open, rolling wheat fields decked with beautiful blood-red poppies the regiment attacked. Those who took part will remember this advance by the formations maintained—scouts out—flank security—and plenty of dispersion. Here, too, there were many instances of heroism in the ranks as our elated troops charged forward with complete confidence in their ability to destroy the enemy. Private Kotlarz, a fighting bazooka man of Company L, took time out between shots at a pill-box to grapple with a German and capture him with his own rifle. The regiment lost one of its finest officers in this drive when Lieutenant Trevelyn L. McClure, Regimental I & R Platoon Leader, met a hero's death in fighting for which he was later awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, posthumously. On the afternoon of 4 June the First Battalion, 351st Infantry broke into Rome at 1900 hours—the first troops to enter the city. Our reception was tremendous. Thousands of cheering Romans lined the streets offering vino, throwing kisses



Riflemen alert for Jerry near Rome



There was plenty of chow for GI's in Rome

and flowers, and clambering aboard the vehicles for the triumphal procession. In spite of occasional skirmishes with German snipers, these people thronged the streets and made it most difficult to advance, for our objective was to secure two bridges across the TIBER RIVER before they could be destroyed by the retreating enemy.

It was during the fight to liberate Capitol City that "Sally" the ex-American radio propaganda girl, announced in her daily broadcast that "the 88th Division fights like blood-thirsty cut-throats", tagging the 88th as the "Blue Devil Division". To the weary soldier packing a forty-five pound mortar baseplate (with a pretty signorina on each arm) through the streets of Rome, the order to drive forward must have seemed a bit unnecessary; but with their characteristic spirit the men of the 351st struck hard at enemy rearguard action north of the city. In conjunction with the 91st

Reconnaissance Squadron and the 804th Tank-Destroyer Battalion, the Second and Third Battalions fought until 13 June with the Ellis Task Force in the vicinity of MONTEROSI. Then on the 13th of June the regiment was relieved and ordered into a bivouac area in the vicinity of ALBANO, twelve miles south of Rome for a well-earned and much needed rest.

Throughout the remainder of the month the 351st underwent a period of training and re-equipment. There were passes to ROME and SORRENTO, parties and swimming in nearby LAKE ALBANO, and Colonel Champeny flew to Cairo on the 17th of June for a well-earned rest. This schedule continued unhampered after the regiment moved to a new bivouac area in the vicinity of TARQUINIA, where many new replacements arrived to fill up the ranks. The spirit of the men and officers of the 351st Infantry remained on a high level, and training for expected future operations, together with past accomplishments, engendered a feeling of confidence in our future engagements with the enemy.

On 6 July 1944 the Secretary of War, Mr. Henry L. Stimson made an official visit to the division accompanied by General Mark W. Clark, then commanding the Fifth Army. The 351st Infantry Regiment was designated as host and formed with battalions abreast on the TARQUINIA airfield to receive the Secretary of War. Mr. Stimson reviewed the regiment in an impressive ceremony and in a short address stated, "The people back home have followed your course on the road to Rome with pride and admiration". The 351st Infantry Regiment was destined to go forth again and wrest victory from the enemy.

Midsummer Fighting -- 1944

The hard-pressed Germans, hurled back from their three defensive lines south of Rome, dropped back slowly through the hilly country until they reached a barrier of high ground running generally from Siena through Volterra, Laiatico, and down to the sea near Cecina. Here they determined to hold the attack of IV Corps while their armies facing the British could

retire into the Gothic Line positions in the North Appenines. American armored units had been stopped with heavy losses, and the 88th Division was ordered into the line to smash the German resistance. While the 349th and 350th Infantry Regiments drove for the hills near Volterra, the 351st moved by truck on 7 July to POMERANCE and then to MONTECATINI in division reserve.

On that same day General Clark, Major General Crittenberger, Commanding IV Corps, and Major General Sloan arrived at the Regimental Command Post. In brief ceremonies General Clark awarded Colonel Champeny the Distinguished Service Cross for his extraordinary heroism and inspiring leadership during the battle of SANTA MARIA INFANTE. Lieutenant Theodore W. Noon was also decorated with a Distinguished Service Cross for his fighting valor while commanding Company G in the same action. That evening orders were received committing the regiment to some of the most bitter, cruel, aggressive warfare it ever experienced.

Attached to the 351st Infantry Regiment for this operation were Company E, First Armored Regiment, a medium tank company, Company C of the 701st Tank Battalion, and the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron. Four battalions of field artillery were massed in direct support of the regiment: 913th and 339th Field Artillery Battalions from the 88th Division, and two battalions from the 6th Armored Artillery Regiment. At the time it was anticipated that only strongpoints of resistance would be encountered and that the advance to the Division Objective at PALAIA would be rapid. From the Observation Post at MONTECATINI the town of LAIATICO was plainly visible in the distance. Approaching this town was low rolling country with LAIATICO on top of a hill-mass, commanding perfect observation in every direction. As it advanced the regiment soon learned that it was to be no rapid move and that apparently the enemy was determined to stop the overpowering advance of the Fifth Army. And so began this costly, bloody, fierce Battle of LAIATICO, which again proved the mettle of the 351st Spearhead Infantry Regiment.

Death and Glory in the Wheatfields-Laiatico

First Day 9 July 1944 At 0400 hours the regiment began advancing in a column of battalions over these rolling grain fields that had been mowed clean. Occasional deep drainage lines broke the smoothness of the ground and these ditches offered the only available cover. As the Second Battalion advanced, heavy rifle and machine gun fire was received suddenly from the left flank. At the same time two enemy flares, (a white flare followed by a green one) were fired near the suspected enemy strongpoint. Directly following this a concentration of enemy artillery fell on the Second Battalion. This temporarily split the battalion in two. Company H set up its mortars and fired at the suspected enemy position. By radio relay contact was made with the supporting 913th Field Artillery Battalion and soon heavy artillery fire on the German strongpoint answered the enemy. Company F executed a holding attack while Company G moved to the rear and then west in a flanking movement. Meanwhile the Regimental Commander, Colonel Arthur S. Champeny was moving among the men, openly exposed to the enemy fire and his calmness and disregard for his personal safety inspired and re-energized the men. G Company thoroughly surprised the enemy with its flanking movement and soon enveloped the right flank of the German strongpoint, allowing the battalion to continue its advance. Again very heavy enemy artillery fire was rained on the Second Battalion, halting its progress in the open grainfields. The drainage ditches, offering the only cover, were also being systematically covered by the German artillery.

Meanwhile the Third Battalion was advancing and shortly after the Second Battalion was fired on the Third Battalion received rifle and machine gun fire from its front and left flank. Due to lack of cover from this fire the Third also halted. The companies were deployed and hastily dug in. At dusk the Germans counterattacked Company K. By immediate radio

relay message, a heavy concentration of artillery fire from the 913th Field Artillery Battalion was placed in and among the advancing Germans. The counterattack was repulsed with many enemy casualties, and the Germans withdrew hastily in much confusion. All through the evening the supporting 913th Field Artillery placed artillery fire on the known enemy positions and in addition, Chemical Mortars from the 84th Chemical Battalion moved into position and added to the artillery fire. The tanks attached to the regiment had experienced considerable difficulty in advancing due to the extensive mine fields. The tanks did not reach the leading Infantry elements until late afternoon and six tanks were knocked out by mines. Had the tanks been present when the initial enemy fire was received the German strong-point could have been liquidated without delay. The regiment was deprived of this important fire power most of the day. Both battalions were alerted for an attack at any time during the night..

Second Day, 10 July 1944 The 34th Division which was on our left flank had been unable to keep abreast and as a result the 351st Infantry was again in a Spearhead position. Division Artillery and planes reported enemy troops assembling on our left flank in the zone of the 34th Division and this posed a serious counterattack threat. The Regimental Commander was ordered to hold in present position due to this threat. The threat failed to materialize, however, and the regiment was ordered to continue the attack with battalions abreast at 0900 hours. The Third Battalion launched its attack on time and advanced rapidly some three hundred and fifty yards to the forward slopes of the hill, but there it was halted by very heavy mortar, artillery and flat trajectory self-propelled gun fire which caused severe casualties. The men dug in hurriedly and remained in position, receiving long range sniper fire and intermittent artillery throughout the day. The Second Battalion had better success in its attack. Heavy supporting artillery concentrations supplemented by chemical mortar fire was placed on high ground in the vicinity of LAIATICO throughout the attack. A gain of more than one thousand yards was made before the companies were stopped by heavy enemy artillery and small arms fire. Due to the lack of cover

and concealment, it was impossible to maneuver from these positions. The LAIATICO hill mass now confronting the Second Battalion presented a serious obstacle to our advance. The Germans had excellent defensive positions and unlimited observation, whereas the Second Battalion had no cover or concealment, leaving the men feeling naked to the enemy's view. As the men said, "they were looking right down our throats". Without doubt this was the enemy's key point of defense and it had to be wiped out before the advance of the regiment, as well as of the division, could be continued. The First Battalion was released to the regiment from Division Reserve, moved up, and at 1800 hours this Battalion was put in Regimental Reserve.

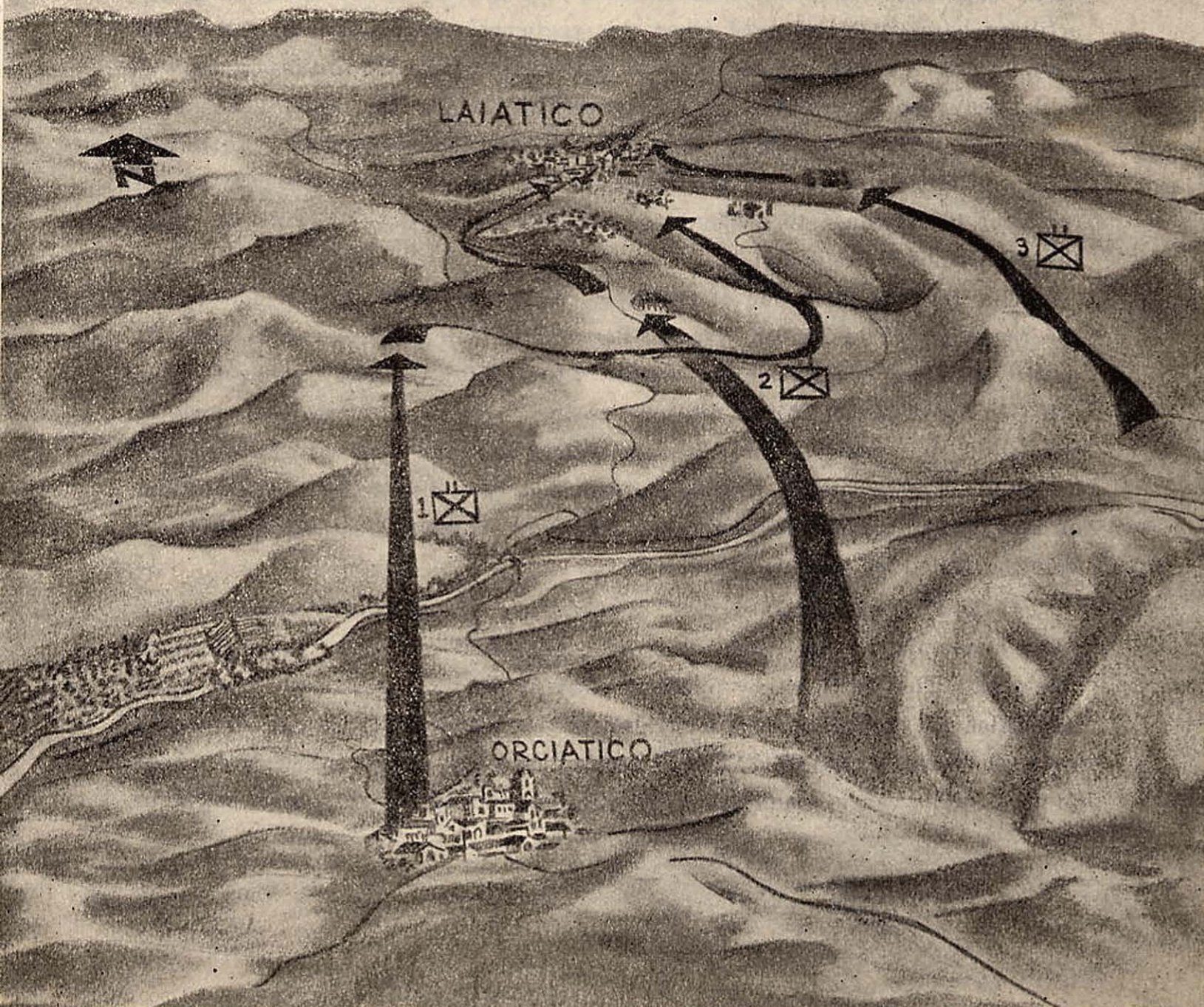
Third Day, 11 July 1944 The burden of the action was borne by the First Battalion on this day. It was ordered to seize the road junction southwest of LAIATICO and send out reconnaissance patrols from that point to another road junction to the northwest to contact the 34th Division. The First Battalion moved out and advanced through the town of ORCIATICO without opposition. The battalion secured the designated road junction and from there sent out a patrol to make contact with the 34th. This patrol was unable to find the enemy or the 34th Division at the previously designated contact point. In the late afternoon the First Battalion was counterattacked in its new position; but this was repulsed by heavy artillery, machine gun and rifle fire, and severe casualties were inflicted on the enemy. All day the Second and Third Battalions remained in their positions, subjected to merciless artillery and self-propelled gun fire. A night attack to be made by the First Battalion was planned by the Regimental Commander and approved that evening by the Assistant Divisional Commander who stayed at the Command Post to follow the progress of the night attack.

Fourth Day, 12 July 1944 At 0300 hours the First Battalion jumped off on its night attack. After an advance of five hundred yards, very heavy enemy machine gun fire halted the advance and the men became widely dispersed. The resistance was not overcome and by daylight the battalion was under direct enemy observation from LAIATICO. Intense enemy artillery blanketed the battalion throughout the day. All that day the 913th

Field Artillery subjected LAIATICO to continuous heavy artillery fire with chemical mortars also firing both high explosive and white phosphorous shells. The 91st Division filled in the gap between the 88th Division and the 34th Division during the day, but remained about six thousand yards to our left rear. The 88th Reconnaissance Troop relieved the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron and was given the mission of protecting the left flank as well as maintaining contact with the 91st Division. During the night plans were made for another night attack to be made by the Second and Third Battalions abreast.

Fifth Day, 13 July 1944 At 0300 hours the Second and Third Battalions launched their night attack. Simultaneously, three ten-minute concentrations of light and medium artillery and chemical mortars were fired on LAIATICO, the chemical mortars firing two rounds of white phosphorous to each round of high explosive. The Third Battalion proceeded with greatest possible speed northwest and toward the ridge projecting east from LAIATICO. Machine gun positions and snipers were encountered but by-passed in the Third Battalion's speed to reach the objective. The Third Battalion seized a German Regimental Command Post, finding the majority of the Germans huddled in dugouts and caves to escape our artillery fire and the white phosphorous. They were panic stricken and surrendered without resistance. The swiftness of our penetration stunned the enemy. The Third Battalion followed our supporting artillery so closely that the enemy had no time to get set in prepared defensive positions before our doughboys reached them. The Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Harold B. Ayres, then Captain, immediately reorganized his companies and prepared to continue the attack westward along the ridge to LAIATICO. Meanwhile the Second Battalion attacked with comparable success. They advanced north with the capture of LAIATICO, their first objective. This battalion attacking in the same manner as the Third, smashed through the demoralized enemy defenses. While advancing up Hill 214 heavy machine gun and machine pistol fire was met but overcome by the heroic, rapier-like advance of our men. Considerable bayonet fighting ensued and the efficient

9-13 JULY 1944



training of our men showed itself to good advantage. Many Germans were found suffering from white phosphorous burns inflicted by our chemical mortars. Holding Hill 214, the Second Battalion set up machine gun positions firing on the sunken road leading into LAIATICO. By daylight our men occupied much of the high ground around the town and by 1100 hours the Second Battalion had advanced three hundred yards north of LAIATICO. By mid-afternoon the Third Battalion had cut the road running north of LAIATICO and established contact with the Second Battalion. This deep penetration of the LAIATICO position by the Third Battalion and the rapid exploitation by attacking the enemy from his rear and flank indicated the determined aggressiveness of these men. At that time, the heaviest enemy artillery barrage experienced since this regiment entered combat, fell on the town of LAIATICO and its northern outskirts. Included in these unbelievably heavy concentrations were Nebelwerfers, which we called "screaming meemies", fired from three directions—north, northeast and northwest. This was made possible for the Germans by the advanced position of the regiment in reference to elements on our right and left. Again, we were the "Spearhead" Regiment.

The day had been one of the most victorious days in the history of the regiment. The 1060th German Panzer Grenadier Regiment was virtually destroyed, along with some companies of the 1059th German Regiment. The 5th Company of the 1059th was attempting to make a relief at the time of the attack and were captured almost intact. At the end of the day four hundred and twenty-five prisoners of war had been dispatched to the prisoner of war inclosure, and German casualties were estimated as at least three hundred killed or wounded.

At 2400 hours 13 July 1944, the attack was continued to seize the high ground, completing the capture of the LAIATICO hill mass—the regimental objective. This was easily accomplished with no resistance. The total casualties for the 351st Regiment during the LAIATICO attack beginning from the town of MONTECATINI totaled seventy-seven killed and three hundred and twenty wounded. With the elimination of this key point in

the German defense line, the entire division was able to resume its advance, continuing for a distance of approximately eleven kilometers before serious resistance was again encountered.

The President of The United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, cited the Third Battalion of the 351st Infantry Regiment for its remarkable and outstanding fighting in the battle of LAIATICO. The citation follows:

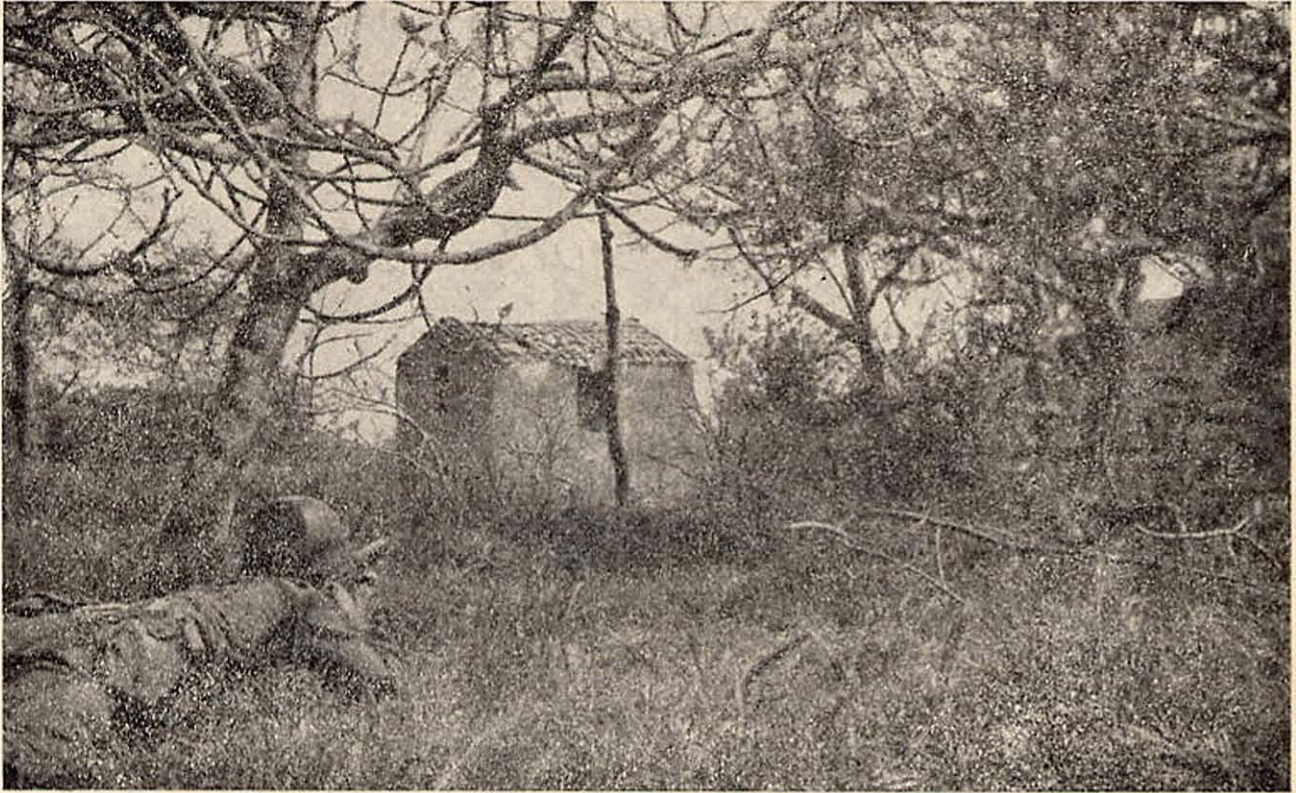
'THE 3rd BATTALION, 351st INFANTRY REGIMENT, is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action, during the period 9 to 13 July 1944, in the vicinity of Laiatico, Italy. During the attack on strongly fortified German positions in the vicinity of Laiatico the 3rd BATTALION occupied an advanced position, devoid of cover and with both flanks exposed, and for three days withstood heavy enemy artillery and mortar bombardments as well as three vicious enemy counterattacks supported by tanks. Displaying courage, skill and determined fighting spirit, the battalion frustrated all enemy efforts to defend the town and surrounding strategic positions. On the fourth day, the 3rd BATTALION launched a night attack and penetrated the German stronghold from the flanks and rear. Aggressively exploiting its breakthrough, the battalion seized a German regimental command post after a savage hand-to-hand struggle in the darkness and cut the main escape route from the Laiatico hill mass. As a result of the 3RD BATTALION'S prodigious efforts, 425 prisoners were taken, 250 Germans were killed or wounded, and a large quantity of enemy weapons were captured which were promptly employed with telling effect against the battered German forces. The timely capture of this key enemy defensive position compelled the Germans to abandon a carefully prepared, strongly defended line and opened the route of advance to the Arno River. The fearlessness, heroic determination, and aggressive fighting spirit of the officers and men of the 3rd BATTALION, 351st INFANTRY REGIMENT resulted in a performance which brings honor to the Armed Forces of the United States.'

Northward Through the Vineyards

As they had done at SANTA MARIA INFANTE, the doughboys of the 351st Infantry Regiment smashed a gap in the German defense line at LAIATICO and opened the way for another lightning spearhead drive to the ARNO RIVER. Without pausing to heal the wounds suffered in the preceding five days of savage fighting, the regiment jumped off on the morning of 14 July to take MONTEVECCIO, PECCIOLI, and the high ground in the vicinity of POGGIO DEL PRATELLO. MONTE FOSCOLI fell on 17 July after heavy fighting against the German 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, and by morning our forward troops had scored a definite breakthrough. Heavy artillery fire was placed on the withdrawing enemy, inflicting terrible casualties. Company E stormed and captured COLLEOLI after heavy fighting, while Company I got so far out in front that it was cut-off for twenty-four hours. Brave men died fighting for these scenic hills and towns, for German snipers and artillery were continuously active.

On 18 July 1944 the spirited attack continued with the Third Battalion taking the town of SAN BARTOLOMEO, thence northeast to the high ground north of MONTOPOLI, which overlooked the ARNO valley. The Second Battalion proceeded in the vicinity of SAN BARBARA and then northeast to high ground commanding the valley. It was with great satisfaction and pride that Colonel Champeny reported to the Division Commander that that part of the division objective within the 351st Infantry's sector had been taken and secured by 1300 hours 18 July. All company kitchens and supply rooms were brought forward on 20 July, enabling the troops to have hot meals for the first time since the start of the campaign.

From its positions overlooking the river valley, the 351st Infantry probed ahead for several days with both daylight and night patrols. On 22 July the Second Battalion fought its way into PONTE DE EVOLI, while Company L attacked ANGELICA and SAN ROMANO on a broad front. The first town fell quickly; but in SAN ROMANO the Third Bat-



2nd Battalion scout in action near Ponte de Evoli

talion found one of the most savage local actions it had ever experienced. Isolated in a house, one squad of infantrymen held out for three days with no food or water while German assault units patrolled the streets. In the final attack on 25 July 1944 the regiment lost one of its finest officers, Captain Allan R. Vail, and many equally heroic fighting men in a nineteen-minute artillery barrage as intense as any yet endured. With the stronghold of SAN ROMANO captured, the Third Battalion moved up to the railroad embankment and vigorously patrolled the river. These static front operations were in progress when the 351st Infantry was relieved by the 362nd Infantry of the 91st Division.

Relief was completed the night of 27-28 July 1944 and the troops moved to a bivouac area near MONTIGNOSO in Volterra Province for rest, recreation, and training. The fighting during the month of July had been some of the bitterest yet engaged in by the regiment, and casualties had been heavier than in the drive to Rome. Many an old-timer had gone West

or had been wounded too seriously to return to combat, but the spirit they imparted to the new-comers lived on to carry the banner of the 351st Infantry through the terrible days to come.

Sweating out the Gothic Line

Near MONTGNOSO the battle hardened men and officers of the regiment spent the month of August and the first week of September training for resumption of the offensive. News of the brilliant victories in France and Holland led to much speculation about when the war would end and whether or not the 351st would fight again—and many a lire changed bill-folds on this score. Most soldiers visited ROME and sent home postcards of the Vatican, and the officers enjoyed the Albergo Excelsior, then in its heyday. In camp there were U.S.O. shows and athletics after training hours. None will forget the dryland river crossing problems and the long dusty marches under a blazing August sun. But the men worked hard and trained hard, for across the ARNO waited the German 14th Army, putting the finishing touches on the Gothic Line.

Rumors of the resumption of large-scale offensive operations were confirmed beyond a doubt on 9 September when the 351st moved by truck to a bivouac area near GALLUZZO, several miles southeast of FLORENCE. Here Brigadier General Paul W. Kendall, new Commanding General of the 88th Division, reviewed the regiment and awarded a Distinguished Service Cross to First Sergeant Paul M. Eddy of Company F for his extraordinary heroism in combat in July. General Kendall then stated, "Six of the seven Distinguished Service Crosses in the 88th Division have been presented to members of this regiment"—an indisputable testimonial to the fighting record of the 351st. In conclusion, Colonel Champeny addressed his officers and men, reiterating the brave achievements for which all are justly entitled to be proud.

While the 351st trained and waited near FLORENCE, the 85th, 91st, and 34th Divisions hammered away at the Gothic Line at FUTA and

GIOGI PASSES, and the Eighth Army forced its way past Rimini. Headlines featured the "breaking of the Gothic Line", and there was tall talk of crossing the Po River in the near future. On 20 September 1944, men of the 351st moved to SCARPERIA, where they took a final shot of tetanus serum and gave their equipment the final check. The next evening the regiment moved on foot through GIOGI pass with the heavy smell of death permeating the misty darkness, while 240 millimeter guns hurled shells at the enemy. Morning found the 351st on the slopes of Mount FRENA, three kilometers southeast of FIRENZUOLA. Once again the Spearhead Regiment was at the threshold of battle.

Gallantry In The Appennines *- Gothic Fighting*

As three divisions of II Corps attacked along Highway 65 directly toward BOLOGNA, the 88th Division hurled itself in a northeasterly direction toward IMOLA and the PO Valley. Here was the main effort—the cream of the Fifth Army—held in reserve for the knockout punch. From FIRENZUOLA to IMOLA a hard-surfaced road followed the SANTERNO RIVER along a gorge-like valley between some of the highest and most rugged peaks in the North Appenines. Mount FRENA, Mount PRATOLUNGO, Mount BATTAGLIA, Mount CAPELLO, and Mount MAGNOLIA barred the way to the first town of appreciable size, CASTEL DEL RIO. The mountains through which the regiment attacked are abruptly rising and precipitous, crossed only by a few tortuous mule trails. In many places the canyons are vertically walled and insurmountable. Circuitous routes afford the only means of advance, and for this reason the terrain was heavily in favor of the Germans. A few machine guns sited to cover the narrow approaches and systematic artillery shelling could make each terrain feature the scene of a costly, bitter struggle. From CASTEL DEL RIO a secondary

road cuts left between Mount PRATOLUNGO and Mount MAGNOLIA to the village of SASSOLEONE, thence down the SAN CLEMENTE VALLEY to the flatlands of the PO. Mount CODRONCO, high ground near GESSO, and Mount GRANDE command this secondary road. This terrain is more cultivated and less rugged than the rocky heights south of Castel Del Rio, but at the same time it offered less protection for the advancing doughboy. In this mountainous setting the 351st Infantry was destined to fight longer, harder, and with heavier casualties than at any previous time. The regiment marched to CAMAGGIORE on the night of 22 September and awaited orders.

Shortly after noon on 23 September 1944 Colonel Champeny issued his attack order to the Battalion Commanders at the forward Command Post in CAMAGGIORE. At 1800 hours the Third Battalion was to attack along high ground to the left of the road, the Second Battalion to the right of the road, while one company of the First Battalion was to clear the highway, itself. Hardly had the order been issued when German artillery fire struck the whole area, killing one officer and destroying several trucks and mules. Once again the 351st Infantry was reminded of the price of victory.

By twilight both battalions had made excellent progress. The Third Battalion had advanced almost two thousand yards along a cliff-side trail with only harassing artillery fire to hinder its progress, while the Second Battalion covered fifteen hundred yards before it encountered enemy machine gun fire which was overcome after a sharp encounter. By midnight both battalions had advanced an additional thousand yards, while Company C kept abreast along the road against stiff resistance. Daybreak found the Third Battalion engaged in a widespread firefight with Germans manning a ridge-line running from Mount PRATOLUNGO across the route of advance. To the right of the highway the Second Battalion battered against stiffening resistance while casualties steadily mounted. Along the highway, Company C suffered heavy losses from mortar and artillery fire while gallant men crawled forward to destroy machine guns. The 351st had definitely encountered fanatical resistance.

The night of 24-25 September 1944 will long be remembered by the fighting men of the 351st Infantry by the savage windstorm that lashed at them as they huddled behind rocks for protection from the sixty mile an hour gale. In the howling, driving wind it was impossible to hear the shells scream in, and courageous mule skinnners took their losses and brought up food and ammunition. Company A passed through Company C to storm and capture the town of MORADUCCIO on the highway, while the Second Battalion and Third Battalion jumped off at 0300 hours, guiding on white phosphorous shell bursts marking terrain features. The Second Battalion drove ahead almost a mile during the day against delaying action resistance; but such was not the case with the Third Battalion.

With Company K leading, followed by Companies M and I, Lieutenant Colonel Charles P. Furr led his battalion along the side of a ridge which joined the German-held ridge line at right angles, roughly shaped like a letter "T". The enemy allowed the screening platoon to pass through their positions and then opened simultaneous surprise fire on the remainder of Company K with from six to eight machine guns at point-blank range, inflicting terrific casualties on the company. Colonel Furr, who was leading the column behind the screening force, immediately plunged into the close-quarters fighting, killing several Germans with his pistol. While thus gallantly leading his men, Colonel Furr lost his life. From Private Rickenbacker of Company K, the following information was obtained: "Colonel Furr was leading. I was the third man in the column and we were moving down a small nose. In front of us a curved ridge extended around both sides of the nose we were on. Colonel Furr turned left, while a platoon of K Company continued straight down the nose. I thought the Colonel must want to see if there were anyone on the left flank. A German stuck his head up and threw a grenade at the Colonel. It hit the right side of his helmet and exploded at the same time—he was a great guy." And in this manner the 351st Infantry lost one of the most promising and fearless young commanders in the Army of the United States. Four times wounded at the head of his fighting battalion, Colonel Furr was admired and respected by

every officer and man in his command.

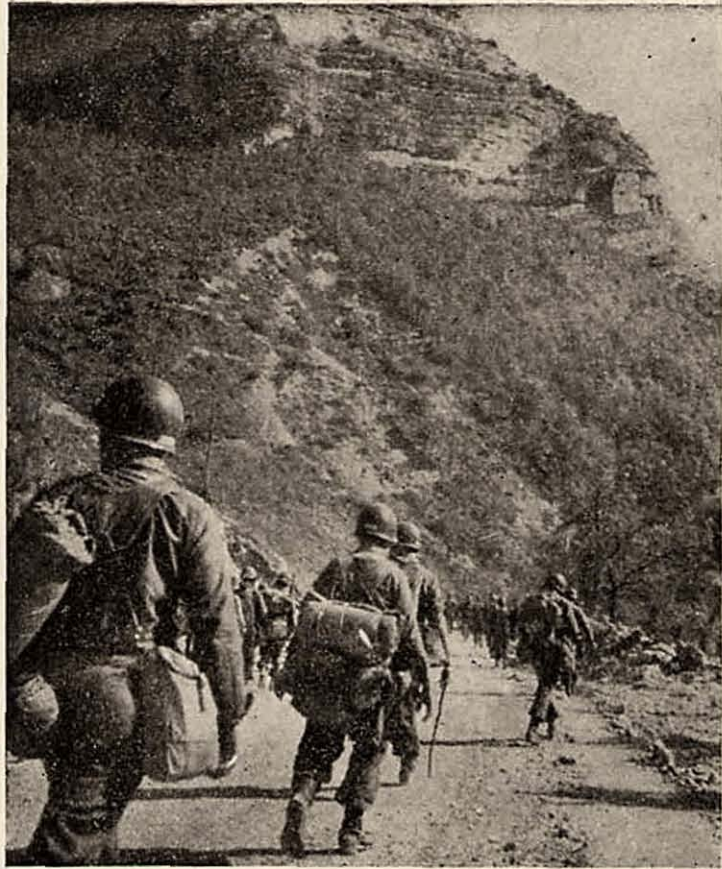
After this devastating blow, the Third Battalion spent the remainder of the day fighting off repeated German counterattacks. The 349th Infantry passed through the battalion to storm and capture PRATOLUNGO, while the Second and Third Battalions converged on CASTEL DEL RIO. Under Lieutenant Colonel Tillman E. Boyd the Second Battalion cleared the high ground overlooking the town, while platoons from Companies I and K cleared the streets by 0900 hours 26 September. Major General Geoffrey Keyes, Commanding General of II Corps, and Brigadier General Kendall of the 88th both sent congratulations to the 351st Infantry for its capture of CASTEL DEL RIO, but many a man had paid with his life for this strategic town. Colonel Champeny moved his headquarters into the ancient stone castle while fighting still raged within a few hundred yards, and he ordered the relentless drive to continue without delay.

They Tried To Stop Us - Capello

Through a chilling, penetrating rain the Third Battalion attacked and overran German positions on Mount MAGNOLIA, while the Second Battalion launched a frontal assault on Mount CAPELLO. Here fanatical German troops, supported by heavy concentrations of mortar and artillery fire, determined to hold at all costs. The dead and wounded of both sides littered the slopes of Mount CAPELLO as the fighting raged up and down the hillside six times. Coming up to join the assault on CAPELLO, the First Battalion had to fight through savage resistance to reach its line of departure. One group of thirty men from First Battalion Headquarters Company stormed a machine gun, and when they finally overran it, only two were able to walk off the hill. Such was the ferocity of the fighting, from 28 to 30 September 1944.

From 0845 hours until dark on 29 September, the Second and First Battalions hurled themselves again and again at the hill and ridge that formed CAPELLO. During this day of savage fighting those magnificent

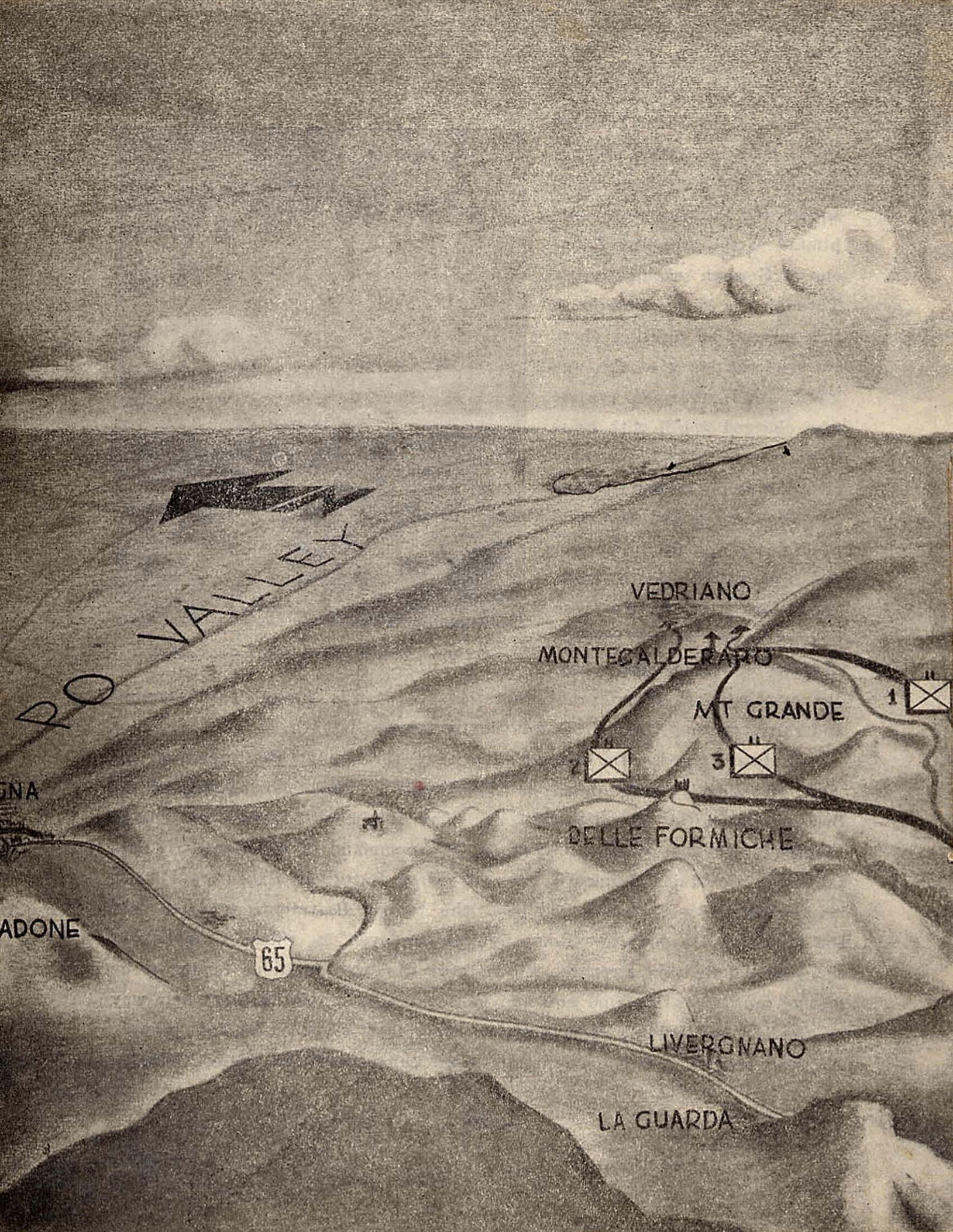
soldiers of the 351st Infantry wrote many an untold story of gallantry and heroism as whole squads and platoons were annihilated in the crossfire of dozens of German machine guns. Through the smoke and din of this unequalled fighting there emerged the story of the unknown and unnamed private who charged uphill with tears in his eyes to shove his bayonet clear through a German machine gunner, then grenade a second machine gun, only to stagger and fall to his death while assaulting a third. To these unsung heroes, we who survived those terrible mountains owe



Men of 1st Battalion move up toward Mount Capello

our everlasting gratitude and admiration—for it was through their sacrifice and gallantry that CAPELLO was finally taken.

Fighting raged with undiminished fury throughout the night of the 29th, and shortly before dawn on 30 September the final assault of the Second and First Battalions began. The Regimental Executive Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Walter B. Yeager, took command of the combined battalions, while Major Frank W. Carmon, First Battalion Executive Officer, led Company B. So heavy had been the Second Battalion casualties that the Battalion Headquarters Company was employed as riflemen to bolster the depleted fighting strength. All morning the two battalions fought in the face of murderous machine gun and mortar fire, gradually inching their way up the hill and holding tenaciously to every foot of blood-soaked ground. At 1250 hours the first encouraging news came over the radio, "We are



PO VALLEY

VEDRIANO

MONTECALDERARO

MT GRANDE

DELLE FORMICHE

LIVERGNANO

LA GUARDA

65

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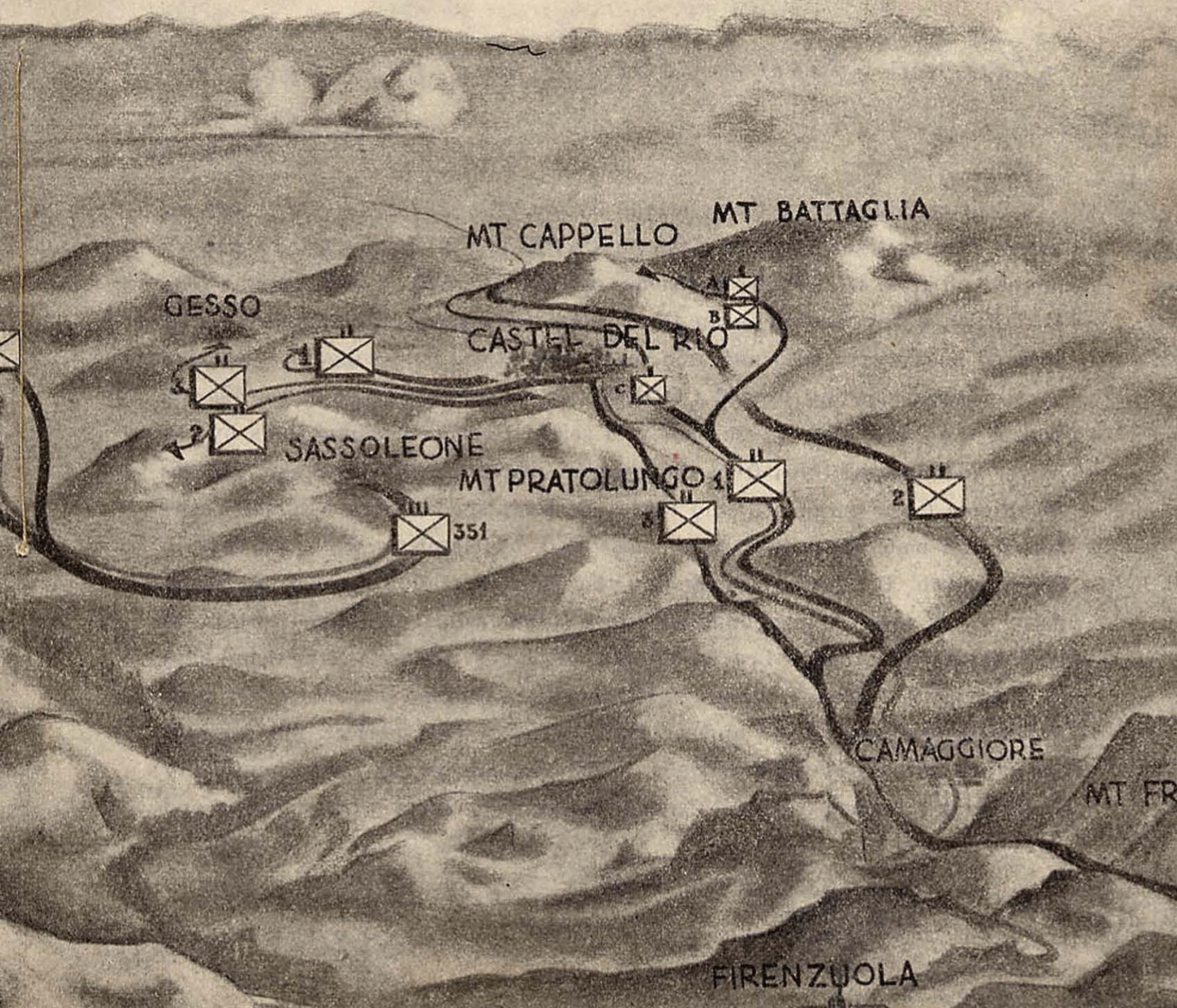
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GNA

ADONE

GOTHIC FIGHTING



proceeding nicely". Three hours later the entire II Corps was electrified by Colonel Yeager's announcement: "Mount CAPELLO taken by First and Second Battalions of the 351st Infantry Regiment!"

Nightfall that evening mercifully closed one of the most gallant and terrible battles this regiment has fought, but in enduring this trial by fire the 351st Infantry gave warning to the enemy that no matter the odds or the price, we would not be stopped. Heroic men like Lieutenant Foster C. Burch, and intrepid Sergeant Peter Pyenta are only a few of the fifty-seven men who gave their lives on bloody CAPELLO that we might carry on to victory.

Power Drive Through Left Tackle *- Codronco*

Still striking heavy blows at the enemy, the 351st Infantry beat off heavy counterattacks for five days on CAPELLO, while the Third Battalion jumped off from its holding positions on MAGNOLIA toward Mount CODRONCO, a key bastion in the German defense system. Companies I and K suffered heavy casualties and won many decorations in carving out a foothold on a ridgeline leading toward CODRONCO in heavy fighting on the 1st and 2nd of October. There were men who seized German machine guns by the barrel and wrested them from the gunners, and there was Lieutenant Charles W. Pierce (then Sergeant), who won a Distinguished Service Cross in capturing two machine guns and a house full of Germans while on patrol. Major Harold B. Ayres, commanding the Third Battalion, committed Company L, his reserve, in a flanking attack across wild and rugged terrain to get behind the enemy. Led by Captain Albert F. Reinwart, the doughboys of Company L infiltrated their way through the German lines until they were formed at the base of the highest knob. Then, with perfect fire support from their own light machine guns, a rifle platoon led by Lieutenant Perry J. Cheeney launched a savage bayonet assault, complete with shouting and

shooting from the hip, to overwhelm the German resistance. From a captured German observation post well in rear of the enemy defending the ridge line, devastating fire of the 913th Field Artillery was adjusted on the Germans, first as they massed to counterattack and again as they grouped to withdraw. The capture of Mount CODRONCO by the Third Battalion put the 351st Infantry well ahead of the 349th on its left, the British on its right, and opened the route to GESSO and the SAN CLEMENTE VALLEY.

Relieved from their positions on CAPELLO, the First and Second Battalions joined the Third in the drive across the hills to GESSO, a little mountain town to which the German High Command attached the utmost importance. Thickly-sown minefields and numerous machine guns and even flame throwers guarded every approach to the town. This was to be no easy nut to crack.

Teamwork Turned The Tide

- *Gesso*

Against stiffening resistance by fresh German regiments rushed from the Po Valley, the First Battalion drove for GESSO. Courageous riflemen fought their way into the outskirts of the town on 10 October in a night attack; but were forced to fall back in the face of a savage counterattack in great strength. The Second Battalion, attacking along high ground on the right flank, scored limited gains and suffered very heavy casualties in fighting reminiscent of CAPELLO. Major Elwin H. Marks took command of the Second Battalion when Colonel Boyd was seriously wounded, and Colonel Champeny brought up tanks to high ground overlooking GESSO and ordered the First and Third Battalions to storm the town.

During the night both the First and Third Battalions made repeated desperate attacks on the town, and both units were halted by intense mortar and machine gun fire, in addition to suffering heavy casualties in schu-minefields. British troops on the right of the 351st had not kept pace with

the regiment and heavy fire was being received from that flank. Before daylight both battalions pulled back to defilade lest they be caught in open ground directly in front of the German positions. Overwhelming fire power and all-out infantry assault would be necessary to break the bitter resistance, for the enemy had no intention of withdrawing from his powerful positions.

All morning Colonel Champeny directed the close-in fire of tanks and tank-destroyers into the buildings of GESSO while the town was repeatedly saturated with heavy concentrations of artillery. As the men of the First and Third Battalions crept forward during the afternoon under the protection of this murderous fire, they were able to approach close to the outskirts of the town. In breaking into and clearing GESSO, the men of Companies I and K performed acts of heroism and gallantry unsurpassed in the history of the 351st Infantry. Captain William B. Sandlin won a Distinguished Service Cross by storming a German machine gun single-handedly, then leading his battered company forward into brutal hand-to-hand fighting. Lieutenant Leslie P. Geelen, then Sergeant, killed a German flame-thrower operator to win a Silver Star, while Private Walter C. Ellsworth went above the call of duty by killing eleven Germans with his rifle after he, himself, was seriously wounded. He also was awarded a DSC by the Theater Commander for his heroism. Faced by the overwhelming power of tank-destroyer fire and the savage assault of the Third Battalion, the German garrison made frantic efforts to flee; but the assault of our troops was so rapid and so ferocious that scores of enemy soldiers were killed or captured in trying to escape.

Stung by the loss of GESSO, the enemy pulled back to other hills and heavily shelled our positions until the regiment was relieved five days later. The 351st lost an excellent fighting Battalion Commander when Lieutenant Colonel Herman W. Ohme of the Third Battalion was killed by shell fire, and heavy casualties were suffered when the Third Battalion Aid Station was destroyed. The First Battalion moved to aid the 349th Infantry in occupying Mount DELLA TOMBE, while the 78th British Division relieved

the bulk of the regiment at GESSO on 16 October. With twenty-three days of almost continuous assault behind them, the weary GI's of the 351st moved to VILLANUOVA for a few days of well-earned rest. Line companies of the regiment had suffered hundreds of casualties in men and officers, and some units were composed almost entirely of replacements rushed to Italy from America and England but a few days before they arrived at the front. Great credit is due these new men, for they entered combat during the most savage fighting yet experienced—and they fought like veterans to carry the banner of the 351st Infantry to greater glory.

High Tide Of Fifth Army Mount Grande - Vedriano

When the 349th Infantry captured the summit of Mount GRANDE, the last dominating mountain before the PO VALLEY, the 351st moved up on 22 October to secure the flanks. Through constant rain and ankle-deep mud the Third Battalion fought its way to the top of MONTECALDERARO on 23 October, while Company G of the Second Battalion attacked VEDRIANO with considerable success. Coming around behind the town and hill at VEDRIANO, the men of Company G surprised and captured a column of forty Germans, and after a short fight captured the town. The German commanders were quick to recognize the potential danger of this threatening attack, however, and they committed the finest German troops in Italy to stop the Second Battalion.

As Companies E and F battled heavy resistance on 24 October in an attempt to reach Company G, now surrounded and fighting desperately, the following radio message was intercepted from the 1st Parachute Regiment to the 1st Battalion, 4th Parachute Regiment: "Attack VEDRIANO. VEDRIANO is decisive!" Men of the First and Third Battalions, themselves locked in battle against desperate German counterattacks, noticed the rattle of small arms fire coming through the mist from VEDRIANO. In the

afternoon the sounds of firing faded away and a short time later another radio message was intercepted: "VEDRIANO retaken. Eighty Americans captured". Although they were overwhelmed and could not hold VEDRIANO, the men of Company G had approached closer to the Po Valley than any unit in Fifth Army—for it was less than five thousand yards to Highway 9, the main lateral road for the German forces facing both the Fifth and Eighth Armies. The heroic men of the 351st Infantry Regiment had fought and suffered as long as was humanly possible—had the orders come through to attack, they would have come out of their muddy foxholes and again stormed the German bastions in their characteristic savage manner. But with over two thousand dead and wounded in thirty-one days of fighting, and a critical shortage of replacements and ammunition, the 351st dug-in and organized its bloody ground for defense.

The regiment came down out of the mountains to rest and relax in picturesque MONTECATINI TERME, near PISTOIA on 31 October 1944. For the third time in less than a year the 351st Infantry had distinguished itself by spearheading Fifth Army drives up the mountainous Italian Peninsula. Those who survived the bloody Gothic fighting could look upon their accomplishments with pride and thanksgiving; but none of us can ever forget those courageous men who sleep beneath white crosses—those who gave their lives that we could carry on to total victory.

“Patrols Were Active”

- Winter Line

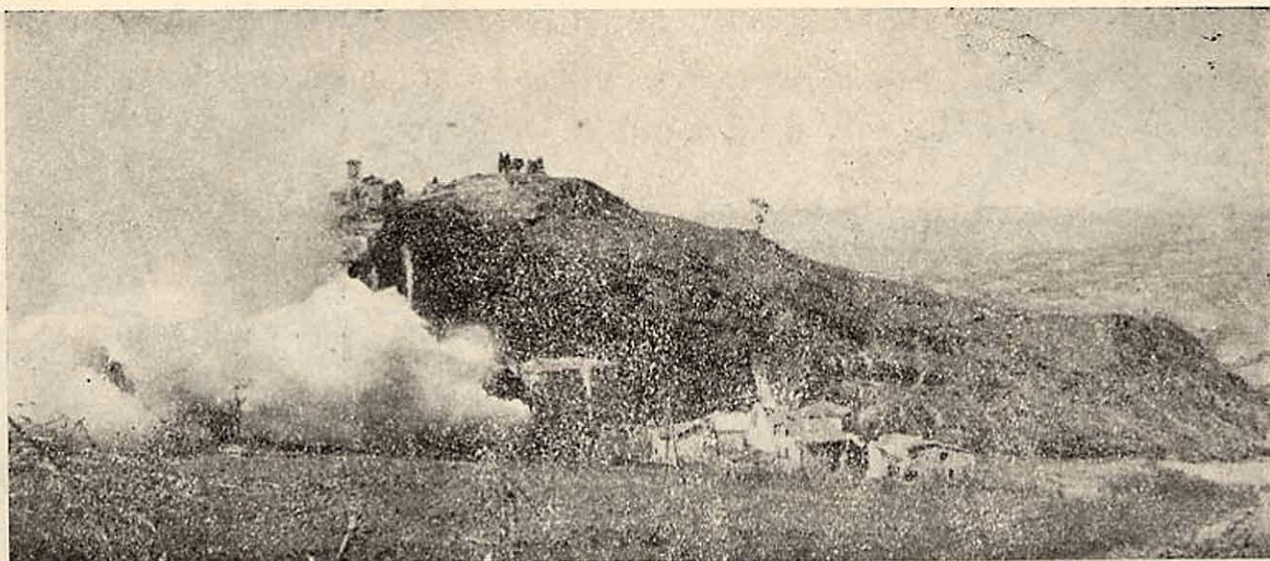
Fortunately, a great many fighting men in the 351st will clearly remember those "static front" days on the line in the Mount DELLE FORMICHE and Highway 65 sectors of the Winter Line. At first there was rain and mud and industrious construction of caves and dugouts for protection from the weather and German shells. But by Christmas, snow and blizzards added to the general discomfort of the men up front. A soldier



Looking north along the Delle Formiche ridge. Collina to the right front.

could look forward to a few days in Montecatini, or, if he were lucky, a pass to Florence or Rome. While the papers and the radio spoke of our "forgotten front", little bands of determined men went forth by artificial moonlight to fight the German.

Highlighting a long list of courageous and heroic patrol actions were two Lieutenants, Ralph E. Decker and Linnsey L. Wheeler, both winners of the Distinguished Service Cross for closing in on German strongpoints to kill and capture the elusive enemy. Men clad in shoepacs and parkas patrolled through minefields to probe enemy positions, while others shivered in the winter night on lonely outpost. "Zipper Pete" near COLLINA, the church at GORGNANO, the rat-trap at BARCHETTA, OST NUOVA on 65, and the IDICE valley were very important places to the white-clad riflemen who crunched there through crusted snow. Service Company soldiers



U. S. smoke generators in action at Livergnano on Highway 65.

will remember the time when seven hundred rounds struck their area near "Cripple Creek Bridge" in fifteen minutes to take a heavy toll in dead and wounded—while Regimental Headquarters lost Lieutenant Colonel Walter B. Yeager, Regimental Executive Officer and one of the greatest fighters in the 88th Division. Colonel Yeager was seriously wounded while near the Regimental Command Post, and Lieutenant Colonel Franklin P. Miller of the 913th Field Artillery Battalion came to take his place.

In February 1945 the celebrated 351st Infantry Ranger platoon was formed. Volunteers were requested from the companies of the regiment to specialize in patrols with the mission of killing or capturing Germans. Lieutenant Ralph E. Decker was commander of this original unit, assisted by Lieutenant Lester F. MacDonald and approximately forty enlisted men. Their success was immediate and a virtual reign of terror was visited upon the enemy.

On 12 February 1945 Colonel Champeny received orders transferring him to the United States, terminating his two and a half year association with the 351st Infantry Regiment as its commander. With his departure, the 351st lost a colorful and outstanding leader who had transformed the regiment from a group of civilian soldiers through two major campaigns to a

position as one of the most successful combat regiments in the United States Army. In assuming command of the 351st, Colonel Miller expressed his confidence in the men and officers who had fought so long and so well.

Throughout February and early March the regiment occupied its holding position in the LA GUARDA, LIVERGNANO, and LOIANO areas. Nightly patrols in miserable Italian winter weather and ferocious artillery duels were the order of the day in this period. It was during this time that the famed Life Magazine photographer, Margaret Bourke-White stayed with the 351st regiment, taking countless views of harsh winter fighting on the Italian front.

Final Preparation

On 9 March 1945 the Regiment moved back to the BARBERINO area for intensive training. It was an ideal location for the offensive warfare practice that the 351st was adopting, for it was no secret that the final big push was due to start soon. Complete recreational facilities were installed so that the men could temper their vigorous training with a varied assortment of sports, and occasional passes were allowed the men so that at the conclusion of this period the infantrymen of the 351st regiment were at top form and their morale was superb.

By convoy the regiment moved to the PISA-LEGHORN area on 6 April 1945 for five days of amphibious training. The ARNO RIVER was used as a model for rehearsing the anticipated crossing of the PO RIVER. The men became familiar with LCV's, Dukws, assault boats and landing barges, and soon they were referring to these new instruments of modern warfare as ducks, alligators, buffaloes, and many other familiar nick-names. With this specialized training the regiment prepared for its return to the front filled with cool confidence in their ability to meet the enemy and overpower him.

Confident that they were ready to complete any mission assigned to them, the doughboys of the 351st Infantry moved to a bivouac area near

PIETRAMALA on 11 April. Here, in II Corps reserve, the men listened to the crushing bombardments and barrages that preceded the jump-off toward the Po Valley. While the 349th and 350th regiments assaulted Furcoli and Monterumici, our men moved up to TRASASSO, where they gave their equipment the final check and waited for the word to move into the line.

On 18 April the Regiment received orders to entruck and move to VERGATO, a rubble town in the IV Corps zone. Ordered to move north along Highway 64 through MARZABOTTO toward SASSO BOLOGNESE, the battalions encountered enemy small arms fire in the form of snipers and scattered machine gunners. Striking into the hilly country to the left of the highway the Second and Third Battalions made rapid progress toward the last high ground barring the way to the Po Valley. Company L coordinated with elements of the 6th South African Armored Division to take a strongly defended ridge line in the vicinity of LAGUNE and open the route to MOUNT CAPRA. Although the 85th Division on the left flank of the regiment originally had a headstart, the 351st Infantry soon outdistanced them and had the usual open flank.

Spearhead Sunday Punch

- Mount Capra

As the Second Battalion drove up the forward slopes of Mount CAPRA it came under heavy friendly artillery fire from the left rear and was forced to halt its attack. Colonel Miller immediately took steps to contact the 337th Infantry of the 85th Division on our left and have the artillery fire lifted in order that we might advance. German defense stiffened in the area of Mount CAPRA on the 19th and early 20th, with elements of the 157th Division, 8th Mountain Division, and 1st Parachute Division attempting to get set to stop our advance.



351st Medics follow the doughboys toward Mount Capra

With the Second Battalion executing a holding attack on Mount CAPRA, the Third Battalion drove around the right flank and penetrated well in rear of the enemy. The Second then followed, while the First Battalion mopped up the mountain, itself. Throughout the action heavy concentrations of artillery and tank fire were placed on the hill, killing a large number of Germans. Doughboys of the First Battalion had a field day in capturing over four hundred prisoners during the day, and by nightfall the roads behind the 351st became clogged with large groups of German soldiers moving toward the PW cages. The battle at Mount CAPRA marked the end of fighting in the Northern Appenines and opened the way to the flatlands of the Po Valley. In comparison with the bloody yard-by-yard fighting of 1944 our losses were amazingly light; but it was in many cases due to the magnificent aggressiveness of the hard-charging riflemen that their casualties were held to a minimum, for the Germans never had the chance to regain their balance.

The Dam Breaks

San Giovanni - Panaro

At 0600 hours, 21 April, the First and Second Battalions jumped off from RIALE to cut Highway 9 eight kilometers west of BOLOGNA. By noon the attacking troops encountered stiffening resistance from enemy rear-guards manning extensive field fortifications prepared during the winter; but the German forces were grouped in strongpoints and were susceptible to encirclement. The Third Battalion, following the attack, mopped up many by-passed pockets of resistance during the day and added to the growing bag of prisoners. About 3000 yards south of SAN GIOVANNI there is a canal along which all bridges had been demolished. The Germans had organized a strong delaying line along this canal, manned by approximately seven hundred men and nine tanks, and they succeeded in halting the initial attempts of the Third Battalion to cross the canal. Swinging wide around the left flank of this resistance, the First Battalion crossed the canal and drove for the outskirts of SAN GIOVANNI, where several hours of bitter fighting in the flat lowlands took place. Lieutenant Colonel Hobson led a column of tanks forward to cross the canal under heavy fire, and by night-fall he had entered SAN GIOVANNI to support the First Battalion in the street fighting. Riflemen of the First Battalion will remember their anger when the enemy used the "white flag" trick and opened fire on the advancing troops from buildings decorated with pillowcases and bedsheets. Colonel Hobson organized a task force to clear one of the main streets in SAN GIOVANNI, while Lieutenant Colonel Howard, commanding the First Battalion, led his men along the other street. Digging the enemy out of buildings with hand grenades and tank fire, the men of the First Battalion stormed through SAN GIOVANNI by midnight, killing sixty-seven German soldiers and destroying two enemy tanks. Once again the doughboys of the 351st had opened the way to a rapid advance.

With the First Battalion on the left and the Third Battalion on the right, the regiment drove forward on the morning of 22 April in the direction of CREVALCORE. About three thousand yards from its line of departure the Third Battalion encountered heavy resistance and became involved in an extensive firefight, while units on the left pushed rapidly forward without opposition. To continue the advance rapidly was imperative. Colonel Miller ordered the First Battalion to cross to the east into the Third Battalion's zone, placing it in rear of the Germans, which Third Battalion proceeded to mop up. Simultaneously he moved the Second Battalion up on the left of the First Battalion, and Major Ayres led them into CREVALCORE unopposed.

During the afternoon the First Battalion came under the fire of two enemy tanks, two self-propelled guns, and a large number of infantry weapons in the town of CASELLE, just south of the PANARO RIVER. Available to the Battalion Commander was Company [A and a single Sherman tank. Taking personal command, Colonel Howard directed devastating tank and artillery fire which destroyed all four German armored vehicles, then led the brilliant attack which overwhelmed the enemy. For this action, Colonel Howard won the Silver Star. Among the forty-seven Germans killed in this action was the Division Artillery Commander of the 305th Division, and a regimental commander and two battalion commanders were among the eighty-nine prisoners captured.

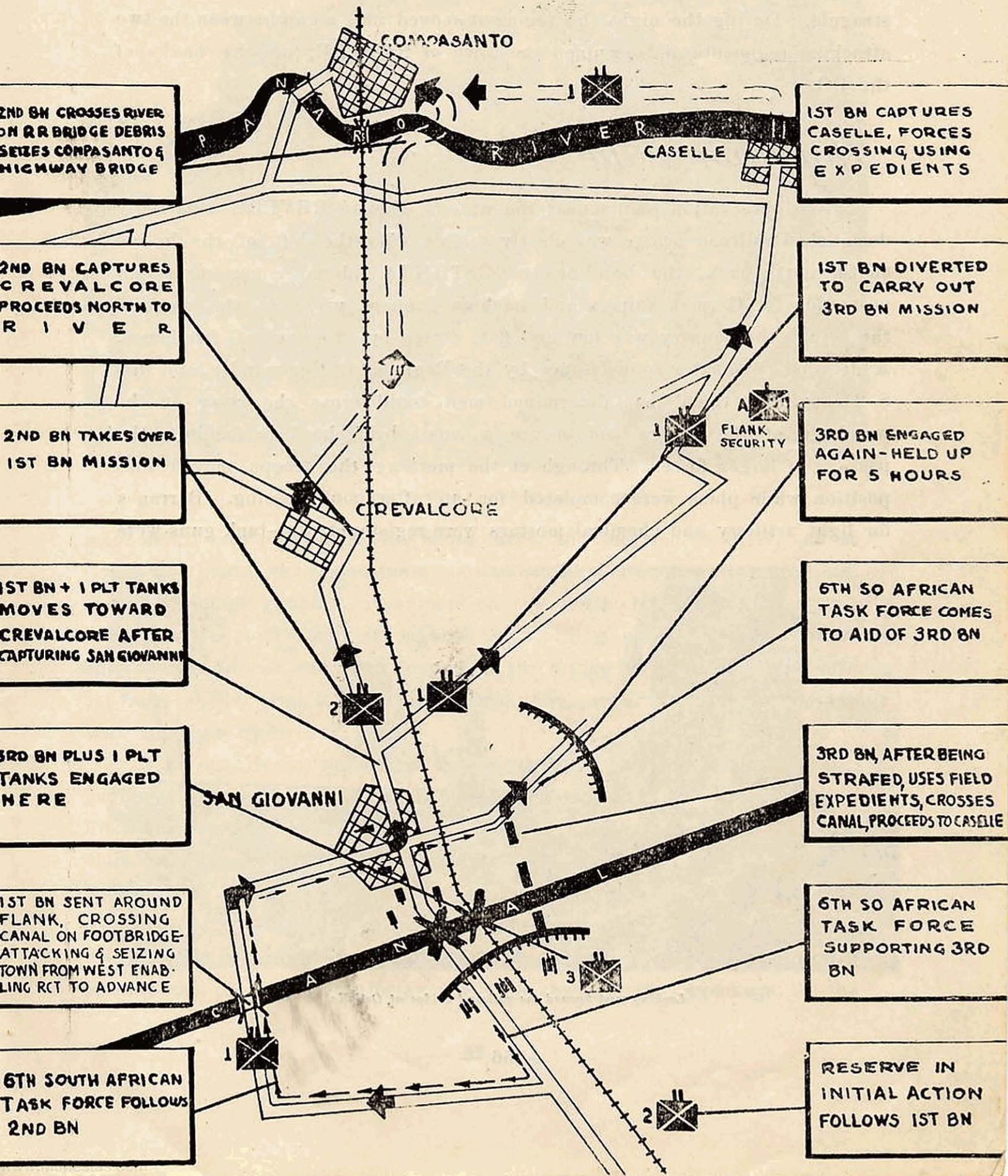
The 351st Ranger Platoon scored remarkable success on the left flank of the regiment by capturing a German signal battalion intact, taking one hundred thirty-seven prisoners of war and killing eleven during a vicious fire fight. Mounted in captured trucks, the plucky Rangers drove right through the main street of a German-held village, firing automatic weapons and throwing hand grenades at the surprised and disorganized enemy. During this afternoon of fighting the unengaged elements of the First and Second Battalions reconnoitered the PANARO RIVER for crossing sites, but heavy machine gun and mortar fire forced the men to take cover behind the south levee. The men of the 351st had fought hard all day, but they

could have no opportunity to relax, for the enemy was fighting for time.

At 1530 hours General Kendall, the Division Commander, joined Colonel Miller at the forward CP and issued positive orders for the PANARO RIVER to be crossed without delay before darkness. German self-propelled fire destroyed a tank and an armored car as they reached the top of the south levee, and German sniper and machine gun fire killed several men who exposed themselves. In view of the Division Commander's stringent orders for immediate attack, Colonel Miller ordered the First Battalion, less the units engaged in the fighting at CASELLE, to cross the river by swimming, while the Second Battalion foot troops could use the rubble of a demolished bridge. A very effective and beautifully co-ordinated curtain of artillery fire laid down by the 913th Field Artillery supported the assault companies as they jumped-off at 1900 hours. Within a short time both battalions were firmly across the river, establishing a bridgehead three kilometers deep. The Second Battalion cleared the town of CAMPOSANTO and captured a bridge in good condition, over which all combat vehicles were quickly brought forward. The 22nd of April had been a great day for the fighting men of the 351st Infantry, for they had overrun three strongly defended towns, crossed two water barriers, and had taken in excess of one thousand five hundred prisoners within twenty-four hours. The regiment had smashed every attempt by the Germans to organize a defense line and gain time to ferry their vehicles and equipment across the Po River.

Relieved by the 350th Infantry early on the morning of the 23rd, the regiment marched through scenes of amazing confusion and destruction. Hundreds of vehicles littered the roadsides and thousands of German artillery horses wandered about the countryside, while long columns of prisoners shuffled to the rear. Caught on the south bank of the PO RIVER with all bridges destroyed and under the pressure of relentless ground and air attack, the Germans either swam the river or surrendered. Although in reserve on this day, the 351st captured more than two thousand prisoners by-passed by the leading elements. Many a veteran of mountain fighting at Cassino and Minturno took exceptional pleasure in witnessing this utter

San Giovanni - Panaro



2ND BN CROSSES RIVER ON RR BRIDGE DEBRIS SEIZES COMPASANTO & HIGHWAY BRIDGE

1ST BN CAPTURES CASELLE, FORCES CROSSING USING EXPEDIENTS

2ND BN CAPTURES CREVALCORE PROCEEDS NORTH TO RIVER

1ST BN DIVERTED TO CARRY OUT 3RD BN MISSION

2ND BN TAKES OVER 1ST BN MISSION

3RD BN ENGAGED AGAIN - HELD UP FOR 5 HOURS

1ST BN + 1 PLT TANKS MOVES TOWARD CREVALCORE AFTER CAPTURING SAN GIOVANNI

6TH SO AFRICAN TASK FORCE COMES TO AID OF 3RD BN

3RD BN PLUS 1 PLT TANKS ENGAGED HERE

3RD BN, AFTER BEING STRAFED, USES FIELD EXPEDIENTS, CROSSES CANAL, PROCEEDS TO CASELLE

1ST BN SENT AROUND FLANK, CROSSING CANAL ON FOOTBRIDGE - ATTACKING & SEIZING TOWN FROM WEST ENABLING RCT TO ADVANCE

6TH SO AFRICAN TASK FORCE SUPPORTING 3RD BN

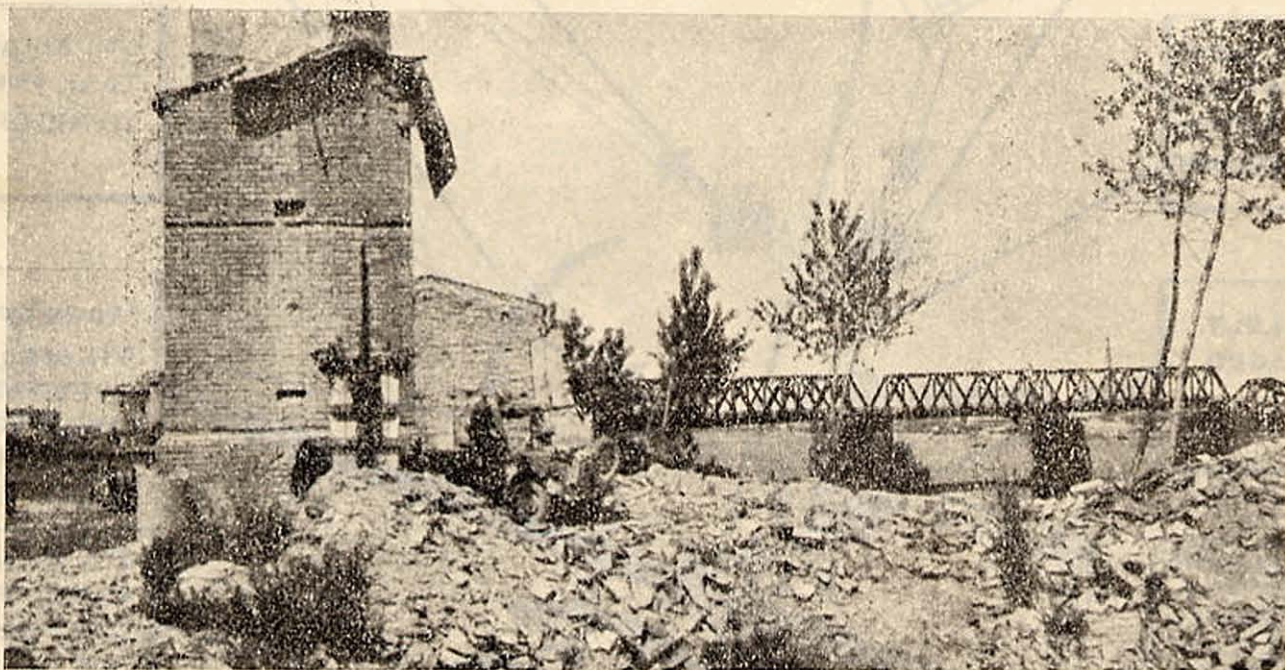
6TH SOUTH AFRICAN TASK FORCE FOLLOWS 2ND BN

RESERVE IN INITIAL ACTION FOLLOWS 1ST BN

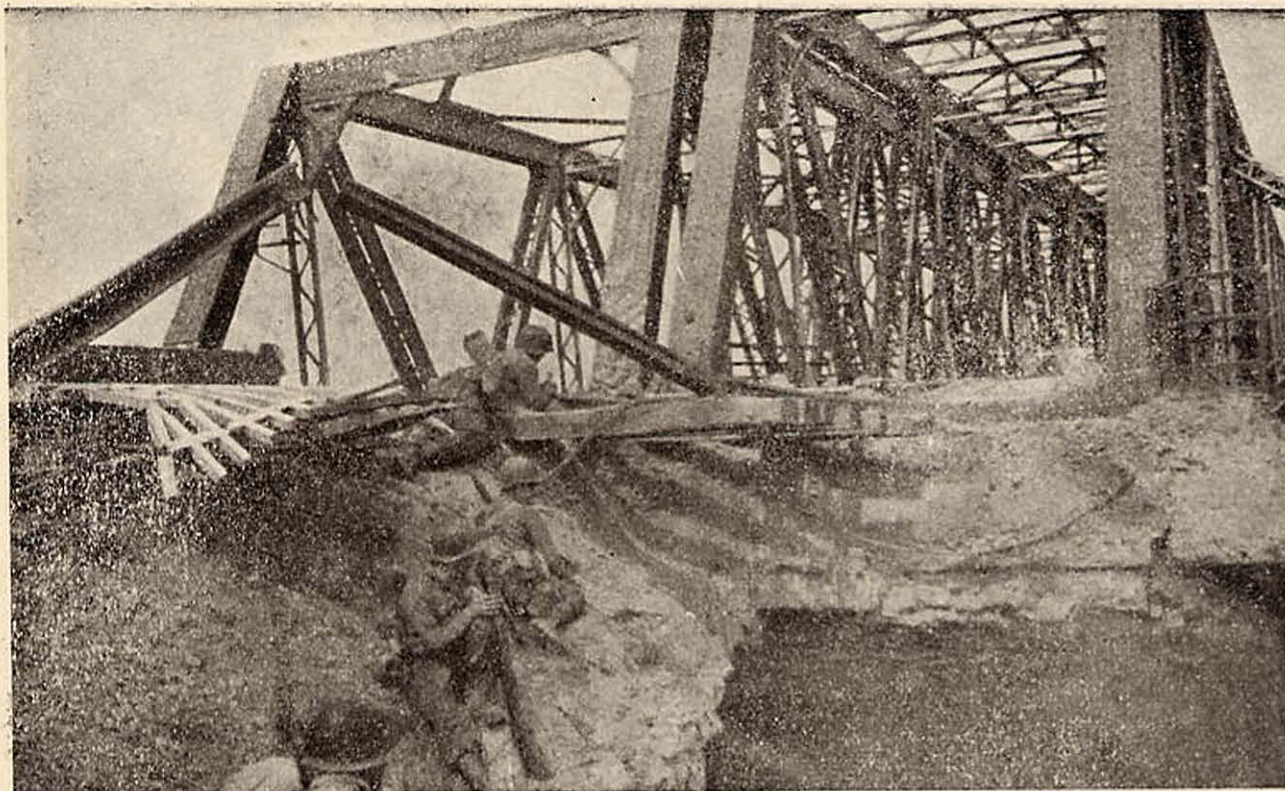
rou t of the Wehrmacht, for this was the pay-off for many months of bitter struggle. During the night the regiment moved into a gap between the two attacking regiments and occupied the town of REVERE, on the banks of the PO.

Storming The Po

From observation points near the water's edge in REVERE a partially demolished railroad bridge was clearly visible. To the left of the bridge on the north bank, the buildings of OSTIGLIA offered concealment and protection for German snipers and machine gunners, while to the right of the bridge the country was low and flat, dotted by an occasional farmhouse. A detailed personal reconnaissance by the Regimental Commander and his S-2 convinced them that determined men could cross the river on the wreckage of the bridge and secure a small bridgehead to facilitate the passage of larger forces. Throughout the morning the troops moved into position while plans were completed for an afternoon crossing. Barrages for light artillery and chemical mortars were registered, anti-tank guns were



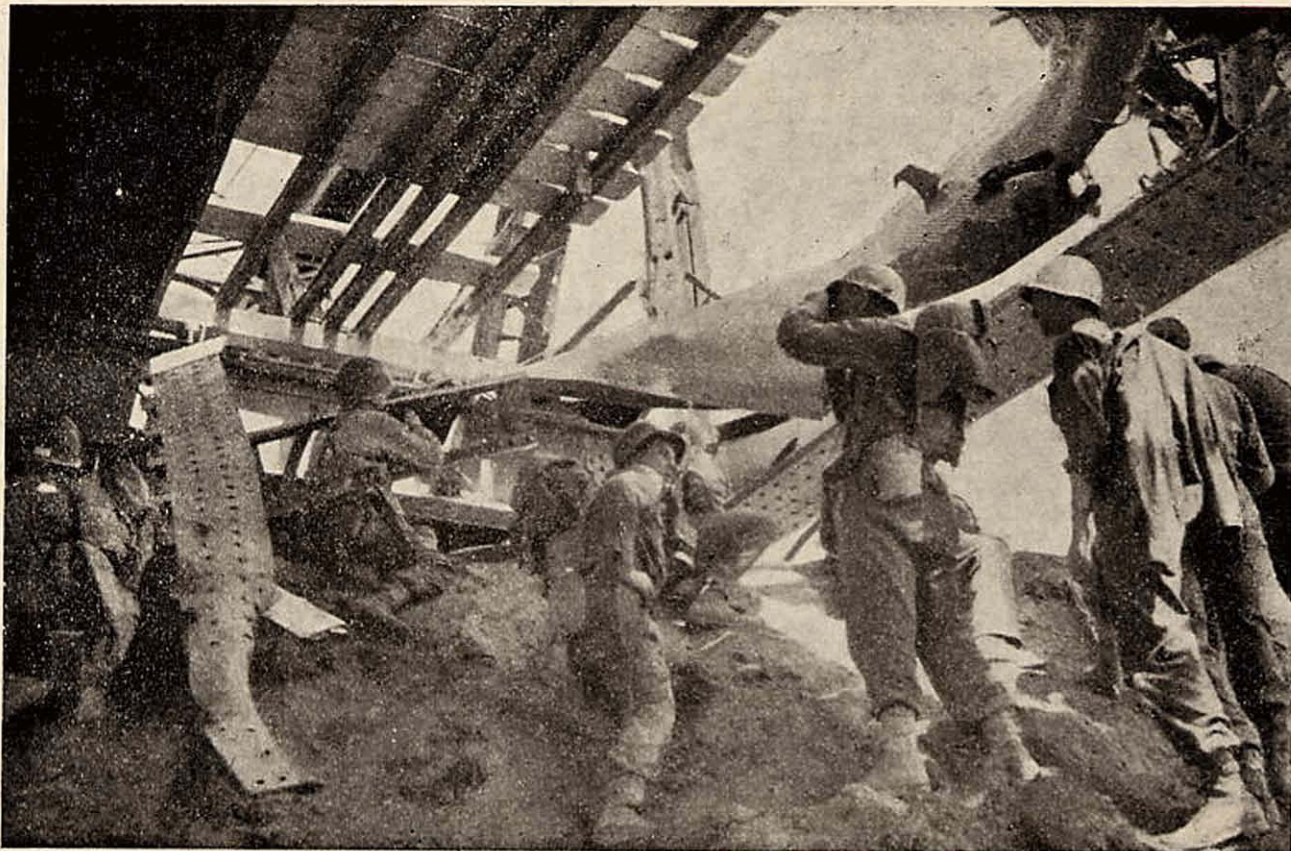
Looking west toward the railroad bridge at Ostiglia



Company G Riflemen waiting for the signal to cross the Po.

manhandled into position on the south levee, and the men of D, H, and M Companies placed their machine guns and mortars into supporting positions. German machine gunners and snipers on the north bank fired at anyone moving on the south bank throughout the morning, and three 20 millimeter anti-aircraft cannon emplaced to protect the bridge harrassed our troops with explosive shells. But in spite of the enemy fire, preparations for the crossing were complete by noon.

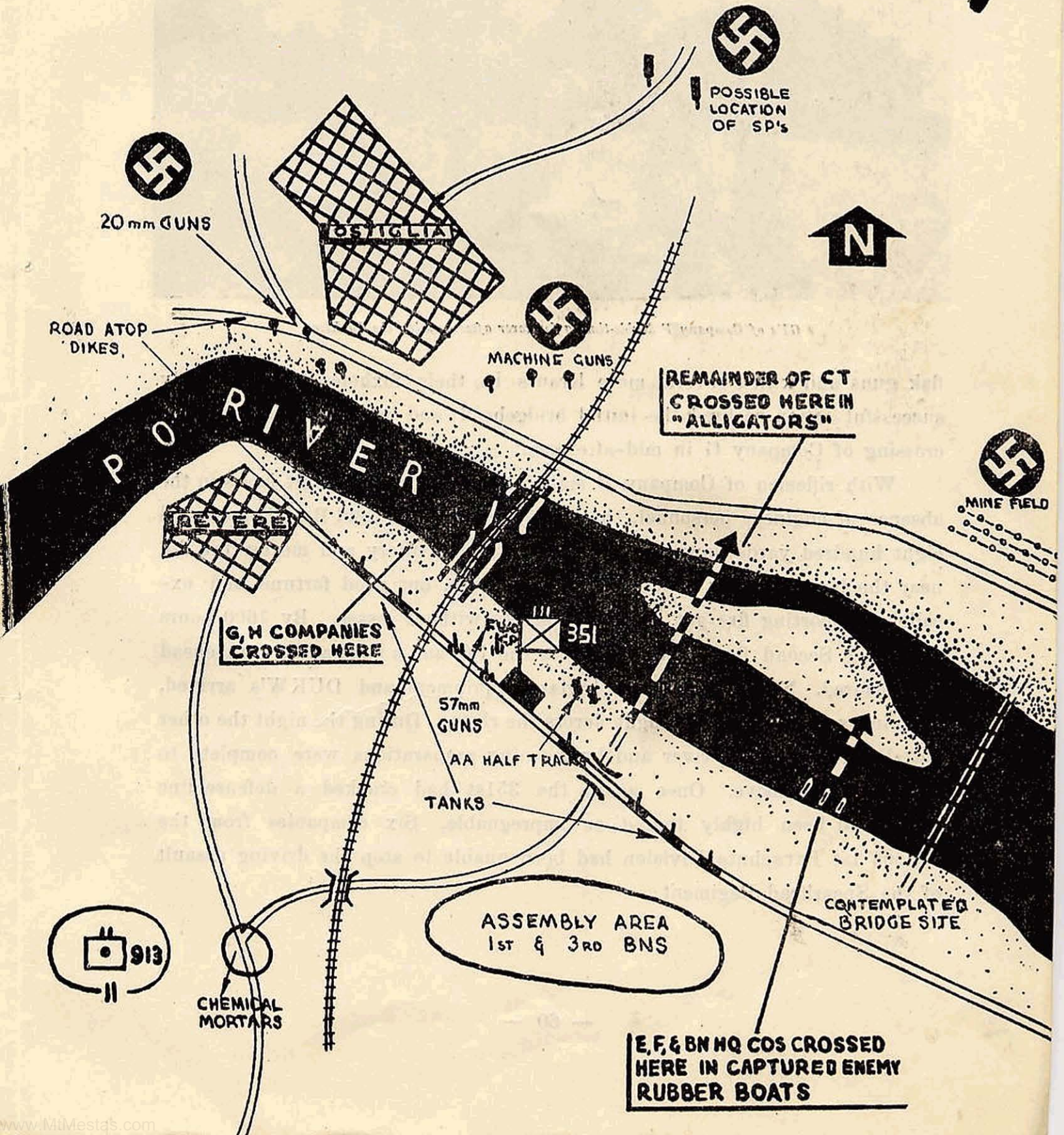
To an eyewitness, the actual crossing was not only spectacular, but also gave the impression of having been rehearsed. At 1200 hours Captain Edmonson, the Regimental S-2, followed by Lieutenant Decker, Lieutenant MacDonald, and thirteen Ranger volunteers, dashed from the buildings of REVERE to the bridge and began to make their way across it. As they reached the broken center span they drew heavy machine gun and flak fire, wounding three of their small force. Captain Edmonson courageously lowered himself into the water and fastened a rope through the wreckage of the



H minus two finds the men of H Company waiting to cross the Po.

center span to provide a hand-hold for those to follow him. Although he was wounded in the hip by a fragment of an explosive projectile, he continued to lead the Rangers to the north bank. Supporting weapons on the south bank fired at all buildings and positions on the north bank, while intense artillery fire raised havoc with the enemy in OSTIGLIA. Once on the far side of the river, Privates Tavenner and Stenquist established a base of fire with their BAR, picking off ten Germans in two hours of remarkable shooting. Lieutenant Decker and two men rushed a machine gun on the left flank of the levee, killed the gunners, and went on to capture a three-story house which commanded observation of the immediate area. From the top floor of this house Lieutenant Decker and his men made a network of trenches and emplacements untenable for the enemy with deadly rifle shooting—then rushed a second house and three bunkers to kill five more Germans and capture an additional twenty. The Rangers then charged three enemy

Po River Crossing



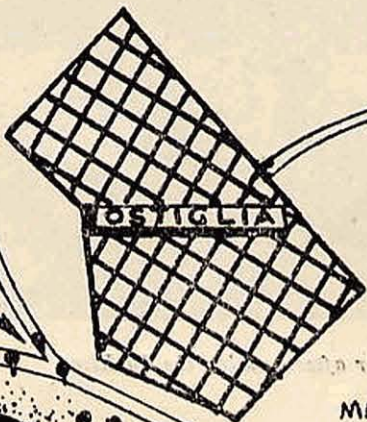
POSSIBLE LOCATION OF SP'S



20mm GUNS



ROAD ATOP DIKES



OSTIGLIA



MACHINE GUNS

REMAINDER OF CT CROSSED HEREIN "ALLIGATORS"



MINE FIELD

PO RIVER



REVERE

G, H COMPANIES CROSSED HERE

351

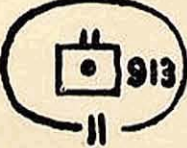
57mm GUNS

AA HALF TRACKS

TANKS

ASSEMBLY AREA
1st & 3rd BNS

CONTEMPLATED BRIDGE SITE



CHEMICAL MORTARS

E, F, & BN HQ COS CROSSED HERE IN CAPTURED ENEMY RUBBER BOATS



GI's of Company F double-timing for cover after crossing the Po River

flak guns and killed several more Krauts in their foxholes. Their highly successful action secured the initial bridgehead and greatly facilitated the crossing of Company G in mid-afternoon.

With riflemen of Company F manning the engineer assault boats in the absence of engineer personnel, the remainder of the Second Battalion crossed eight hundred yards downstream. Intermittent artillery and mortar fire fell near the boats as they paddled across the river, but good fortune and excellent supporting fire got our forces across without losses. By 1600 hours the entire Second Battalion was across the PO and a substantial bridgehead was secured. Shortly thereafter engineer equipment and DUKW's arrived, enabling supplies to be brought across the river. During the night the other battalions crossed the river and by morning preparations were complete to resume the offensive. Once again the 351st had cracked a defense line which had been highly touted as impregnable. Six companies from the famous 1st Parachute Division had been unable to stop the driving assault of the Spearhead Regiment.

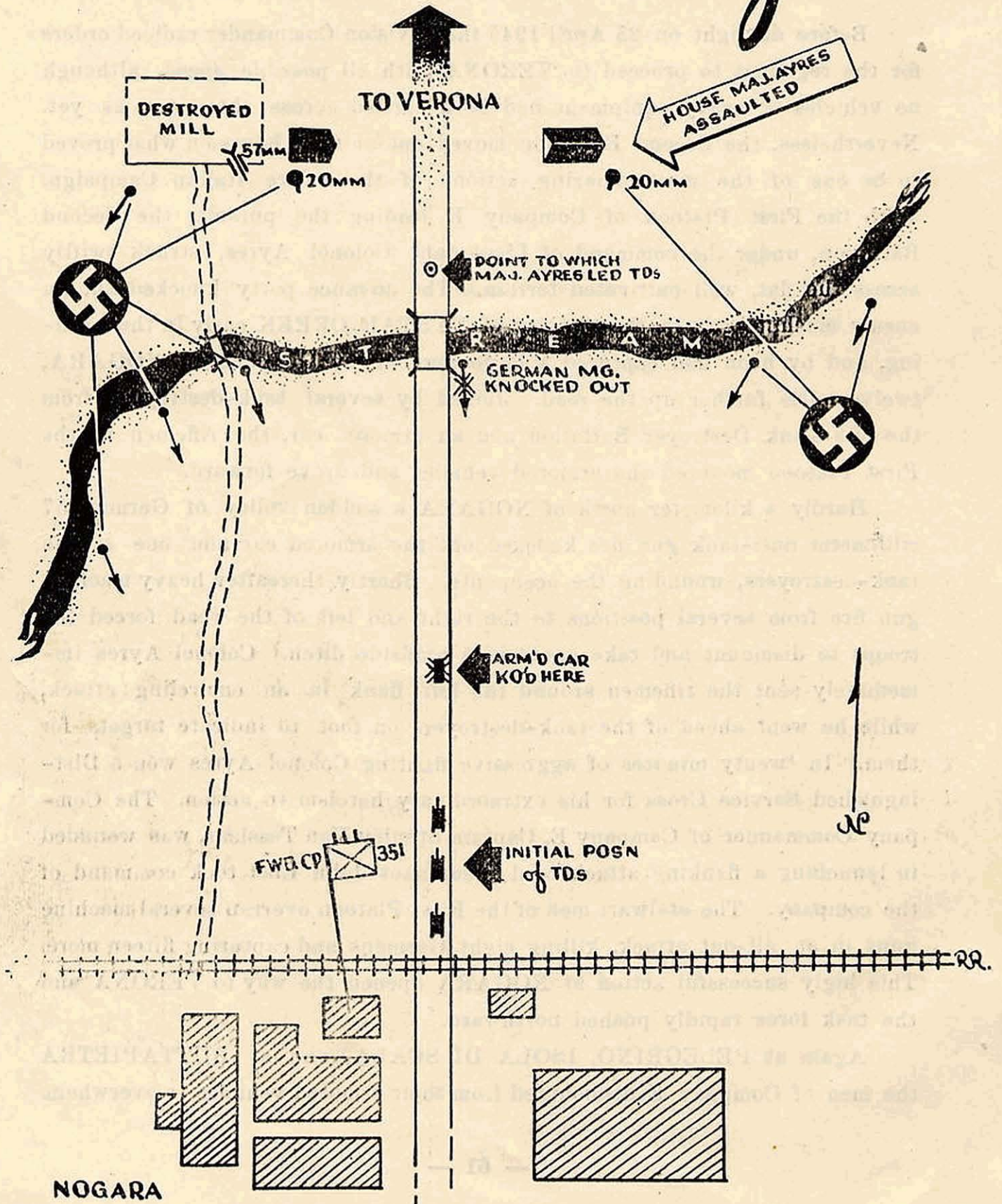
37 Miles In 13 Hours - Verona

Before daylight on 25 April 1945 the Division Commander radioed orders for the regiment to proceed to VERONA with all possible speed, although no vehicles or heavy equipment had been carried across the river as yet. Nevertheless, the Second Battalion moved out at 0830 hours on what proved to be one of the most amazing actions of the entire Italian Campaign. With the First Platoon of Company E leading the pursuit, the Second Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ayres, struck swiftly across the flat, well-cultivated terrain. The advance party knocked out an enemy machine gun in the vicinity of TARTAR CREEK early in the morning, and by noon had captured a large number of Germans in NOGARA, twelve miles further up the road. Joined by several tank-destroyers from the 805 Tank Destroyer Battalion and an armored car, the riflemen of the First Platoon mounted the armored vehicles and drove forward.

Hardly a kilometer north of NOGARA a sudden volley of German 57 millimeter anti-tank gun fire knocked out the armored car and one of the tank-destroyers, wounding the occupants. Shortly thereafter heavy machine gun fire from several positions to the right and left of the road forced the troops to dismount and take cover in a roadside ditch. Colonel Ayres immediately sent the riflemen around the left flank in an encircling attack, while he went ahead of the tank-destroyers on foot to indicate targets for them. In twenty minutes of aggressive fighting Colonel Ayres won a Distinguished Service Cross for his extraordinary heroism in action. The Company Commander of Company E, Captain Stanley Van Tessler, was wounded in launching a flanking attack, and Lieutenant John Ebel took command of the company. The stalwart men of the First Platoon overran several machine guns in an all-out attack, killing eight Germans and capturing fifteen more. This highly successful action at NOGARA opened the way to VERONA and the task force rapidly pushed northward.

Again at PELEGRINO, ISOLA DI SCALA, and at BUTTAPIETRA the men of Company E dismounted from their armored vehicles to overwhelm

Action at Nogara



strong road blocks barring the way to VERONA. In the little town of BUTTAPIETRA Lieutenant Ebel went ahead of this platoon on reconnaissance, dropped a German sentry unconscious with a butt-stroke from his carbine, and captured twelve enemy soldiers manning two 88 millimeter guns to win a Distinguished Service Cross for his magnificent fighting ability. When the First Platoon captured a German position at CA DAVID, they broke the last resistance south of VERONA, and by 2100 hours the leading elements of the 351st had entered the city.

Within VERONA the men of the Second Battalion had a field day shooting up the badly disorganized German groups who were trying to escape northward into the mountains. At one road block near the southern outskirts of the town, dead and dying Germans literally covered the street as truck-load after truck-load of enemy personnel were blasted at close range by our tank-destroyer and infantry weapons. Brave men of Compay F



Kraut prisoners shuffle past dead comrades shortly after heavy fighting at this road junction in Verona.

fought savage battles in the darkened streets, while equally courageous medics evacuated the wounded under fire. In a single day of continuous fighting the Second Battalion had covered thirty-seven miles in less than thirteen hours, and had for practical purposes severed the German armies in Italy. Over five hundred prisoners had been taken by the leading platoon, alone, while the First and Third Battalions, protecting the flanks and rear, accounted for hundreds more. It had been one of the most successful combat days in Fifth Army history, and a record was established of which every man in the 351st may well be proud.

When he arrived in VERONA on the morning of 26 April, Colonel Darby, Assistant Division Commander of the 10th Mountain Division, paid a remarkable compliment to Colonel Miller and the fighting men of the 351st Infantry, stating, "You seem to have had interesting brawl during the night. I heartily approve of the results". Elements of the 10th Mountain Division were at this time entering the city from the west to relieve the 351st.

After hardly getting a glimpse of the sights and signorinas in VERONA, the hard-driving troops of the Spearhead Regiment executed a "column right" and headed due east toward another SAN GIOVANNI and ZEVIO, along the south bank of the ADIGE RIVER. About noon on 26 April the Rangers entered SAN GIOVANNI and to the amazement of all were met by a representative of the commander of a Czechoslovakian Regiment, who promptly surrendered his entire unit to the 351st Infantry. Pushing rapidly on toward ZEVIO the regimental column encountered a strong road block made of steel rails and covered by rifle and machine gun fire. Attempts to ram the road block with tanks of the 752 Tank Battalion were unsuccessful, and increasing small arms fire from the flanks forced the riflemen to dismount from the vehicles and take cover in ditches. While a brisk fire fight ensued at the road block, the main body of the column by-passed the resistance around the left flank and drove into ZEVIO. The bag of prisoners captured during this action was so unbelievably large that the guarding and evacuation of them threatened to hamper the movement of the regiment.

One complete German field hospital was captured in ZEVIO, along with all its patients, transportation, and nurses. In recognition of the outstanding accomplishments of the 351st on the 24th, 25th, and 26th of April, the Commanding General of II Corps sent the following message to General Kendall:

"Congratulations to you and the other Blue Devils for a magnificent race won against great odds. Please convey my congratulations to Colonel Miller and the 351st and their team mates from the 752nd (Tank Battalion) and 805th (Tank Destroyer Battalion)."

At ZEVIO the 351st crossed the ADIGE RIVER on the night of 26 April, using the debris of a demolished bridge. The swiftness of the current presented unusual problems to the transportation and supply echelons, but by using commandeered Italian skiffs most of our vehicles and equipment was across before priority on the bridge at VERONA was obtained. The regiment moved a few miles east of its bridgehead and went into temporary bivouac along Highway 11 for twenty-four hours of much needed and well deserved rest. It was during this short rest period that the commander of a Georgian Infantry Battalion sent word through an Italian that he desired to surrender his whole force, and Colonel Hobson took a



Third Battalion GI's crossing the Adige River by assault boat.

three-jeep convoy through the enemy lines to negotiate the capitulation. Camped at the foothills of the mountains, many an ammo bearer squinted up at the snowy peaks of the Alps and wondered if he'd have to climb these, too.

351st On Patrol

Marostica-Bassano

The regiment shuttled along Highway 11 behind the fast-moving 349th Infantry and closed into VICENZA by noon of the 28th. Knocked out tanks and bullet splattered walls testified to the intensity of the fighting that had taken place a few hours before, and it became evident to all that the enemy might yet attempt another organized defense. German units facing the British Eighth Army were stubbornly retreating to the northwest, while the 88th Division was cutting in behind them in an easterly direction. It was this cross-current of two forces that led to one of the most confusing and widespread battles of the Italian Campaign.

Committed in a northeasterly direction from VICENZA on the evening of 28 April 1945, the regiment marched in column of battalions, Second, Third, First, until a blown-out bridge near SANDRIGO forced the tank-supported Second Battalion to detour. By daylight of April 29th the Second and Third Battalions met in the town of SANDRIGO and captured eleven anti-aircraft cannon, large quantities of ammunition and vehicles, along with more than three hundred prisoners. Four rifle platoons from the Second Battalion drove forward without delay to capture and secure MAROSTICA by 0700 hours, opening the way for the regiment to follow. Here in the ancient stone castle Colonel Miller received unusually accurate and timely information from a highly developed Partisan organization. Disposition and movement of German units were recorded, greatly facilitating the advance during the day.

Company A, mounted on tanks, moved out toward BASSANO DEL

GRAPPA about midday, meeting scattered resistance along the way. As the task force approached within a few hundred yards of the town it encountered several road blocks and numerous machine guns hidden in the buildings. The men dismounted and deployed for two hours of stiff fighting. Private Robert M. Boston of First Battalion Headquarters Company lived up to his magnificent reputation as a fighting man by single-handedly assaulting a roadblock to kill and wound seven Germans in five minutes, while Sergeants Moffett and Richards of Company C fought a two-man war on the right flank, knocking out two machine guns and killing five Jerries. There were many instances of heroism and gallantry in the hard-fighting First Battalion during the afternoon as our troops smashed desperate resistance from German paratroopers and forced their way to the banks of the BRENTA RIVER.

While the First Battalion clawed its way into the town, large forces of enemy troops moved into their rear and cut the road between MAROSTICA and BASSANO, seriously endangering the regiment. Along the entire length of the regimental column—nearly ten miles—sharp and savage fire fights took place. Anti-Tank Company took up its rifles and engaged in several highly successful actions during the afternoon, while Second and Third Battalions captured hundreds of prisoners in minor skirmishes. In BASSANO intense sniper and machine gun fire from buildings across the river constantly harassed our troops, and even the 913th Field Artillery cannoneers were forced to use grenades and carbines to beat off repeated infiltration attacks. With the cutting of the main road behind his battalion, Major Frank W. Carmon was ordered to organize a task force with one rifle platoon from the First Battalion and four tank-destroyers.

Striking back along the main road, the task force soon encountered a strong road block manned by two companies of Germans, four heavy machine guns, two "Panzerfaust" teams, and one heavy bazooka team. Intense small arms fire forced the riflemen to dismount and deploy. Major Carmon, who was riding in the leading tank-destroyer, seized the .50 caliber ring-mount machine gun and swung it into action. He killed two Germans with

his first burst, knocked out a "Panzerfaust" team and the bazooka team, then went on to put all four machine guns out of action. The only break in his firing was when he stopped to reload his weapon. Between Major Carmon and his aggressive riflemen, eighteen Germans were killed, twenty wounded, and fifty-two taken prisoner in this sharp, ten minute fight. With this road-block destroyed, Anti-Tank Company came up to patrol and hold open the main road.

The task force had hardly returned to BASSANO when it was given a new mission on the regimental right flank. Moving south along the BRENTA RIVER to NOVE, the task force fought a few minor skirmishes and captured some prisoners. Turning northwest along secondary roads, the TD's and doughboys penetrated to within a mile of MAROSTICA, capturing about fifty prisoners along the way. Here the task force did an about face and returned to NOVE, then swung due west and captured the town of SCHIAVIO, where a few rounds of 76 millimeter cannon fire took the fight out of two hundred more Germans. Continuing on to SANDRIGO during the night, the task force circled back toward the BRENTA RIVER. One large column of enemy troops surrendered intact without a fight, and Major Carmon brought his task force back to its starting point about midnight. It had been an outstanding success, for in their circuit the infantry and TD's had captured five hundred and nine prisoners, killed and wounded many, and succeeded in disorganizing several German formations.

While Major Carmon secured the right flank, the Third Battalion moved into BASSANO during the afternoon and prepared to cross the BRENTA RIVER. A German footbridge was utilized to dash across the swiftly-flowing stream and gain the far bank. With brave men from Company I clearing the buildings in that part of BASSANO east of the river, the Third Battalion spread out and secured a substantial bridgehead during the night of the 29th. This aggressive blow cut the German's last escape route into the mountains and marked the end of organized resistance in the PO VALLEY. It had been yet another amazing twenty-four hours of offensive fighting—three thousand two hundred and forty-four Germans captured, an

Action at Marostica

LARGE FORCE OF GERMANS ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE SUCCEEDED IN CUTTING ROAD BEHIND 1ST BN.

INCOMPLETE GERMAN BRIDGE USED BY 3RD BN. TO CROSS RIVER

2ND 3RD BNS and AT. CO IN PERIMETER DEFENSE AROUND MAROSTICA

INITIAL POSITION OF 1ST BN. 15 TKS

MAROSTICA

BASSANO

3RD BN MOVED TO ASSEMBLY AREA 2ND BN REMAINED IN DEFENSE OF MAROSTICA

LARGE FORCE OF GERMANS ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE - SUCCEEDED IN CUTTING ROAD BEHIND 2ND & 3RD BNS

TASK FORCE 'C' CO 4 TDS. LED BY MAJ. CARMON SENT BACK TO CLEAR ROADS OVER 600 PWS TAKEN

SCHIAVON

'C' CO. LEFT TO DEFEND SCHIAVON

LARGE FORCES OF GERMANS MOVING NORTH TURNING EAST AFTER BEING ENGAGED BY 'L' CO

SANDRIGO

CHEM. MTRS. SV. CO
'C' CO. 313TH ENGR IN TOWN



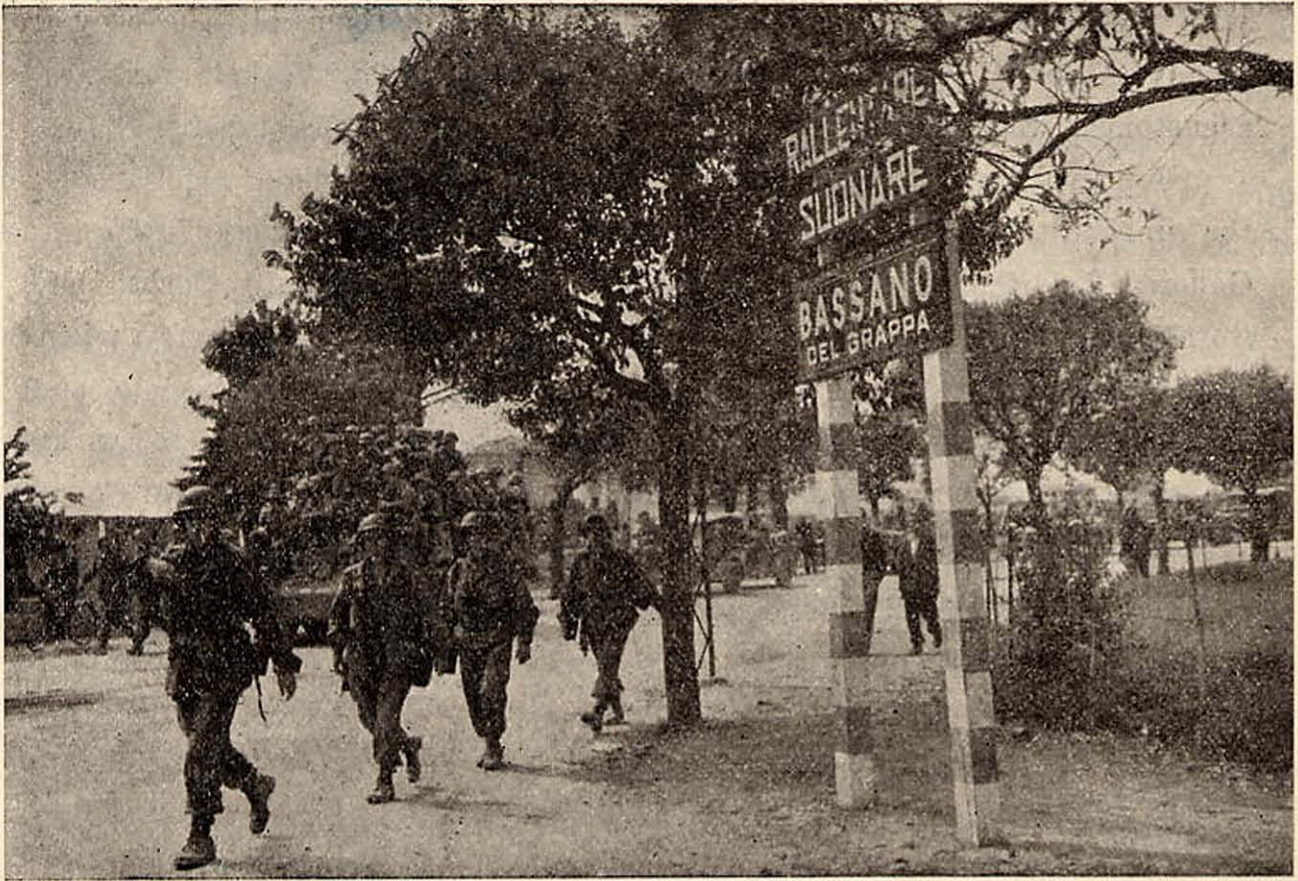
estimated four hundred and fifty killed, and large numbers wounded and dispersed. In the prisoner bag were no less than one thousand forty-one Germans from the two best enemy outfits in Italy, the 1st and 4th Parachute Divisions. The men and officers in the 351st Infantry may well take pride in their achievements in this single day of fighting.

Into The Alps *Arsie-Borgo*

Several changes of orders came down on the morning of 30 April before the 351st at last knifed into the mountains. Moving along Highway 47 in column of battalions, First, Second, Third, the doughboys marched between Alpine peaks as high and rugged as any they had yet seen. An occasional sniper fired a few shots and then surrendered, but for the most part the advance continued rapidly all afternoon and through the night. Morning of 1 May found the regiment at the town of CISMONE, where a lateral road joins Highway 47. The Ranger Platoon, mounted on tanks, moved north along a parallel valley on the right flank and struck a German supply column at ARSIE, killing eighteen enemy soldiers and wounding forty in an hour of stiff, aggressive fighting, while a task force from Company E hit the same force of Germans from the west. By the time ARSIE was completely mopped-up, the enemy had suffered seventy-five killed and over sixty captured.

While this action took place on the right flank, the First Battalion continued to drive up Highway 47 toward TRENTO, the regimental objective. Light resistance was overcome before the First Battalion took BORGO and waited for the column to catch up. It was here in BORGO that the regiment received its first artillery fire in several days. Since the fire seemed to be coming from the vicinity of a town called RONCEGNO, five hundred rounds of counterbattery fire were placed on reverse slopes in the neighborhood of that town. Plans were made for the immediate resumption of the advance, and Company B moved out on the morning of 2 May 1945 and into the final fighting of the war.

After advancing several kilometers beyond BORGO, the leading squad



Third Battalion "Queens of Battle" leaving Bassano and the Po Valley.

of Company B received intense machine gun fire from German paratroopers entrenched along the highway. In an hour and a half of maneuver and fighting, five courageous men gave their lives while even at that moment messengers were bringing forward the orders to cease firing. Because of the wide dispersion of the Fifth Army during the final days of fighting and suspicion of German motives in sending messengers to the Regimental Commander, orders to break through to TRENTO were carried out to the letter. Fighting continued throughout the afternoon, with Anti-Tank Company gunners knocking out a German self-propelled gun, while riflemen and bazookamen of Company B hacked away at German forces in the BRENTA VALLEY. When it finally reached the front lines at 2204 hours, 2 May 1945, the order to cease firing could be interpreted literally by the fighting men of the 351st Infantry, for they were driving the Germans northward

with the same magnificent spirit that had carried them all the way from bloody Cassino. Veteran riflemen kept alert all night in their foxholes, so accustomed were they to the danger and uncertainty of combat.

For two days the regiment remained in position while negotiations for the unconditional surrender of the I Fallschirmkorps were in progress. General Heidrich, Corps Commander of the 1st Parachute Corps, paid a worthy compliment to the 88th Division and the 351st Infantry when he stated that nowhere in this war had his unit met tougher resistance or such a fighting spirit. At long last the Spearhead Regiment brought to its knees the same German units who had captured Company G and part of Company F at VEDRIANO during the Gothic push. In evening this score, many men and officers of the Second Battalion took great satisfaction.

“Cease Firing” Trento-Ghedi

On the morning of 5 May Regimental Headquarters moved into San Cristoforo, which also was the German headquarters. It was a strange sight, indeed, to see our infantrymen moving about the area with their weapons while German soldiers carried rifles and zipper pistols and wore swastika decorations. For a few days arrogant German officers rode by in convertibles and returned Hitler salutes. But this situation did not last long, for soon all arms were taken from the Germans and they were moved to concentration areas further south.

The 351st Infantry was given a large area to occupy, police, and govern—two thousand eight hundred and forty-five square miles of terrain. First Battalion moved to LEVICO and the surrounding countryside, Second Battalion established itself near TRENTO, while Third Battalion occupied RIVA, on the northern tip of LAKE GARDA. For several weeks the regiment remained thus dispersed, with companies and even platoons separated by many miles from their higher headquarters. Command posts were established in towns and most Company Commanders assumed a quasi-political

role as mayor of the town, judge, alderman, and advisor, as well as commander of their own units. As the weeks passed, the regiment evacuated over fifty thousand prisoners of war, brought the civilian economy back to normal, and enjoyed the beauty of the mountains and lakes in the Dolomite Alps. Most GI's collected more pistols and rifles than they could carry, and some came to know the local girls pretty well. In spite of guard details and motorized patrols, this period came as close to a regimental holiday as any period in the 351st Infantry's history.

Early June 1945 found the regiment concentrated in bivouac areas near SALÒ, where for one week the men enjoyed swimming in LAKE GARDA and passes to BRESCIA. On 12 June the 351st moved by truck to the airfield near GHEDI to assume the mission of guarding the sixty-five thousand German prisoners concentrated there. By this time the re-deployment program of the War Department began to affect the personnel of the regiment. Men worked over their "points" for discharge or reassignment and sweated out shipments home or transfer to other units. New faces appeared in the ranks as veterans of other good outfits came to us under the re-deployment program—but these new-comers, also, soon reflected the pride of a soldier in the 351st Infantry Regiment.

Toujours Prêt

In concluding this sketch of the Fighting 351st Infantry from July 1942 until July 1945, it can be stated that no one within the regiment knows for sure what the future of our unit will be. But whatever job is assigned for us to accomplish, the men and officers of the Spearhead Regiment will stand "always ready" to carry on for our Government and our beloved United States of America.

HONOR ROLL

MAJOR DECORATIONS

awarded in the 351st Infantry Regiment as of 1 July 1945

The Distinguished Service Cross

Colonel ARTHUR S. CHAMPENY

Lieutenant Colonel HAROLD B. AYRES

Lieutenant Colonel RAYMOND E. KENDALL

Major FRANK W. CARMON, JR.

Captain THEODORE W. NOON, JR.

Captain WILLIAM B. SANDLIN

Lieutenant RALPH DECKER, JR.

Lieutenant JOHN F. EBEL

Lieutenant TREVELYN L. Mc CLURE

Lieutenant CHARLES W. PIERCE

Lieutenant LINNSEY L. WHEELER

Lieutenant JOHN T. LAMB

Staff Sergeant SAM Mc GOWAN

Staff Sergeant DELVIN V. SAMPLE

Private First Class WALTER ELLSWORTH

The Legion of Merit

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Lieutenant Colonel HAROLD B. AYRES

Lieutenant Colonel CHARLES P. FURR

Lieutenant Colonel VICTOR W. HOBSON, JR.

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Captain CHARLES J. RADOSEVICH

Lieutenant JOSEPH J. BARAN

Master Sergeant JOHN F. MC GRATH

Master Sergeant CHESTER A. POST

Staff Sergeant WILLIAM R. ABRAMS

The Silver Star

Colonel Arthur S. Champeny

Lieutenant Colonel Tillman E. Boyd

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” ” Claude M. Howard

” ” Herman W. Ohme

” ” Walter B. Yeager
(1st Oak Leaf Cluster)

Major Frank W. Carmon, Jr.

” Edwin H. Marks, Jr.

” Trevor E. Williams

Captain Gilmer H. Heitman, Jr.

” Emmet B. Lyle

” John J. Mc Donnell

Captain Albert F. Reinwart, Jr.

” Stanton D. Richart

” Stanton D. Richart
(1st Oak Leaf Cluster)

” Charles J. Radosevich

” Leo L. Sautter

” George D. Schaffer

” George D. Schaffer
(1st Oak Leaf Cluster)

” Allen R. Vail

Lieutenant Joseph J. Baran

” Harry G. Baughman

” Perry J. Cheeney

Lieutenant John F. Curry

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„ Roy C. Ellis
„ Leslie P. Geelen
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„ Garvin C. Mc Makin
„ Carlton R. Mikkelsen
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„ John A. Neeley
„ Edward A. Walsh
„ Wilson G. Weisert
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„ Thomas A. White

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„ „ Albert Kruger
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„ „ Dale R. May
„ „ Edward T. O'Brien
„ „ Jose C. Orona
„ „ Jose C. Orona
 (1st Oak Leaf Cluster)
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„ „ Howard E. Prather
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„ „ Frank J. Ziegler

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„ „ James A. Kirby
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„ „ Leonard Maciejewski
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„ „ Charles M. Spiecer
„ „ Clyde A. Vaughn

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„ „ „ Ivan D. Black
„ „ „ Robert M. Boston
„ „ „ George Boykin
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„ „ „ Walter D. Deay
„ „ „ Henry Dombrozky
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„ Lawrence J. Cunningham
„ Kurt Freisinger
„ Roger C. Hall
„ Sylvester Ignasiak
„ Hendrick F. Rodriquez
„ Lyle E. Rust
„ John E. Takach
„ Lester E. Wells

Battle Buddies

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