

U.S. ARMY MILITARY HISTORY INSTITUTE

202
-173FA
1945a

Retain in Container
when not in use

U.S. Army Military History Institute

Retain in Container
when not in use

U.S. Army, 173d Field Artillery Battalion

HISTORY

173RD FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

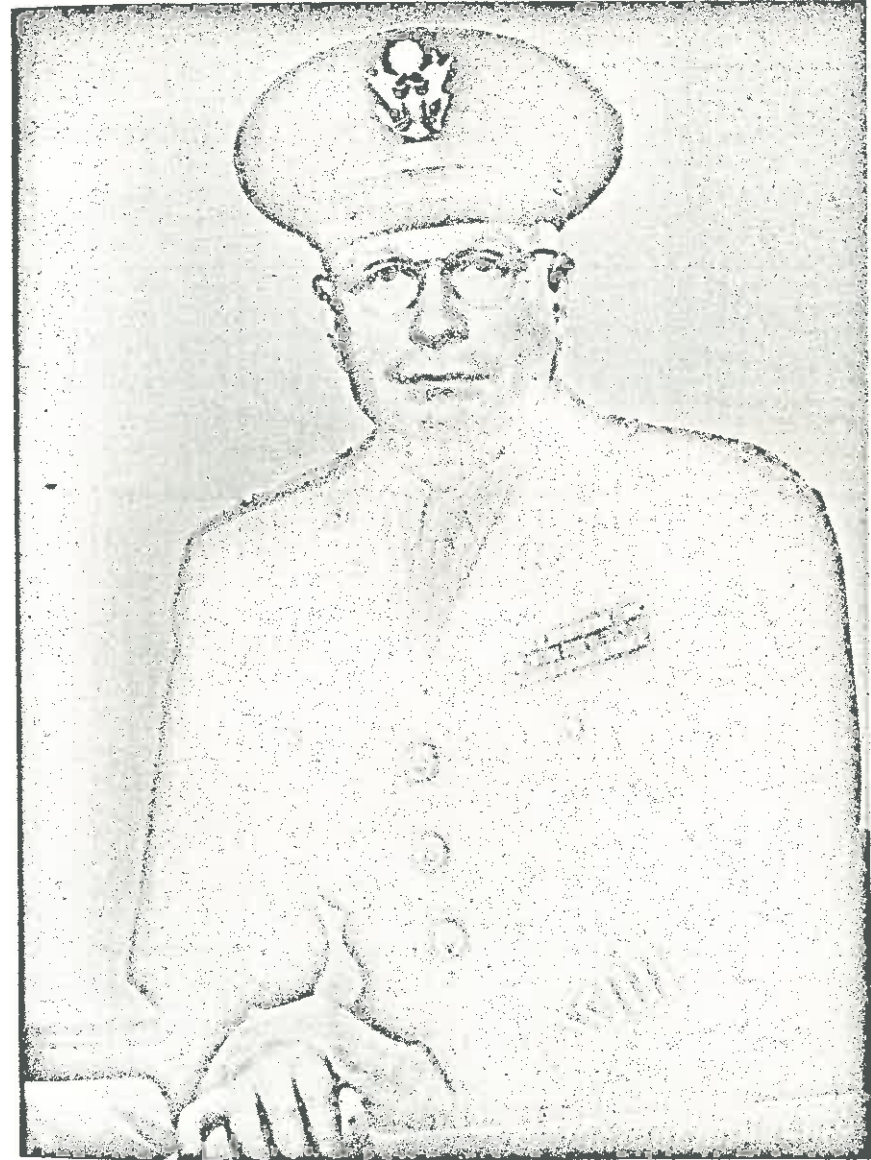
PROPERTY OF THE US ARMY

NARRATIVE BY
CAPT. BENTON H. BURNS

EDITED BY
LT. COL. HARRY T. KETCHAM
LT. COL. EARL J. RICE

ARRANGEMENT & SKETCHES
M/SGT. WILLIAM N. STARCK

DEDICATED
TO
THE MEN OF THE 173RD WHO
HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES

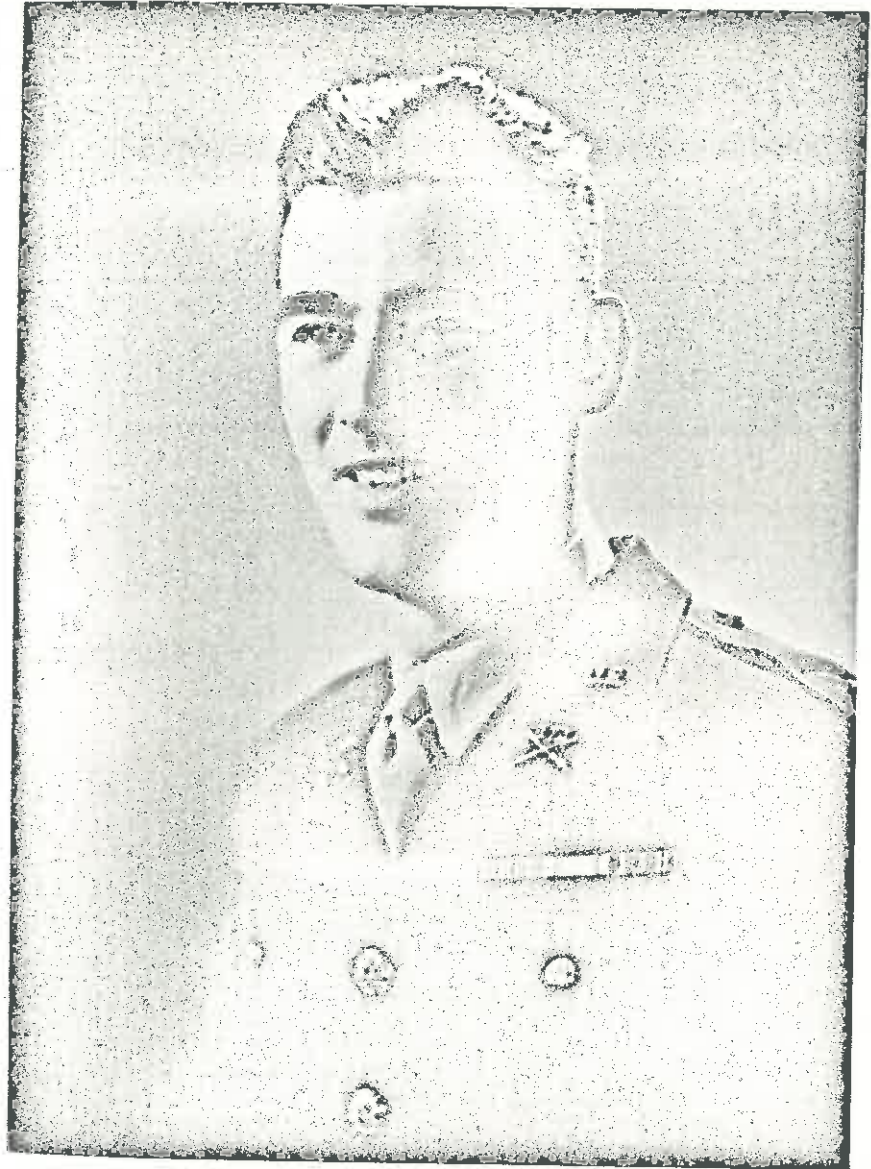


COL.

HARRY T. KETCHAM

COMMANDING

FEB. 1, 1942 - SEPT. 23, 1944



LT. COL.
EARL J. RICE
COMMANDING
SEPT. 23, 1944 - SEPT. 7, 1945

CHAPTER I

THE BATTALION IS BORN

The 173rd Field Artillery Battalion was one of the many children of the violent reorganization undergone by the Army of the United States in the initial stages of its preparation to meet a strong enemy on the field of battle and emerge victorious.

Its mellow ancestry harks back to the year 1898, when General Phillip Sheridan made a springtime visit to Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Many of the Civil War veterans of the city organized a guard of honor for the grand old warrior, and upon the termination of his visit, a cavalry squadron known as the Light Horse Squadron was formed, with the guard as its nucleus. This squadron was quite unofficial and in actuality was a sort of well-to-do riding club, wherein all the members bought their own horses, designed their own uniforms and elected their officers.

In 1916, however, duty called, and the Light Horse Squadron became a part of the U.S. Army as the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry and saw duty on the Mexican Border. After one year of service the squadron went to Fort Sheridan, Illinois, for demobilization. Before the demobilizing could take place, however, the U.S. entered World War 1, and the First Wisconsin Cavalry was ordered to Fort Waco, Texas, where, in 1918, it became a part of the 32nd Division and was renamed and rearmed as the 120th F.A. Regiment of horse-drawn, three-inch guns.

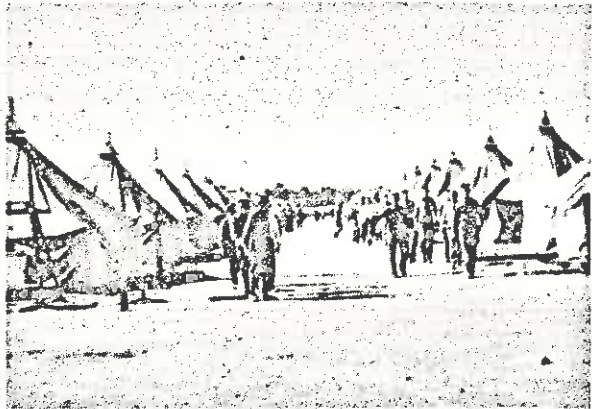
In that same year the division sailed to France, where, in five major engagements, the 120th distinguished itself as a brave and effective combat unit, earning five battle streamers for its guidon, and an enviable reputation.

These traditional horsemen, however, still craved the smell of a sweated horse and the creak of saddle leather, for upon their return to the U.S. in 1919, they made known their desire to be redesignated as cavalry again. The Government obliged, and at Camp Grant, where they had settled down after returning from Europe, they were immediately transformed into the 105th Cavalry Regiment and made a part of the 23rd Cavalry Division.

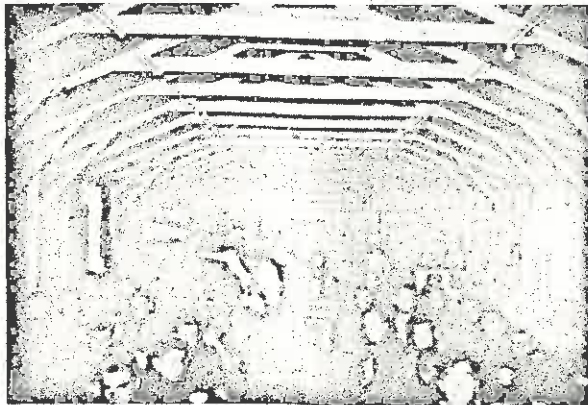
The 105th Cavalry Regiment they remained, until the recent emergency began to rear its ugly head, and on October 1, 1940, they were again assigned to the 32nd Division, this time as the 126th F.A. Regiment of 75 MM guns motorized.

Fifteen days later the Division was inducted into the Federal Service on active status and stationed at Camp Beauregard, Louisiana. From the date of the arrival at "Camp Disregard", as it came to be known to its inmates, until the middle of February, 1941, the regiment lived in mud, rain and cold and only through the Grace of God and the famous Sibley Stove were casualties kept to a minimum. At the end of this period, brand new Camp Livingston, some nine miles away, welcomed the pioneers with its wooden floors, gas stoves, and various other conveniences to which they had become unaccustomed.

Here at Camp Livingston, under the command of Colonel Frederick T.C. John the Regiment pursued a leisurely program, enjoying such forgotten luxuries as pay day off, Wednesday and Saturday afternoons off, and mild and flexible training schedules. On February 1, 1942, the 32nd Divi-



BATTERY
STREET
CAMP BEAUREGARD
LA.



TYPICAL
CAMP DISREGARD
MESS HALL



CAMP LIVINGSTON
LA.

sion underwent that metamorphosis known to the trade as triangularization. The second battalion of the 126th F.A. Regt. and the second battalion of the 121st F.A. Regt., which was the 155 howitzer regiment of the 57th F.A. Brigade, were joined together to form the 173rd F.A. Regt., 155 MM gun, under command of Colonel Waldemar F. Breidster, former commander of the 121st. They were assigned to General Headquarters reserve, and training very gradually became much more earnest, although for six months the only arms the regiment was issued were 30 caliber rifles and 45 caliber pistols.

In 1942, on the 11th of August, the 173rd F.A. Regt. waved a last farewell to the green pine woods and hot parade grounds of Camp Livingston and took up its residence at Camp Gruber Oklahoma, complete with large wooden barracks. One month later the unit was assigned to Tenth Corps as a part of the 16th F.A. Brigade. Life became somewhat grim under a rigorous training program.

Finally the appellation was again upset when, on February 23, 1943, the regiment was split into two separate battalions. The battalion which had been the 1st battalion of the 173rd R.A. Regt. at this time received its present designation, and thus was born the 173rd F.A. Bn. The second battalion became the 985th F.A. Bn., which also fought through those trying months in Italy. And the Regimental Band, which had served so faithfully and well under the direction of C.W.C. ("Doc") Sartell, went to Fort Riley as a Post Band.

At the moment of which we speak, the battalion was very near the peak of training; under Lt. Col. Harry T. Ketcham, who had commanded the battalion during its 173rd Regt. days, it had maneuvered extensively through two summers in Louisiana, fired its fine new 155 MM guns enough to have given its men confidence in themselves and their weapons, and generally shown itself to be a well-trained and well-disciplined organization. Its personnel, originally of Wisconsin National Guard, had been augmented considerably by selectees from all over the country, as well as a number of Reserve Officers, and could really be considered a well-rounded, representative group of American soldiers. They had a high pride in their unit, knew their jobs well, were able to take care of themselves in the field under adverse conditions, and were all anxious to meet the final test - that of Battle. It was not to be long in coming.

CHAPTER II

THE BATTALION IS MADE READY

From the time of its designation until July of that year, the Battalion lived a serene, if stiff, garrison life. Under the 202 F.A. Group, it participated in field problems in the Cookson Hills, where Camp Gruber is situated. It fired its big guns and learned to put them into places seemingly impossible of access, which later proved to be of inestimable value in combat operations. The men were kept at a high peak of discipline and military precision by frequent inspections, retreat formations and constant refreshers in Basic Military subjects.

A strenuous physical program was put into effect which included forced marches as well as calisthenics and supervised games and other athletics. For a long period of time, the batteries made regular marches of three miles in 30 minutes, five miles in 60 minutes, and eventually a 25 mile hike or two. The men were also given instruction in marksmanship, jiu jitsu and night marching and squad work by compass.

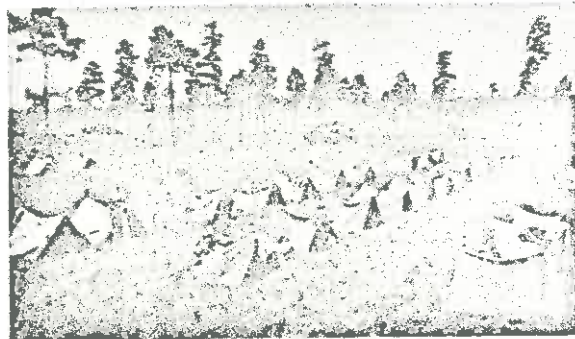
In March of this period the Battalion was issued four 7½ ton Mack trucks as prime movers for the guns. They were split up among the batteries at first, but eventually all landed in "A" Battery. The maximum speed of the tractor TD-18, which had been in use, was nine miles per hour without a towed load. With the truck, although more difficult to work with in woods, and requiring a little more time to couple up, the movement of the actual guns was greatly speeded up, for they could move 30 to 40 miles per hour on a good road.

It was also March that the shoulder patches were once again changed, when the Battalion became a part of the Third Army under Lt. General Walter Kreuger. The old blue and white X was replaced by the White A and so remained until that moment when the battalion's activities became a Military Secret and they were removed.

Early in July orders were received to prepare for a movement to the maneuver area near Boyce, Louisiana, with the strong possibility of never returning. Few suspected how soon that point was to be cleared up. After the extensive preparations accompanying such a movement had been made, the convoy rolled out towards Boyce on the 7th of July and arrived there three days later, setting up a bivouac and settling down to wait for the big maneuver to start.



BATTALION
ON MANEUVERS
NEAR
BOYCE, LA.



On the evening of the 11th at 1800 the maneuver situation was to become tactical. A few hours before that time General Mallett sent down the message that the 173rd was to go at once to Camp Polk and prepare for overseas movement.

C.O. 173rd F.A. Bn.

You are out of the maneuver at once all equipment must be boxed by July 26/43, tagged ready for shipment. Personnel be ready to move by Aug. 7/43. The Bn. be ready to move on an hours notice after 1200 July 12/43 for bivouac area in Camp Polk.

Equipment from Gruber will have to be shipped back to Polk. Liaison planes will have to fly back to Gruber be boxed and shipped back to Polk.

Your priority has been raised to 2A2. All inspections and reequipping will be done at Camp Polk by X Corps.

Signed
P. Mallett
Brig. Gen. U.S.A.

With a good deal of justifiable excitement, they moved out and set up camp on the outskirts of Camp Polk, near the air field. Then a round of inspections by Ordinance, Motor Transport, Signal Corps, Chemical Warfare, Engineers, etc, who checked the equipment in their various departments as serviceable for combat or not. All the personal clothing and equipment was likewise looked over by the battery officers and staff members. The rumors flew thick and fast, "You can't take that over there." "You can take this," and it usually took two days to find the answer.

Capt. Paul Hinkley was sent back to Camp Gruber for records and other important things which had been left behind. Billiard tables were sold or defaulted, and many items of battery property not on T/O's were abandoned to the tender mercies of the newly forming 42nd Division.

Cub planes arrived, two of them, and a 2nd Lt. pilot, Charles A. Herbison, who later left the battalion and finished up in France with the 7th Army. The Staff Sgt. pilot, Wallace Hoy, remained and was commissioned later over in Italy.

No one had qualified with the Carbine up to that time, so there was many a hot day spent on the rifle range at Camp Livingston while the Battalion ran through the course.

The gas masks were all checked in the gas chamber. The men went through the "mental conditioning" course, which is to say that they crawled over about 100 yards of muddy ground, through mud puddles of water, and under two or three lines of barbed wire. They were careful to keep all items close to the ground, as there was the additional mental hazard of small charges of explosive blowing up all around them and a few .50 calibre machine gun bullets whizzing over the top at intervals. Everyone came out wet, covered with mud, and of course, mentally conditioned.

Last minute leaves and furloughs of seven to ten days were granted, and many of the men were fortunate enough to have had a chance to say goodbye in person to their families and friends. Some, of course, had their families or wives come down to Louisiana for their farewells, which resulted in a mad scramble to find quarters in the already over-crowded towns and Camp Guest Houses.

Finally came the day of departure. It was to be by train to an unknown station. The kitchens were built into baggage cars, men were assigned

seats, and the camp was hiked down to the siding on August 11. The last days had been spent in a wild rush to get all the items packed and crated, signed and sealed, with the correct number of lists of content on the inside, outside, and in separate files. Every crate had to be marked on three sides with a battery sign, a crate number, the cubic volume, the weight, and the address.

The men worked like demons, completing their training, making sure that they had all their personal equipment and clothing, and getting the organizational equipment packed and ready to ship. It went on ahead and was shipped separately from Newport News, Virginia. They were not to see it for several weeks.

So, on this momentous Wednesday, a Wednesday of heavy rain but undampened spirits, the 173rd F.A. Bn. took its lunch diluted by the down-pour, and at about 1500 hours loaded onto the train for the first leg of the coming adventure. The train was ancient and uncomfortable, and there were three men for every two seats in the rickety coaches, but the excitement occasioned by the unknown future prevailed, and for the five days duration of the trip from Camp Polk to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, everyone spent his exuberance on singing, healthy normal bitching, and a bit of crap or poker.

No one knew, of course, what the destination might be, except that there was a strong certainty that it was a New York Port of Embarkation. The first day out, however, the news spread that Camp Kilmer would be the stopping place and so naturally everyone redoubled his efforts with the square bones, visualizing some rough evenings in New York City.

The train started out straight north, went through Arkansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and on to Chicago, where it stopped for water at approximately 0200 Friday morning. On the daytime stops, the officers jumped out and bought candy bars by the cases for sale to the men, and ten cases of candy bars lasted about two minutes in the cars full of hungry soldiers. The Meals were hot and fairly good and there were three of them every day. The cooks performed nobly, and, aside from a fire in "B" Battery's kitchen which burned up a little equipment, without mishap.

From Chicago, our string of "cattle cars" turned east and plodded through Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, arriving at Camp Kilmer at 0330 on Sunday, the 15th day of August.

By this time everyone was tired, hot, and covered with a thick layer of good black Pennsylvania coal dust, through which the engine had plowed its way practically all day Saturday. But they jumped off the train, hefted their field bags, and hiked about three miles in the cool night air to the barracks to which the Battalion had been assigned. The batteries were organized and fitted into the barracks as quickly as possible and it was "Rest, Sweet Rest" for the next eight or ten hours.

Then began again the clothing and equipment check. New items were issued, such as gas proof clothing, and for five days everyone was on the merry-go-round. More packing and marking, exchanges on equipment which the Army Quartermaster at Camp Polk had not been able to make, and keeping count of personal equipment, which changed hands in mysterious and unaccountable ways. Any ideas pertaining to pleasant afternoon at Minsky's or star-filled evenings at the Stagedoor Canteen were blown away like bubbles. No one was to leave the confines of the camp till all the preparations were finished. After five days of G.I. confusion and chaotic preparations, everyone packed up his field bag with the horse-shoe blanket-roll, tied up his "A" bag, and at about 2100 hours boarded the train for New York. But it was strictly a business trip. Without having had five minutes outside the camp, they were on their way to the boat, on a train with all blinds pulled down, and after dark to boot. Morale was again upheld only by the knowledge that big things were immediately ahead.

At very close to midnight the train stopped, and disgorged its load of soldiers. Carrying all personal clothing and equipment, and a few chests and typewriters besides, the Battalion staggered onto a ferry boat and was carried to Staten Island, where the ferry was greeted by the New York Port of Embarkation Band which had evidently been tipped off and immediately swung into the Caisson Song and On Wisconsin. It gave everyone a sort of catered-to feeling aside from the fact that there are probably few soldiers whose hearts are not stepped up a few beats at the sound of martial music.

Rolling off the ferry with their burdens, America's heroic sons were next met by the Red Cross with their unbeatable combination of doughnuts, hot coffee, and friendly, fresh-faced girls. A bit of repartee with the sex weak but fair, a half dozen doughnuts washed down the hatch by three cups of coffee, and the lads once again shouldered their "A" bags and prepared to take themselves down the hatch.

Having been carefully coached and rehearsed for about five times to respond with their first names as the 1st Sgt. Called out their surnames, and they started up the gangplank and there were only a scant twenty or so who called back the irrefutable "here".

By about 2:00 everyone was settled in one of the canvas bunks, which were in tiers of five and just far enough apart to allow one man to walk between them without turning sideways. Most of the Bn. was on "B" deck, which was fairly comfortable, although a little hot later on. By talking with the sailors, it gradually became known that they had boarded the U.S.S. Monticello, a former Italian luxury liner of about 30,000 tons, then known as the Conte Grande. It was to sail in the neighborhood of 0600 that morning. Some, tired, flopped into the canvas strip which was to be home for the next two weeks, and others, indefatigably curious, prepared to stay up and watch the anchor weigh at dawn. All, waking or sleeping, dreamed of the future and wondered what it held in store for old 173.

CHAPTER III

THE BATTALION SAILS OVERSEAS

And so the Monticello majestically steamed through New York Harbor at about nine o'clock on August 21st, bearing approximately 7,000 troops below her decks. Secure to the last, Navy kept everyone down under until the harbor was out of sight, so that there was not even a last glimpse of the Statue of Liberty to comfort the voyagers.

There were five decks under the weather deck, lettered from top to bottom beginning with "A". "A" Deck was occupied mainly by the officers and the female contingent, there being about fifty nurses and Red Cross workers on board. Most of the 173rd was on "B" deck, which had a fairly ready access to the open air in the daytime through an open deck on its level. "C" Battery was one deck down from the others and directly underneath. At night, however, because of light discipline, the ship had to be completely closed up, and although there was a blower system in operation to ventilate her, the sleeping quarters became almost unbearably hot and stuffy. For the first few nights it was difficult to sleep and many stretched out on the steel floor instead of their bunks in an effort to keep cool.

The meals were served on one of the lower decks, and the food was not bad; but in order to feed everyone it was a constant rush, and men streamed up and down the ladders all day long going to and from chow. There were many who, after having waited for an hour or two on the swaying ladders, decided that they didn't want to eat anyway. Others, of course, just naturally didn't feel like eating.

Due to the large number of men on board, it was impossible to allow everyone access to the weather decks at the same time. A schedule was fixed, and certain sections came at certain times, everyone getting two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. The time was spent mostly in just leaning over the rail and looking at the old Battleship Texas on one side of us, or the big Monterey on the other, and watching the foaming brine slip past the ship sides. Those who tired of looking at the sea, gathered round here and there for a friendly little game of cards or crap.

Despite the fact that the convoy had grown to twenty-two ships, it kept up a good head of steam and appeared to be heading for its destination with reasonable haste. In the meantime, 7,000 soldiers accustomed themselves to unsteady footing, sleeping quarters that smelled like YMCA locker rooms, Navy whistles, daily boat drills, and to a new language of galleys, hatches and bilges, to say nothing of ten pounds of life preserver wrapped around their waists every time they left home plate.

The sixty-dollar question was pretty well answered when every man was issued a little booklet on North Africa. The booklet was carefully read by all, and later on proved to be fairly preposterous. According to the bits of information gleaned from around and about, the ship had taken a southeastern direction after standing well off the coast, and then, nearing the Bahamas, had veered east for Africa.

About the ninth day out, in the afternoon, a muffled explosion was heard, which apparently had occurred somewhere in the bowels of the ship. It was followed by the loud, sibilant hiss of escaping steam, and for a matter of a half hour or more clouds of white steam billowed into the air from some outlet near the funnels. In the meantime the ship lost way, and the rest of the convoy did a right flank and faded away in the distance. After two or three hours, the damage was repaired at least to the extent that the ship could move along, and it wasn't much longer before she again joined the convoy, through some miraculous coincidence engineered by the Navy. The tragic news arrived from below that some sailors had been badly burned, and one had died as a result of the accident. He was buried at sea with ceremony, and the incident brought home to the sojourning G.I.'s that this was no picnic they were on.

Those fortunate enough to have been topside at the time saw a whale cavorting around half a mile off the starboard bow about the third day out, but as the ship neared the Mediterranean, a school of porpoises played their undulating game of tag around the ship and proved to be the best show of the trip.

It was after eleven days of calm sea, with the tranquility broken only by the above-mentioned events, that land was sighted. The rugged coast of Africa had appeared dimly blue in the distance and almost everyone spent his time aboveboard staring fascinated at the rocky shores of the Dark Continent as it came nearer and nearer. Tangiers, Spanish Morocco, came under their glasses later in the day, and then the convoy slipped through the Straits of Gibraltar while eyes were strained in the direction of the formidable Rock, which, to all outward appearances, was as plain and innocent as any rock in the Mediterranean. Here the Battleship Texas, faithful guardian of the fleet, and some of the destroyers, of which about a dozen had accompanied the group, left the convoy, and it proceeded on its way escorted by a brace of airplane carriers, their decks flat as table tops and looking like wandering harbor accessories.

The shores on either side had begun to recede when darkness came, and one and all feverishly made preparations for disembarking. At about noon the next day, September 2, part of the convoy, including the Monticello, slowly turned and headed for the harbor of Oran. After an interminable two hours, she had gently nosed her way into a berth, and 7,000 eager beavers impatiently stamped the deck awaiting orders to unload. At some time near four o'clock, the long procession began. Terra firma felt pretty good to almost everyone, even in Africa. A transportation unit loaded the men up almost immediately and transferred them to Staging Area 2, near Fleurus. At that time the area consisted of a large, bare field with several long rows of pyramidal tents flapping in the breeze. At one end of the area designated to the 173rd, there was a round canvas water tank about six feet high and ten feet in diameter, of the type used by Army Engineers at water points. This was to be the first taste of a water supply which was really limited.

The ride through Oran, which at first glance was quite a picturesque city, was made doubly interesting by the presence of pretty French girls on the streets, palm trees here and there, and the conglomeration of soldier and sailor uniforms from many different nations. As the trucks, which were loaded with 30 standing soldiers, passed the outskirts of the town, Arabs began to make their appearance. They were dressed generally in robes of dirty white, always a head covering, and rarely shoes. Tiny donkeys were everywhere, carrying terrific loads, to which the attendant jay-rab invariably added his weight and kept the little beast moving by a constant tattoo of his heels in the donkey's flanks.

By eight o'clock the bulk of the battalion had arrived at the designated camp, tents had been assigned, and blankets were being laid out on the ground for a little, well-earned rest. Unbelievable as it may seem, now for the first time the Bn. was issued the famous "C" ration, and meals became a succession of meat and vegetable stew, meat and beans, and meat and vegetable hash. After two days, the menu had become discouragingly monotonous, and there were those who tasted daintily of meat and beans once a day and let it go at that. The water situation was like-wise. Whenever it came from, it had been so heavily doctored to purify it, that it was hardly drinkable. The days soon became so hot, however, that it even tasted good on occasion.

Little by little equipment drifted in on the one truck, 3/4 ton, that had been allotted for the purpose, and after a few days stoves arrived and the kitchens were able to set up and start heating the rations. Shortly afterwards "B" rations arrived, and everyone began eating three meals a day again. Gradually the camp developed until finally there were fairly complete facilities for mess, quarters, transport, and the initiation of a training program. This all-important training program was then begun and is of sufficient interest to occupy a chapter of our History.

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTALION SPITS AND POLISHES

An order from Hqs. NATOUSA, dated August 27, 1943, assigned the Bn. to 5th Army upon its arrival in the theatre. A further assignment found the unit with 18th F.A. Brigade, commanded by Brigadier General Vincent Meyer, who had made the Atlantic crossing on the same boat. Along with the 173rd were placed the 985th F.A. Bn. the 932nd and the 936th, the last three being Howitzer Bns.. Very soon after assignment, all battery C.O.'s and staffs took a run down to the 5th Army training area, near Chanzy, with Gen. Meyer. They passed through Sidi-Bel-Abbes, seat of the French Foreign Legion, and had a look through the trophy rooms, and then continued south and reconnoitred a wild empty wasteland south of Bedeaux for a possible Artillery firing range and maneuver area.

The north coast of Africa at this point is broken up by a low range known as the Atlas Mountains. Along the coast the roads are fairly good, and there, as well as in the mountains, the little donkeys are the backbone of the transport system. Farther south, however, after leaving the mountains and approaching the borders of the great Sahara Desert, one begins to see the solemn looking camels more and more. It was towards this region that the general intended his brigade should train.

The trucks were beginning to arrive along with numerous crates of new equipment, as well as the ones that had been packed at Camp Polk or Camp Kilmer. The sections took over their boxes as they came in and checked over the equipment, cleaning it and readying it for battle use. As the equipment piled in, wooden kitchens with screened sides were built and the three firing batteries operated their kitchens. Service and Headquarters split up among them for chow. Holes were blown in the rock ground by Italian prisoners, and latrines were built. The batteries hauled rock for paths and walks in their streets, and a uniform layout for beds and everyday equipment was adopted.

A training schedule including a large amount of physical hardening was put into operation, and many hours were put in climbing through the deep, steel walled rock quarries with ropes, and roaming up and down the hills through the rocks and thorn-studded bushes. The only shade was an occasional fig or olive grove, and it wasn't long before everyone was as fit as the Foreign Legion. What extra weight wasn't worked off, melted off.

General Meyer came around on Saturdays for formal inspections. These inspections were among the stiffest the men had ever experienced, and though everyone sang the blues at this, that, and the other thing, the results showed in improved dress, bearing and military snap.

Along with the work there was play, of course. Swimming in the Mediterranean at Canastel, where the water was like crystal and the plant-covered rocks and sea anemones ten feet down appeared to be just below the surface, was a favorite afternoon pastime. Daily trips were made to Oran, and the neophytes tried out their French phrase books and spent the big francs that they had been given in exchange for their American bills. They stood in line for beer at Joe's Place, and for ice cream at the Red Cross Club.

There were Sunday trips to Side-bel-Abbes, and the ragged little Arabs on the street were ready to lead a soldier from anything from A to ZZ. Many families had made restaurants of their houses, and these brown urchins regaled the hungry sightseers with, "Hey, Joe, you like ecks, bisteck?" Then they would lead the customer down some little side-street, up two flights of stairs and into a parlor full of chairs and tables and feeding G.I.'s. The meals weren't bad, though the tariff was usually a touch high.

In the meantime those still in camp were strolling over to Fleurus and discovering that cigarettes, soap and candy went a lot farther than money if they wanted a helmet full of grapes or a couple of spotted watermelons. And everyone, whether in camp or out, was making the acquaintance of vin rouge, vin blanc and cognac, the three staples among a bewildering array of wines and fancy liquors. Some met the new inebriators gaily and others, alas, sadly, but the ability of the American soldier to adapt himself to new things can hardly be overrated, and this crew was no exception.

Before the plans for the firing range and the maneuvers could be put into effect, orders began to arrive concerning boat loading plans, overland movements, and other signs of imminent movement. As the information became definite, preparations began for an overland march leaving "B" Battery behind to wait for some Mack trucks and join the Bn. later on. The march was to be made from Oran to Bizerte and was planned to consume five days. Every stop was carefully scheduled in advance, and was definitely the highlight of the time spent in Africa.

At five o'clock in the morning the camp stirred up and disappeared into the trucks, and, leaving the broken-hearted B Battery behind, the remainder of the Bn. took off for the I.P. as the first gray streaks of dawn lit the sky. It was the first of five wild days, each more entertaining than the last - a saga of Arabian egg merchants, adolescent hoochie-koochies, and Ali Baba's forty thieves, to say nothing of the ever-present zig-zig artists.

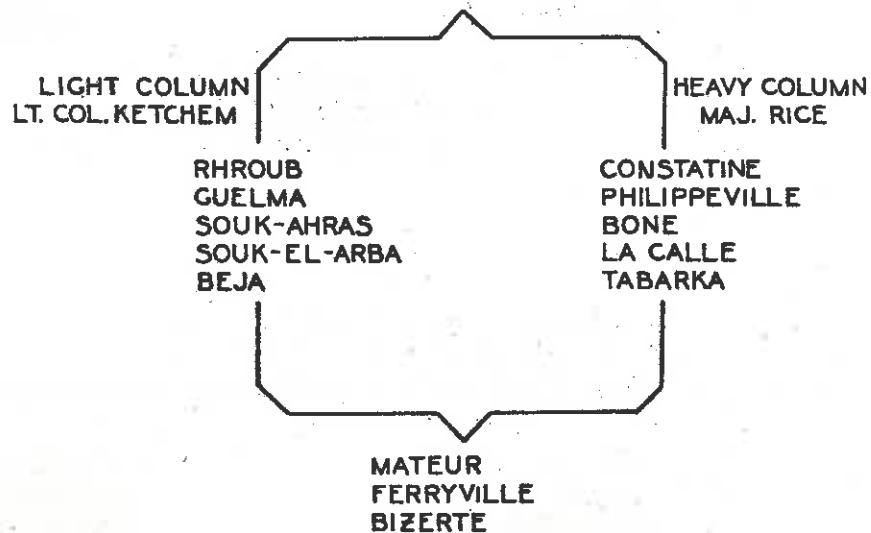
The first night was spent at Orleansville, and the pup tents were lined up in a great wide field rimmed on three sides by low, tree covered hills and ridges. It was a regular stopping place for convoys traveling east and the colonel was warned by M.P.'s that Arabs lurked in the hills during the afternoon, casing the camp and then infiltrated at dark to see what they could pick up. The story said that two or three had recently been shot by guards. So naturally there was a very alert and determined guard posted, and everyone slept on his rifle or pistol in readiness for instant action. But the only trouble encountered was in trying to keep them away from the kitchen the next morning, and more than one took a G.I. boot in the rear to speed him on his way.

The ubiquitous shoe-shine boy was still being encountered. For sheer persistence, these little enterprisers are without a peer. First the sales talk, "Joe, shoe-shine - 'Merican polish!", accompanied by a great clacking and chattering of brushes and other equipment. If the intended victim was not immediately acquiescent, the whipper-snapper then descended on the shoes with his brush and said he'd just "Brush-up; you no like, no pay. O.K., Joe?" and began to brush madly. If the prospect didn't fall for this routine, he was then approached on the possibility of selling a little "American polish". Eventually the conversation led around to the subject of a shine again, and if the customer was not broken down by this time, our salesman usually threw up his hands, and with a loud and disgusted "Blow it out your Barracks Bag" or some other similar but less printable phrase, betook himself off in search of someone with either a more amiable or a dustier pair of shoes.

Early in the morning, after shagging the Arab swarms, the men broke camp and set out for another day on the road. During the time spent in the winding mountainous roads, where the convoy often crept at a snail's pace for short periods, there was many a deal made over a moving running-board, the vendor running alongside with his two eggs or onions or fruit or whatever he had to sell. Prices varied - they were high in francs, but low in merchandise. A few cigarettes or a candy bar went at least five times as far as its equivalent in cash. So, at eventide, the long line of trucks pulled into a long shady side-road near L'Arba, complete with grapes, pomegranates, onions, black bread, apricots, vin rouge, imitation cognac, and fresh eggs, most of it purchased on the run.

THE BN. ROUTE OF MARCH FROM
ORAN TO BIZERTE

ORAN FLEURUS
ARZEW
MOSTAGANEM
TENES
ZERALDA
BLIDA
L-ARBA
FONDOUC
ST. ON DE MAILLOT
MANSOURA-DES-BIBANS
SETIE
ST. ARNAUD



The particular side road in this case left the main road, ran parallel for a time, and after a few miles rejoined it. There were shady trees lining it and orchards to one side. On the other side ran a swift, deep canal, a part of the irrigation system for the country. The men pitched tents along the road, in the orchard, or just slept in the trucks. There was a light rain during the night, but on the whole it was comfortably spent. It is a well known fact that a day of riding an army truck is pretty conducive to slumber when night falls.

At 0715 the next morning, October 6, the trek continued on its way through Beni Mansour to Setif. In this region in particular, it appeared that all Arab girls were trained for the harem, beginning at an early age. Certain it was that the 173rd was given many a revealing insight into the nature of young Arab womanhood. The general routine ran about as follows: a group of children would be gathered in a cluster at some point along the road, all probably chanting some sing-song Arab tune, clapping hands and stamping. As the vehicles approached, a couple of little girls would step out, lift up their tattered skirts and wiggle. Sally Rand never did more for her customers than these scrawney little girls. They were without even a G-string, and Carmen Miranda never squirmed with more abandon.

And so the long day passed, and the battalion came to a great plain near Setif, where there were also some British units passing the night. A heavy rain made this night uncomfortable and cold, and here it was that the British mobile canteen was discovered, with its abundance of good chocolate bars. At that time everyone was starving for chocolate, or candy of any kind for that matter, and when the caravan left Setif in the morning there was a great munching and crunching of good, English chocolate and the usual, "Why doesn't the American Army do something like that?"

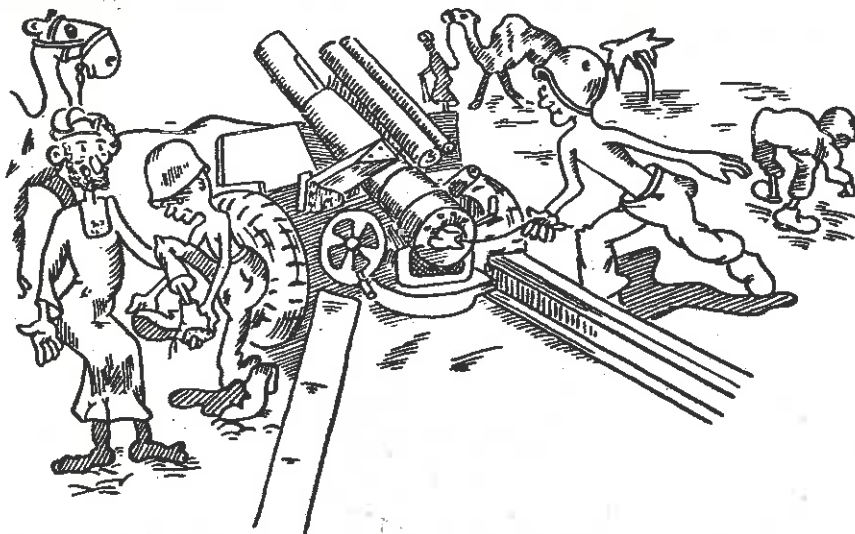
The noon halt on October 7 was made at Ain Bila, and when the time came to hit the road after lunch, the big trucks hauling the guns took a northern route and were separated from the rest of the column for two days and one night. They stayed the night at Phillipeville, passing through Constantine, and the next day made the run through Bone down to Mateur by late evening to join the main column again. The only untoward adventure occurred just out of Phillipeville, where "C" Battery prime mower, in order to avoid smashing up a horse and cart, took to a ditch and knocked over a cement high-tension tower, throwing out a few sparks and causing no end of trouble for the public utilities of Algeria. During this time the column subsisted almost entirely on "B" rations coaxed from Military Hospitals. The procuring officer was Texas-born Lt. Edgar H. Jacobs, whose sob stories were heard in every hospital mess from Ain Mila to Mateur. And these moochers joined the remainder of the Bn. fully loaded with all sorts of rations.

In the meantime, the main convoy had weathered the night at Souk Ahras and run on into Mateur through Beja. This particular section, around Beja and Mateur, had been the scene of some great tank battles, and the untried warriors were thrilled to see many evidences of battle still littering the ground. Many half-burnt and blown-up vehicles and tanks were laying in the fields along the roads and afforded a first glimpse of what was ahead.

The two columns, reunited, passed the night at Mateur, and at about 1130 on October 9, they arrived at the Bivouac area a couple of miles outside of Bizerte. A big olive orchard, shady and fairly well drained, sprang up into a fullgrown and operating military camp in the course of an hour or so and chow was served. The site was in the hills south of Bizerte and overlooked the lake and the harbor, with the usual barrage balloons and ack-ack emplacements.

Bizerte itself was an awe-inspiring sight. It had been bombed very completely both by the Allies and the Germans and barely a building was standing. The civilians had all fled to Ferryville and other nearby coastal

towns, with the exception of a few hardy individuals inhabiting the outskirts' on the inland side.



THE BATTALION SETTLED DOWN TO SOME SERIOUS TRAINING

The Bn. soon settled down to some very serious training. A large amount of ammunition was authorized, and the guns thundered regularly as the crews smoothed out their teamwork and the forward observers and battery commanders practiced putting them "on the target". The impact area was a huge mountainside with a small, shallow lake just in front of it and an air field in back of it. The P-40's from the field made a habit of circling the mountain closely and zooming the lake. Finally one day a venturesome airplane driver zoomed too low and hit the water. Most of the plane, as far as the 173rd observers found out, and the pilot too, burned up in the lake. The rather ridiculous suspicion that a shell fired by one of the guns might have caused the plane to fall, coupled with a much less ridiculous supposition that they might have been responsible for a few craters which appeared in the runways behind the mountain, caused the target to be reduced considerably by the trembling authorities, but the practice went on, nevertheless, and was marred further by nothing more than a premature burst or two. One of these occurred a short distance from an infantry unit out for a walk, and by slightly wounding two and greatly scaring two hundred, assured a cleared road thereafter during service practice.

One of the 155 MM Howitzer Bns. in the group (the 933rd experienced a very tragic accident when one of their guns was blown apart by a shell which detonated without ever leaving the barrel. The gun was completely demolished and most of the crew were either killed or wounded. A very disheartening occurrence on the eve of combat. The one thing an artilleryman must have is confidence in his weapon.

During this period, the anti-tank section in Hqs. Battery also practiced with its 37 MM A.T. guns. A moving target was rigged up by towing a square of canvas between two G.M.C. winches, and S/Sgt. James Holehouse procured practically unlimited quantities of ammunition of all types from the salvage yards around Bizerte. Soon these practice sessions became regular carnivals, with grenades, rockets, submachine guns, pistols and the AT guns all blazing at once.

The salvage yards became almost another quartermaster Corps for the 173rd. Men began blossoming out with all sorts of little stoves, handmade from pieces picked up there, improvised cots, sleeping bags sewn from salvage shelter halves, and countless other little conveniences. "C" Battery even picked up a German light plant, which they later gave to Bn. Hqs., and which served nobly for many months in the line.

We cannot allow the battalion to depart from Bizerte without mention of the African mud. In November the rainy season began, and it was discovered that that particular section of North Africa produced two kinds of mud, one of them was the hard clay type which was quite hard and so slippery that even the slightest grade was impossible to walk on with ordinary shoes. Truck wheels spun like tops, and if the road slanted from one side to the other, vehicles simply slid sideways as they rolled forward. The other kind was loose but adhesive and was found in most of the fields. The feet sank in about six or eight inches and after half a dozen steps each foot was carrying about twenty pounds of mud that wouldn't shake off. It had to be scraped.

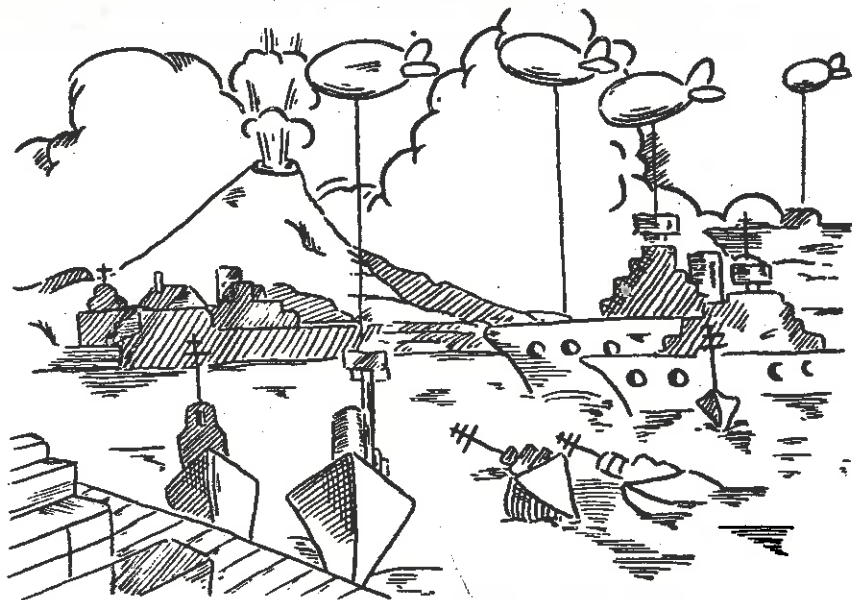
The rain came pretty regularly and was not allowed to hinder our training, so it displeased no one when the usual orders for loading plans and weight lists, etc, began to come down, signifying an imminent boat trip. The stay at Bizerte was broken up somewhat by trips to Carthage and Tunis, so that it was not all hard work. Tunis, almost everyone agreed, was nicer than Oran, and of course, Carthage was interesting mainly from a historical standpoint. There were many interesting old ruins, with many persistent little urchins trying to sell many old coins which were offered in various sizes, colors and states of corrosion and for which their vendors claim various degrees of antiquity, ranging from B.C. to Julius Caesar. Prices ranged from a cigarette or piece of candy up to five hundred francs, equal in value at that time to ten dollars. Few, indeed, returned from Carthage without at least one "old Roman" coin.

Finally on the 23rd of November, 1943, the 173rd loaded up and drove to Karouba Docks a few miles west of Bizerte. After a short wait the men were loaded on an L.C.I. (Landing Craft, Infantry), #233, and carried out to the Liberty Ship Thaddeus Kosciuszko, for transport to Italy. The vehicles were loaded on another ship which came on at a later date.

This boat, which had no cargo in the holds, was loaded with about a thousand soldiers. They simply spread their blankets on the wooden floors of the holds and slept without benefit of beds or cots. There was one tiny kitchen which had been designed to cook for probably 100 people at most. As a result of this condition there was a steady stream of men going down to the kitchen on one side of the ship and coming back up on the other with whatever the cook had to offer. This went on all day. By the time the last man had received his breakfast, the first man was ready for dinner, and so it went.

About 200 of the men were British, which did not help the ration situation a bit. The second day out (November 24) was Thanksgiving Day, and quite aside from the fact that there was spam and K-ration biscuits and sliced pineapple for Thanksgiving dinner, the situation was further enhanced by a fairly high wind, which not only blew the very pineapple from the fork, but it rocked the boat until half the poor voyagers couldn't have swallowed it anyway.

And so, the day following, with the wind still whistling through the rigging like a siren, the Thaddeus hove in sight of the far-famed Isle of Capri, just off the southern tip of Naples Bay. After sailing between the island and the mainland an Italian pilot was picked up, and with his aid the ship picked its way among the sunken hulls and twisted carcasses which grew in the harbor waters like trees in a forest.



NAPLES BAY

Hardly had the ship been made fast to the wharf when the hoarse scream of an air raid siren split the air, and everyone was ordered below. Thus the new arrivals made an early acquaintance with "Photo Joe", who came over often to photograph the harbor and keep tab on new arrivals and departures and advise his boys as to the most profitable evenings for raids. The first soldier off the ship was the one who was shoved over an open trap by the press of the crowd in the first hold and who fell about twenty feet into the second. Needless to say, he was not only the first one off, but he got a ride besides. He was, fortunately, not from the 173rd, and it was later passed around that he was not seriously hurt. Without undue delay, the remainder of the troops followed him off and the Bn. was loaded on trucks which promptly whisked the men off to the Collegio Costanza Ciano at Bagnoli, which is a small southern suburb of Naples.

The men were assigned quarters in one of the huge school buildings, and the kitchens were set up in the back. The place had been very obviously occupied by the Germans, as it was cleverly paint-camouflaged, and there were murals of German soldiers all over the walls. This business of the murals was to become quite commonplace. It seemed that almost every German unit had its artist, who carried a little charcoal with him and worked on any clear expanse of wall he could find. Anything from pornography to battle to lettered German mottoes might be the theme. But they were usually well done for amateurs.

The college consisted of several very large buildings with most of the windows out, but with three stories of large, tile floor rooms. There were no utilities, of course, the light was strictly candle power, and the water poured from the container, liquid, five-gallon, but it was home after months of boats and tents.

Photo Joe had apparently impressed the Home Office with their arrival that day, for Jerry staged a big air raid that very evening after dark. This was the first real raid anyone in the outfit had experienced, and it was at least exciting. The Bn. had arrived only an hour or two before the raid, and no instructions on air raids had been issued, so that when the men saw the first streams of little red dots shooting into the sky where the 40 MM ack-ack was starting to fire, they gathered at the windows to watch. All candles and lights were immediately extinguished, of course, and all the other inhabitants of the building were groping through the darkness in search of the exit so that they could go to the air raid shelter. There was a very large and well reinforced cement shelter in the form of a long tunnel, which was located a short distance from the school, but after the show was over, it developed that most of the Bn. had stood around outside watching, and "A" Battery had not even left the building, but had watched the whole thing through the windows. It was a rather cloudy evening, and the planes were not visible, though powerful searchlights swung beams through the sky in every direction. The plane noise, however, was very audible right overhead for a time, and adding that to the crackle of the countless 40's and the booming of a few 90 MM's that opened up, a pretty terrifying din was produced, along with the undeniably impressive sight of the lights, the 40 MM tracers, the flashes of exploding shells, and the red aura cast over the north side of the bay by old Vesuvius who looked like the lighted end of a giant cigar glowing in the darkness.

Everything was quiet and calm the next morning, however, and the Bn. settled down to a mild training program for the next couple of weeks. The local Italians were present in force and bottles of vino, English walnuts and all kinds of fruit were being sold apparently by every male citizen of Naples old enough to walk. The guards around the College had to be continuously vigilant to keep the place from having more salesmen than soldiers in it.

Shortages of food had caused the people to become completely shameless, and little children were sent out with all kinds of receptacles to catch any garbage that a G.I. might have left on his plate and was intending to throw into the garbage can. So every time anyone went to scrape out his mess kit, there was a howling band of hungry natives all holding out their pots and cans to catch the scrapings.

Through the efforts of Fred (Doc) Pease, the Bn. surgeon, who had studied at the University of Rome for several years and spoke fluent Italian, order was brought out of chaos and the applicants were lined up and dealt with in turn. This first glimpse was rather pitiful, but everyone was accustomed to it after a few months, because it was always the same story everywhere war had passed or was in session.

During this period the men were allowed trips into Naples and out to Vesuvius and Pompeii. At this time Vesuvius was very impressive. A sharp cone rising above the bay with a couple of little towns on its steep sides and a continuous plume of thick white smoke rising from the crater at the summit and stringing out with the wind currents. Pompeii, of course, was doubly interesting because the guides were all so careful to emphasize the naughty things about the ancient town, which must have been pretty wide open in its day.

The modern town had a beautiful cathedral. It was very large and was the forerunner of many other large and ornate churches that were to be "liberated" later on. The inside from floor to ceiling was a mass of gold

trim oil painting and marble statuary, and in its gaudy richness was something truly Renaissance Italian. The habit has carried over, and the Italians still like their churches rich-looking and ostentatious.

Naples itself, one of the largest cities in Italy, and certainly the largest port, was not dressed in her best to greet the uniformed tourists. All the harbor facilities had been carefully destroyed, and most of the buildings facing on the harbor had been seriously damaged by bombing raids. Everyone was too busy trying to scrounge food for anything normal like cleaning up to take place, so most of the rubble remained, except where the Army or Navy had cleared thoroughfares. The big, new, modern Post Office had been time-bombed and was pretty well gutted, with a little damage to buildings around it.

The children were, as always, filthy, and all smoked cigarettes, from five years old on up. There was as usual a big shoe-shine and pandering business flourishing through the initiative of these ragged little mud-balls, and they picked up American slang phrases even faster than the G.I.'s learned to say "Buona sers, Signorina, come sta" and "Grazie" and "Prego".

The architecture was substantially different from that in America. Everything was of stone, some modern, some middling with all sorts of statues and other fruity decorations, and some very ancient and castle-like with battlements and drawbridge entrances. It was quite interesting, and in places attractive.

Back in the Battalion preparations for entry into combat were going forward. Naturally, the Bn. had been assigned to the Fifth Army and, being heavy artillery, were classed as Army troops and eligible to wear the 5th Army patch. Instructions, specific ones, pertaining to combat operations came in, and a few officers went forward and stayed overnight with the 985th Bn. which had sailed to Naples directly from Oran and thus won the race into battle by a couple of weeks. Much valuable information on what to expect was brought back.

CHAPTER V

THE BATTALION ENTER BATTLE

On December 11 Col. Ketcham, the B.C.'s and the S-2 all went forward on reconnaissance for a bivouac area near the front. They reported in to the 13th F.A. Brigade, commanded by Maj. Gen. John A. Crane and were assigned a general area to reconnoitre. A place along the bank of the Voltorno River near the little town of Roccaravindola was chosen, and the Bn. moved out of Bagnoli at about 1200 hours, 13 December, 1943, to this area, arriving in the evening in the rain, and setting up camp to await further developments. These developments were not long in coming. The next morning Brigade ordered them to go into position right where they were, and by 0815 the guns were ready to fire. The 173rd F.A. Bn. initiated its long period of effective combat service at 1617 hours on that day with a registration by "A" Battery on a point near the town of Cardito. The mission was observed by Lt. McClary from the air O.P.

A battery and platoon of the 437th AAA Bn. was attached for additional protection from air attack. It consisted of twelve 40 MM Bofors Ack-Ack guns and sundry 50 Cal. machine gun clusters mounted on half-tracks. This protection was distributed equally among the batteries and gave a necessary sense of security to about 750 men who were expecting All Hell to break loose any minute, now that they were at the front.

The first men to have trouble with the enemy were Lt. Charles Herbison and Lt. Franklin W. Meeker, who were up in one of the Bn. observation planes and had three holes put through the cabin by German small arms. As Captain Hinkley said in his publication "Hot Oil" for that day, "Nothing was wounded but their pride", and this was assuaged by the presentation of the Bn. D.L.M. or Distinguished Luck Medal.

The Bn. fired some preparation missions and did quite a bit of harassing and interdiction work in the next few days as the cannoners, and everyone else for that matter, settled down to do a job of work and get orderly routine set up. There was a considerable amount of mud, mostly in the roads, and of the thin, soupy type. It was very deep and made very difficult going on foot as well as in a vehicle, because it completely hid the irregularities in the road, which were many.

Ground OP's were set up on Mont Alto and La Falconara and a schedule was arranged which rotated the observer every 24 hours, but it already seemed obvious that most of the observed firing would be conducted from airplanes, because of the long range of the guns. The OP's were maintained mostly for information of the enemy, since they overlooked the lines and were able to observe some sectors of enemy held territory. During the first couple of days a bomber passed overhead and released a big white cloud of leaflets, which proved to be a German news sheet called "Front-post", which was put out by America's P.W.B. (Psychological Warfare Board) and gave Jerry a chance to get some accurate news, not only of his war, but in the rest of the world.

On the 15th of December, the rations were increased by one package of cigarettes, one stick of gum, and a roll of fruit drops per man per day. This continued the entire time the Bn. was in the lines, and included periodical shots of tooth paste, tooth brushes, shaving cream, razor blades, soap, etc.

The Bn. was inspected during this period by various officers from Brigade and Group, and the inspectors declared themselves quite satisfied. So that basic training helped after all! Of course they arrived after Pvt. Lawrence Murphy of "C" Battery had changed his pants. Pvt. Murphy's trousers were the only casualties, resulting from a premature burst by one of "C" Battery's guns. In view of the fact that Pvt. Murphy was in them at the time and stepped out of them unscratched, he became the third proud wearer of the D.L.M.

Another milestone in the development of long range artillery was passed when one of the guns registered at 21,000 yards with a P-51 pilot as observer. These long range "P-51" or "Spitfire shoots" became quite common later on and proved very effective. Probably the 173rd was not the first to fire this type of mission, but the great number of them that were fired certainly provided information which aided in its further development.

On the morning of December 17, the Battery Commanders and Major Rice went forward on reconnaissance. A flat table-like plateau beside the town of Rocchetta was the area assigned and fairly good positions were located. During the next couple of days the positions were prepared and men were left to guard them, as there were quite a few French Goums around and other units were also on the lookout for positions on the plateau and the 36th Engineer Regt. made a road over which the Bn. could move to their positions. For two days following this the Bn. was kept in

suspense on the move. One minute it was imminent and the next minute it would probably not take place till the guns could be moved even farther forward. More rain came on the 20th, which certainly didn't help the mud problem, but the mail problem was solved on the 21st, when about a hundred bags came in, containing mostly Christmas packages.

It was beginning to look as if the Bn. would stay put. German counterattacks were vigorous and frequent, and on the morning of the 22nd higher Hqs. said there would probably be no move in the near future.

At noon the same day orders were suddenly received to get to the new positions as soon as possible. During the eight days spent in the first position "A" Battery had fired 330 rounds, "B" Battery 330 rounds, and "C" 329 rounds, a total of 989 for the Bn. a pretty fair christening. VI Corps had attached the 13th F.A. Brig. to the 2nd Moroccan Infantry Div. for the coming drive, and it was desired that the guns of the 173rd be able to fire on Atina, a fair-sized town well inside German territory, and which was considered to be an important communications and supply hub for the enemy in that sector. For that reason it was necessary to move to the Rocchetta plateau, where the guns would be actually in front of the French light artillery, and, moreover, practically astride the boundary between the British Eighth and the American Fifth Armies. Army boundaries are generally considered weak chinks in the defensive armor. Just how weak it was came as a shock later on.

And so with more rain coming down, the big guns moved out through the rivers of mud and on up to Rocchetta. The difficulties which were overcome during the occupation of this position would fill an entire chapter. The positions were located behind a tall, steep hill of solid rock extending for about 3/4 of a mile in an east-west direction. Most of the approaches were cart trails between cultivated fields. Some ramps had been built of dirt and rocks to aid certain guns to get into place. By the time the guns arrived, however, these ramps and cart trails looked like small editions of the Mississippi River, and the lead guns for each battery had not run 50 feet off solid road till they were bogged down over the hubs. "B" Battery's road gave way under one side of a run as it rounded a curve, and it turned over into a deep ditch, dragging the truck with it. Their second gun on an alternate route was saved from the same fate by some fast staking on the part of its crew, and it had to be left in place to wait for help. "A" and "C" managed to occupy their chosen positions after hours and hours of constant back-breaking work with shovels, winches, blocks, chains, extra trucks, and the Bn. wrecker, and a borrowed tractor. It was done simply by putting everything and everybody on one gun till it was in, and then turning to the next one. It was late in the evening of the 24th that the last guns of "A" and "C" were in and for two days and two nights, some of the noncoms not sleeping at all during this time. A new position was chosen for "B" Battery, and they were finally in position on the 26th.

Hqs. was in a building which had been part of a state fish hatchery. Beside the building were several cement pools, and from the base of the hill at this point ran a big spring, the headwaters of the Voltumo River. The civilians living in the building were very glad to have Americans there because the Moroccans were not very gentle in their treatment of the Italians, and they kept away from American installations.

Turkeys formed part of the Christmas Day ration, but they had arrived frozen so hard that it took till the 26th to thaw them out, and so the big dinner was a day late, but definitely none the worse for that. Due to the hundreds of packages from home, everyone had a pretty Merry Christmas in spite of the work, the mud, the rain, and the extreme state of fatigue.

The rain finally stopped on the 26th, and it turned a little colder. Mud was everywhere, and there was no dry spot anywhere on the plateau. About 50 per cent of the men had received overshoes, which no one had

been allowed to carry overseas with him, so there were plenty of cold, wet feet. A few of the little gasoline stoves had been made available and were being used on OP's and for midnight slugs of coffee by cannoneers who had night missions to fire. Fifth Army patches arrived, and everyone soon blossomed out with the old A-5 on his sleeve.

On the 28th a registration was obtained with a P-51, and the rounds began to pour into Atina and environs. The Germans seemed to be backing up and the volume of fire laid on Atina and its roads by the twelve guns of the 173rd undoubtedly hampered enemy operations considerably. These missions were all supercharge, at a range of 22,000 to 24,000 yards. In the meantime, a few shells had whistled into the plateau from the other side, but none too close, and everyone felt fairly secure behind the big rock and with sandbags built up around everything.

This sense of security was completely smashed when, on the night of December 30, a round of German artillery burst about five yards from "A" Battery's No. 3 piece. The crew was firing the gun and did not hear the round coming. Three men lost their lives, and several were wounded.

The next day was cold and rain turned to snow. And then some time during the night a terrific blizzard arose. All the tents on the higher level were blown down, and by morning all the pup tents had blown away and were buried by the snow, including all sorts of equipment and clothing. The men had gathered in some nearby buildings, and in the pyramidal tents which had been re-erected and braced. Snow was everywhere, and the wind was blowing so hard that one could lean on it. The two airplanes, which had been anchored by stakes in the ground in a nearby field, were both casualties of the storm. The one which was held by her anchors had not been strong enough to withstand the gale, and the wings were buckled and drooping, bent right back and down. The other had been torn free of the ground, and thrown on her back into an orchard about 100 yards distant. She was pretty badly smashed.

In one battery at least the cooks were not able to keep the stoves going because of the wind, and the turkey dinner planned for January 1, 1944, had to be postponed until the next day. Lt. Winston R. Breck, "C" Battery's observer and his party were brought down off their OP in a nearly frozen condition by Bush of "C" Battery. Bush was awarded the soldiers medal for dragging Lt. Breck off of Minardo Ridge in a blizzard. The OP at Scapoli was sheltered in a building and the men stayed on.

During the next few days, while the snow became a slushy mud under the noon sun, the Bn. was checked over by enemy aircraft a couple of times, and received intermittent enemy fire, some high bursts and some on the ground. A civilian near "B" Battery was injured by one of them. Lt. Col. McLaughlin of 17th F.A. Group, inspected the Bn. positions and declared them satisfactory. The War Department sent the approved Bn. insignia with which every member of the organization is certainly familiar by now.

On the fifth day of January the British artillery Hqs. at Cerro was contacted by the S-2, and it was discovered that they did not consider themselves responsible for the town of Castel San Vincenzo. Neither did the French, who were on the right flank of the Fifth Army. Thus an unprotected gap in the line, with no infantry out front, was being filled by nothing but the 173rd F.A. Bn. This alarming situation was brought to the attention of the two forces concerned, and after a few parleys over the tea cups in Castel San Vincenzo the French decided to put Goum patrols in the area at night, and the British took Lt. Breck in with them in their Artillery OP. The 173rd taking no chances, put four 37MM anti-tank guns and three 50 Cal. machine guns on its right flank, and maintained a continuous and heavy guard 24 hours a day. Only one opportunity arose to fire, and Hqs. rough and ready A.T. section kept a French patrol pinned

to the snow for a full half-hour one night before everyone finally discovered who everyone else was.

Enemy shelling became so frequent that it was tough getting the men out of their holes even for Pay Day. Shells kept dropping in all around the position and on January 9 two "C" Battery men were wounded, Cpl. Fred Krause and Pfc. Gerald Mills. Pfc. Mills subsequently died of these wounds. The guns had been putting out regularly during this time and Atina was still catching it hot and heavy. But it was no bed of roses. Jerry knew where our guns were and where they were firing and he fired back every time he could while the boys were still out of their holes. But through the wet cold days and nights everyone kept on doing his job, no matter how tough it was, and the Bn. putting out a job which was to earn it an unshakeable reputation, began to take on a beginning coat of Battle Seasoning.

Col. Henry D. Jay, commanding 36th F.A. Group, to which the 173rd was transferred on January 12, came over to look around and get acquainted. The 36th originally was a regiment of Long Toms which fought through Africa and was later broken down into battalions. So Col. Jay knew much on the heavy artillery subject, and during the next few months he was to prove a hard and exacting master, but also a wise one. And later on when Col. Jay became II Corps Artillery Commander and left the 36th Group, the 173rd had become a smooth, well-functioning artillery machine, of which all from Colonel Jay on down were justly proud.

On January 14 positions were reconnoitered in the Cardito area. It was still very hot up there, however, and an immediate move did not seem to be contemplated. On the 17th a reconnaissance was made around Scapoli, and positions were found in a narrow, longitudinal valley near Coll' Alto. The shape of the valley and the direction of fire necessitated putting the three gun batteries practically in line, one behind the other. There was already a 155 howitzer position in the valley, manned by some dark-skinned French colonial troops. Higher Hqs. felt that the range was needed, however, so the Bn. displaced on the afternoon of January 19 and occupied the new positions at about 2115 hours.

The twenty-eight days spent at Rocchetta were rich in experience and really contributory to the French drive which had died and then relaunched itself on the morning of January 12. The French proper, as well as their African colonials, were very brave and savage fighters.

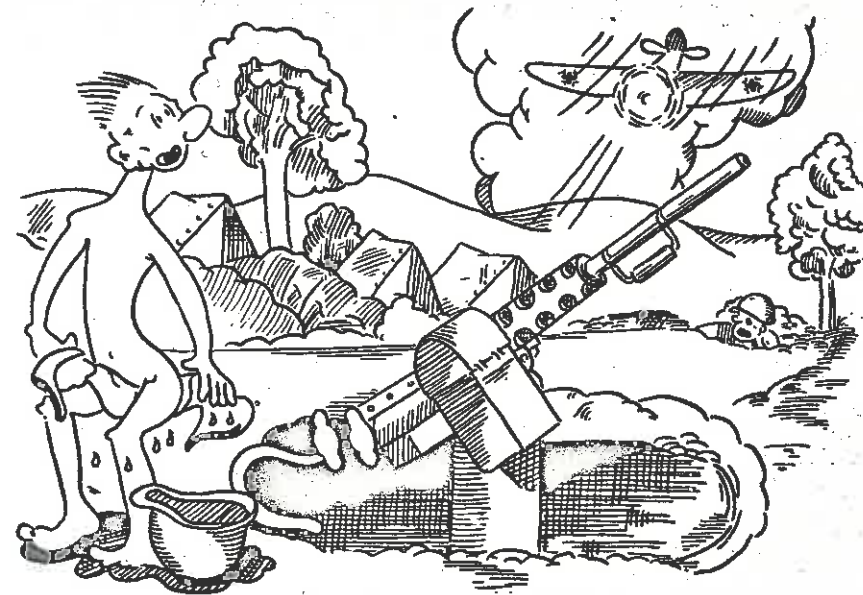
Lt. Herbison and Lt. Meeker had been played with by a couple of Messerschmitts, but managed to escape unscathed. A couple of men had broken their legs in truck accidents, and Pfc. Duncan stepped out of Capt. Edward A. Hartl's second story C.P., forgetting that there were no stairs, and also broke a leg. The Battalion had fired a total of 5,821 rounds -- 1884 for "A" Battery, 1778 for "B" and 2159 for "C", and had been slowed down in its rate of fire to a one round per gun per minute maximum by order so that the tubes would not wear excessively.

The Battalion settled down in the long, elliptical bowl next to Coll' Alto and prepared to spend the remainder of the winter. The day after the positions at Rocchetta were vacated, they were shelled very heavily by the Germans. Apparently the enemy had maneuvered some artillery into position where they could drop massed fire on the gun positions so it was another of those times when, for no reason at all, the 173rd out-guessed a lot of trouble.

On the morning of January 20 all of the batteries were in firing position, and a successful registration was completed. During the next few days the French attack, which had been going fairly strong, finally began to waver, and German counterattacks became more frequent and more powerful. Monte Croce was contested and retaken by the Allies and the enemy two or three times, and the line finally stabilized itself about the 25th. That period saw considerable activity on the part of the Battalion

and from 1800 hours January 22 to 1800 hours January 23 the Battalion fired a new daily record of 692 rounds. From 1800 hours January 24 to 1800 hours January 25, the guns fired 738 rounds.

Several enemy ack ack batteries were located by our air O.P.'s and, any time that the Allied bombers were active, these ack ack batteries automatically caught a few battery concentrations to keep them from worrying about the planes. An OP was set up on San Pietro with Lt. Fagan, and it was the first OP from which it was possible to actually observe the fire and see the targets which were distant enough to be classed at 155 rifle missions. By this time the idea of changing OP personnel every 24 hours had been abandoned, and the observers usually stayed about a week at a time. At that particular season of the year the haze was very thick and lasted practically all the daylight hours of the average day, and for this reason it was very difficult for the observer to do much observing, even though he had such a fine site.



ANTI AIRCRAFT GUN POSITION

On the 25th of January, six Spitfires, which were variously reported as having German and British markings on the wings, did a few fancy dives and finally peeled off and strafed the road, passing over Service Battery's area in so doing. One pyramidal tent, one pup tent, and two G.M.C. trucks were hit, but not seriously damaged, and none of Service Battery's men was injured, but two Frenchmen in a jeep were killed in the road as they went past. Fox holes increased in depth three or four feet in the next twelve hours.

From the night of January 26 to January 27 a new record again was set when the battalion fired 1112 rounds in 24 hours. Either the enemy believed that the battalion had not moved, or they were not able to locate them because no counterbattery fire was received during all that time,

in spite of the terrific fire being put out by the guns. To add to the confusion, Baker Battery began to have premature bursts with its No. 4 piece. Baker Battery, being the rear battery in the peculiar lineup of which we have already spoken, Able and Charlie Batteries were receiving the effect of these rounds. The gun was finally called out after putting a hole through Capt. Cunningham's command post tent and slightly wounding three of A Battery's men, as well as some of the French who were manning the 155 Howitzer Battery, which was also in the valley with the 173rd.

The Anzio landing gave the boys some cheering news to read about and made the conquest of Rome seem much more imminent. After the first two days, however, it became apparent that the boys who had landed there were having no picnic and that the road to Rome was probably going to be just as long and hard and rocky as was originally anticipated.

On the 29th of January information was received through the grapevine that there were enemy troops in Castel San Vincenzo, and, since the air field was still located about 600 yards from the town, a detachment of men was immediately sent to defend the planes in case they were attacked. As in the case with most grapevine messages, it proved to be a false alarm and no Germans were located.

The war slowed down over the last two days of the month and the liveliest activity of the period was an all-battalion party in honor of the second anniversary of the battalion's formation on the second day of February. On the morning after, a reconnaissance was made to the northeast in a wide, flat valley just behind the town of Aqua Fondata. The valley was found to be well heated, and several rounds of heavy artillery arrived at the cross-roads in front of the town almost simultaneously with some 173rd reconnaissance vehicles. Sgt. Atwood N. Johnson, the battalion survey sergeant, was knocked down, got up, ran across the road, jumped in a fox hole and sat out two or three more rounds before he began to feel blood running down his back, and upon examination was found to have no less than seven scattered from his knees to his shoulders. Sgt. Johnson said that he did not feel a thing when he was hit except the force of the blast knocking him off his feet. He was taken to a French aid station by Capt. Hinkley and Sgt. Starck where he was plied with Algerian wine and sulfanilamide, and later returned to the battalion his old self after several weeks in the hospital.

The next day the reconnaissance went to the town of Vitucuso, another valley town about 25 kilometers west of Acquafondate. This valley, similar to the other one, was filled to the brim with artillery, both Field and Anti-Aircraft, and it looked impossible to superimpose another battalion of Long Toms over the innumerable positions already established.

In the meantime the boys at Anzio were taking a beating such as had been unparalleled up to that time. The beachhead was so shallow that German artillery was able to reach any point in the Allied territory clear back to the actual shore of the sea. In this area were crowded all types of supply dumps, several hospitals, and all the innumerable installations that go to make up the rear echelon of a fighting army. The troops holding the perimeter of this ill-fated beach-head were subjected to constant pressure. The Germans had been able to bring to bear a terrific number of troops in an incredibly short time to the spot in an effort to shove the whole beach-head back into the sea. As we all know, they did not succeed in this; however, all those who were there, and in fact all the troops who were in Italy at the time, will always know Anzio as one of the most dreadful battles in which the Yanks participated.

Also during the first part of February a salient was being slowly pushed out at Cassiono and another battle which will live forever in the memory of the Fifth Army troops was in the making.

Just to relieve the monotony of cold, rain, mud and dirt, nothing had been devised which could possibly out-do the Quartermaster delousing company which appeared on the scene early in the month of February. A soldier went in one end, and in a short time came out the other end, having had a hot shower with soap and thrown off all of his old clothes and had them completely replaced by freshly laundered ones, which in some cases were even new! It is impossible now to imagine just how good that hot shower and those clean clothes felt after two months of bathing out of the "helmet, steel".

An interesting observation can be made concerning Capt. Hinkley's "Hot Oil" of February 7, 1944, when after a trip through the batteries he discovered that by far the majority of men believed the war would end very shortly. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that the Russians had withstood the German onslaught at Stalingrad and were starting the long march back to their western border, pushing the Nazi's before them.

On February 9 some British Ordnance officers arrived in the battalion area and star-gauged the tubes to see how they were wearing under the volume of fire to which they were being subjected. The normal diameter of a new tube is 6.103 inches. At the time they were gauged they were found to be averaging about 6.225". When this figure reaches 6.310 or 6.320", the accuracy of the piece has diminished considerably, and it is necessary to replace the tube.

After six weeks in combat, every battalion or division was given a quota of men to go back to the rear to a camp which had been set up in the king's palace at Caserta for the purpose of recreation. There were beds with sheets for each man, hot showers, a PX, and various USO shows and movies available, besides the usual benefits of civilians, up to and including women and liquor. The 173rd generally sent about 40 to 50 men at one time, and they remained there approximately four days, taking one day for transit each way.

A similar camp was set up for officers at Sorrento in a very nice hotel overlooking the sea. Two officers were allowed to go at a time, also for four days. The officers got together and rented an apartment in Meta, a northern suburb of Sorrento, and, when there were no officers at the hotel, the Colonel sent two officers to the apartment so that most of the officers were able to get to Sorrento at least once before the battalion had to move on. These rather infrequent trips back to the cities where life was somewhat normal were very refreshing to all who experienced them and were a real factor in enabling the men in the battalion to carry on for long periods of time in the front lines without relief as a battalion.

On February 10 the weather turned to snow, wind and rain, and the visibility was so poor that an attack, which had been scheduled for the afternoon of the 10th, was postponed. On that day only four rounds were fired, and these were used to check the sound ranging of the observation battalion. From that time on, there was a great deal of snow around the OP's and Lt. Fagan reported that at his OP there was so much snow that the enemy shells when hitting the snow where it was deepest either didn't explode or the explosion was quite muffled. The actual battalion area was very slushy and muddy, and the snow usually didn't last very long.

In the meantime a Polish division had been moved into the left side of the 8th Army line replacing a British division, and liason was established between a Polish colonel and our own by a couple of visits. The Americans and Poles got on well together except that the first two or three days the Poles were in position, they insisted on firing their 50 caliber machine guns at the 173rd Cub planes every time they took off. They were finally made to realize that these were not enemy planes and relations were continued once again on a friendly basis.

During this period the town of Cassino had been hotly contested, and Indian troops had been able to capture the railway station; however the Germans resisting vigorously, and the situation did not look very hopeful for a break-through. The area south of Cassino looked like an anthill covered with ants, there were so many guns, tents, trucks and installations of all types, all of which were in plain view of the enemy in the hills back of Cassino. Highway 6, which ran into Cassino, was under constant surveillance, and all vehicles were required to stay at least 200 yards apart, and the minimum speed for most individual vehicles was the speed at which the vehicle traveled when the accelerator was jammed against the floor. An M.P. stationed at a cross road spent practically all of his on-duty hours in a foxhold built of sand bags. The enemy shelling throughout this area was more or less constant and heavy, and casualties were high. The 985th lost somewhere in the neighborhood of thirty-five men in their position there, and two officers were wounded.

Most of the news was received through the courtesy of the Germans over the radio on a program which consisted of a dialogue-type discussion between "Sally" and "George". Their reports on the news were fairly accurate except, of course, figures on casualties and yardage gained. But their interpretations were so preposterous as to make rather poor propaganda. The one really good thing about the program was that it had at the time the best American jive records of any station on the air so it was naturally heard regularly by anyone with a radio. Whether the propaganda effectively served any purpose or not is questionable. In our opinion morale was aided by the music, and the response of most of the soldiers to the news discussions was a loud laugh.

On the 23rd of February C Battery's No. 3 and No. 4 guns went to ordnance for re-tubing. Within three days the entire battalion was again ready to shoot, every gun having been fitted with a brand new tube. The job was done by the 94 Ordnance, who moved along with the heavy artillery during the entire Italian campaign and did a wonderful job of taking care of their needs. These tubes were changed without ever having more than four guns at a time out of action. Each one had somewhere in the neighborhood of 1800 to 2000 rounds on it when it was discarded. More than half of that figure was supercharge.

While the tubes were being replaced, another institution was brought to the attention of the boys. The Red Cross doughnut girls paid their first visit to the 173rd. There were two of them, and they had brought enough doughnuts with them so that each man could have three. They also had a small victrola with some records, an accordian, a guitar, some magazines, a few books, and plenty of pretty American smiles and fast gab. They spent a few hours at the position, talking to the men and generally spreading sunshine around, and it was really a thrill for many of the men to talk to a girl who spoke real American and was willing to be friendly, to say nothing of how the doughnuts tasted.

The French and Africans who had been surrounding the position and in it were moving out, taking their guns, their funny-looking tents, their raggle-taggle uniforms, their unsanitary habits, and their detachment of Arab women with them. They were replaced by the First Italian Motorized Brigade. This Brigade was using Italian equipment, the men wore Italian uniforms and had Italian rations, which to the Americans would have been a starvation diet. The Italians proved to be interesting but not very effective. Their equipment was not very good, and they were not well led, although they had a strong desire to show the Allies that they were on their side and wanted to do something.

The rain continued practically every day until February 29, when the clouds cleared up about 2:00 in the afternoon and the sun shown for the first time in many days. From then on the rain became a little more in-

frequent, until it finally died out, although during the next week or so it still rained about every other day.

On March 2 a real touch of the good old U.S.A. arrived in the form of a genuine Coca Cola ration. Each man was allowed three bottles. The precious stuff did not last very long, but it certainly did wonders for some of the more homesick boys who were missing their cokes and chocolate sodas a little too much. The bottles, however, had to be carefully preserved because the next time cokes came in the battalion was only able to draw a full coke for each empty bottle which was returned. It was a lot of trouble collecting the bottles and taking them back to the dump, but all concerned agreed that a good slug of coke was worth it any day.

A new T.O. was received in the latter part of February which called for a fairly complete reorganization of the artillery battalion. It resulted in quite a loss of men as well as vehicles, and the battery commanders were all very anxious to see it fall through. However, it was necessary for each one to make up his list of men who would have to go in case the T.O. was enforced in the theatre. On March 8, while everyone was still worried about losing all these men, replacements which had been requisitioned six weeks before came in from the Repple-Depple. The only thing that saved the day after that happened was the fact that fresh eggs were issued for the second time since the unit had arrived overseas. Needless to say, the cooks had a busy time the next morning frying eggs to order for every man in the outfit.

During the next two weeks normal activities were carried on, and the Battalion was able to fire many very helpful missions on enemy ammunition dumps, tanks and other installations. Also during this time, Col. Jay visited the positions frequently and finally seemed perfectly satisfied with the training, dugouts, military courtesy and service of the piece, which he had spent much time observing and revising. Around the 21st of March parties were sent back to Pignataro, where it was expected the Battalion would soon go for a rest and to perform the dreaded reorganization which was to force so many good men out of the Battalion and into Repple-Depples. It seemed inevitable, however, because the manpower in the territory was actually running a little short and the vehicle situation was not much better.

At about this time the Poles invaded the area and evidently it was planned that they would take over when the Battalion left for the rear. Finally on the 25th of March orders came to move to the rear, and on the 26th in a terrific storm complete with rain, snow, cold and wind, the guns were pulled from their holes and the night trek to Pignataro was begun with everyone practically frozen when he started. Just before "C" Battery pulled out of its area, two or three of the men were standing by the road in the blinding snow were accosted by five Germans who came walking down the road and immediately showed a healthy desire to surrender. Thus the Battalion took its first prisoners.

The 173rd arrived the next morning in a grassy olive orchard on a hillside near Pignataro, and for the first time since entering the lines everyone could relax, bask in the sunshine and forget the rigid camouflage precautions for a while. For the next week the equipment was hauled out, spread on the grass and cleaned and shined as it had not been cleaned and shined in many weeks. Inspectors from practically every department in the army arrived during this time and checked over the equipment for serviceability, and the Battalion received a very nice commendation from almost every one of them for its effective maintenance program. Also during this period the big reorganization took place, and those men who were found surplus were relegated to the replacement centers. The vehicles, however, were not taken and many a battery commander was hard put to it to find enough drivers to push all his vehicles down the road at the same time.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTALION TAKES ROME

On March 29 the battery commanders went out and looked over the next area which the Battalion would occupy. This area was a very large, flat piece of pasture land which stretched for a distance of probably eight miles along the sea and a mile or so inland. The batteries were to be located a mile or so south of the Garigliano River and in plain sight of the town of Minturno, which was at that time occupied by Allied troops and was just at the foot of a jagged ridge of mountains, the Petrella Hillmass, where the Germans were holding forth on the west end of their Cassino defense line. At the time the reconnaissance was made, the positions were occupied by the British, who had a battery of 5.5" guns in there. It was arranged with these British that the 173rd would move in on the morning of April 3 immediately after they moved out and occupy exactly the same positions with each gun, except that "C" Battery would have to dig out a new position for itself, since the British had only eight guns emplaced. This move was made without undue confusion on the night of the 3rd at 1900 hours. The guns were in position and ready to fire by 0215 the next morning.

This flat plain on which the Battalion was located was cut by a long straight road running parallel to the coast line from Mondragone, a town located at a point where the mountain came right down to the sea, up past Minturno and into Scauri, which was at that time held by the enemy.

This road was clearly visible to the Germans all the way down to Mondragone, and they were able to observe all traffic and other signs of activity from their vantage point on the high road. A cross road about three miles to the rear of the batteries which led off to the little town of Celiole was occupied 24 hours a day by MP's both from 88 Division and II Corps. These MP's were very strict in limiting all unnecessary traffic on the road, and it was difficult for the batteries even to run vehicles from their rear echelons to their gun positions because this cross road was located between them. Windshields had to be down and covered if the vehicle was going forward and the driver had to have a special pass either from 88th Division or from II Corps in order to get past. This disrupted the administrative functions of the Battalion considerably until Major Rice finally lost his temper and went to the authorities and shook things up a little. The 88th Division had just been newly brought into the line and was placed slightly east of Minturno in readiness for the coming drive. The 85th Division was actually occupying the town of Minturno, having arrived at practically the same time as the 88th, and being still a little green as far as battle was concerned. These two divisions were to prove themselves in the coming conflict and both of them left extremely enviable records behind them when they finally left Italy.

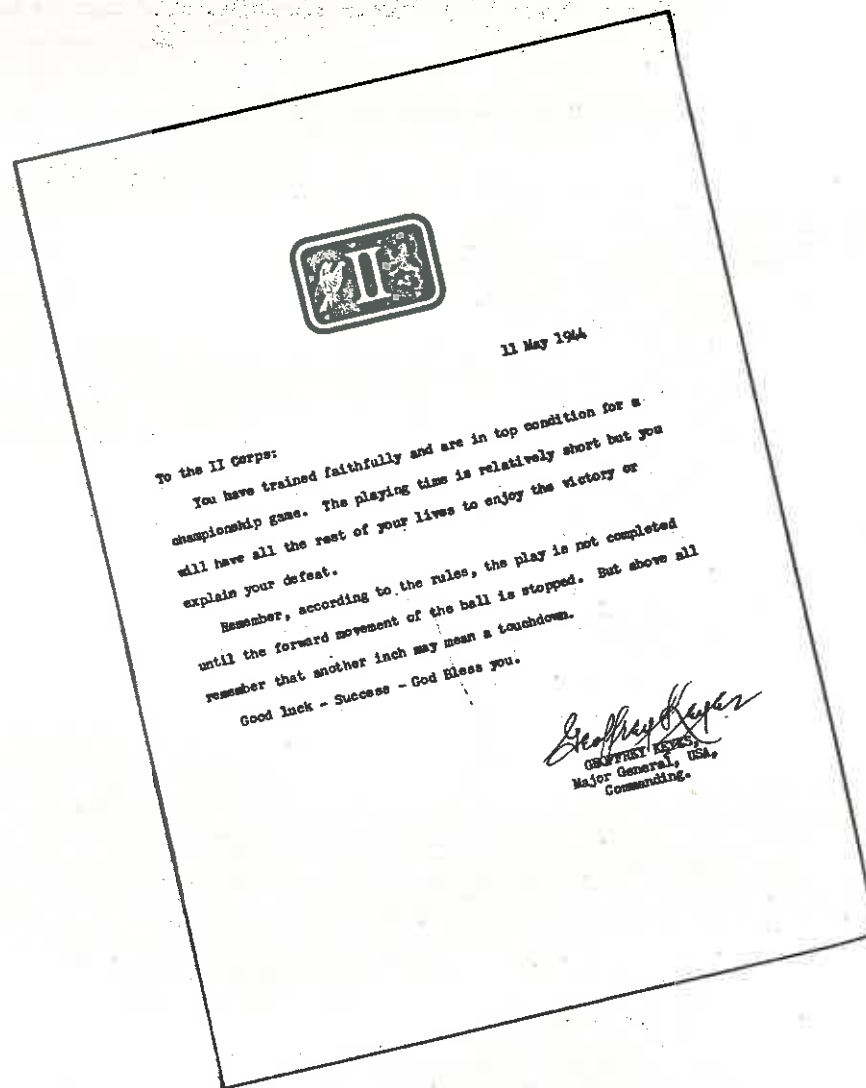
At the beginning of April "Sunny Italy" began to live up to her name. The nights remained cool but the days became longer, drier and warmer, and the sun shone brightly through all the day light hours. Despite the fact that the batteries were shelled more or less regularly by the enemy within two days after their arrival the men managed to get in a little volley ball and a little baseball here and there. Lt. Curtis, the Special Service Officer, managed to procure a projector from higher headquarters and thus came into being the Garlic Cinema. A large barn which had a high heap of garlic in one corner was rigged up with benches and blacked out at the windows and served as a movie theatre for the 173rd for about three weeks. The smell of garlic was rather strong upon first entering the theatre, but one and all were amazed at how quickly the nostrils became attuned to the same, and they were able to enjoy the pictures without being distracted in the least by the vegetable pile. Lt. Curtis managed to change the films fairly often, and the theatre really proved to be a very good source of entertainment for the men.

Ground observation had been set up in conjunction with 85th Division Art. in the little town of Tremonsuoli. This town was located about two and one-half miles northwest of Minturno and was just across a valley about 600 yards from Scauri, which, as we have mentioned before, was enemy occupied. The telephone lines to this OP were constantly going out in the vicinity of the river because the pontoon bridge, which was the only crossing at that point, was kept in a continuous cloud of smoke and the river could not be seen for approximately one-half mile to each side of the bridge. The Germans, therefore, threw a heavy volume of artillery over the smoked area in hopes of catching the bridge as well as vehicles on or approaching it. Wires ran up the road to the river and crossed at a point approximately 300 yards east of the bridge, but this area shelling of the Germans was continually knocking it out on one side of the river or the other, necessitating some very dangerous repair work. As a matter of fact, some wire men were killed or wounded while working these lines in the vicinity of the bridge. The first decorations which were awarded in the Battalion came to Corp. Lenin Ferri and Pfc. Ted Koufopoulos for repairing the Battalion line under fire when wiremen from all other units left the area because of the intense shelling.

Plans were afoot around the middle of April to send all or a part of "B" Battery to a position well forward on the other side of the river. This necessitated a considerable amount of advance preparation. Dugouts were constructed; pits were dug for the guns; sand bags were placed in doorways, on roofs and other places where they were needed for protection from shell fragments. Originally plans had called for moving two guns forward to this position for fire on the town of Itri, but apparently the spot was too hot and enemy capabilities a little too strong for this move to be feasible; therefore the entire battery was kept in place until in May a couple of days before the big push started.

During the entire month of April, the weather was nice and living conditions were spoiled only by the frequent enemy shelling which resulted in casualties. Two from "C" Battery, Pfc. Dennis Cowen and Pfc. Walter Lekies entered the beach area and set off a mine field. Pfc. Cowen was immediately killed and Pfc. Lekies seriously wounded. Pfc. William Eamhart, Battery C, died of wounds received from enemy shell fire on April 27th.

Frequent visits were made during this period by 36th F.A. Group officers and Major General Keyes II Corps Commander came to watch the guns fire a few times. One of the batteries was shelled while the inspectors were there and the deep dugouts were filled beyond capacity. There was also a very nice beach established near Mondragone for the benefit of the members of II Corps. It was very sandy, there were volley ball nets and pyramidal tents set up in which to change clothes, although swimming



11 May 1944

To the II Corps:
You have trained faithfully and are in top condition for a championship game. The playing time is relatively short but you will have all the rest of your lives to enjoy the victory or explain your defeat.

Remember, according to the rules, the play is not completed until the forward movement of the ball is stopped. But above all remember that another inch may mean a touchdown.

Good Luck - Success - God Bless you.

Geoffrey Hayes
GEOFFREY HAYES
Major General, USA,
Commanding.

trunks were not necessary. Regular detachments were sent to this beach daily by each battery for recreation purposes.

It was also during the month of April that Col. Jay was pushed up to the II Corps Artillery Commander's job, and the 36th F.A. Group was taken over by Col. Hill.

Most of the missions which the battalion fired during this time were on the coastal installations at Formia and Gaeta, two large and well-fortified coastal towns which were located on a good highway and were hubs for communications and supplies in that sector. The Battalion was able to very effectively disrupt a lot of the enemy's administrative activities in these places as well as to destroy many ammunition and supply dumps and to knock out enemy artillery located in that area.

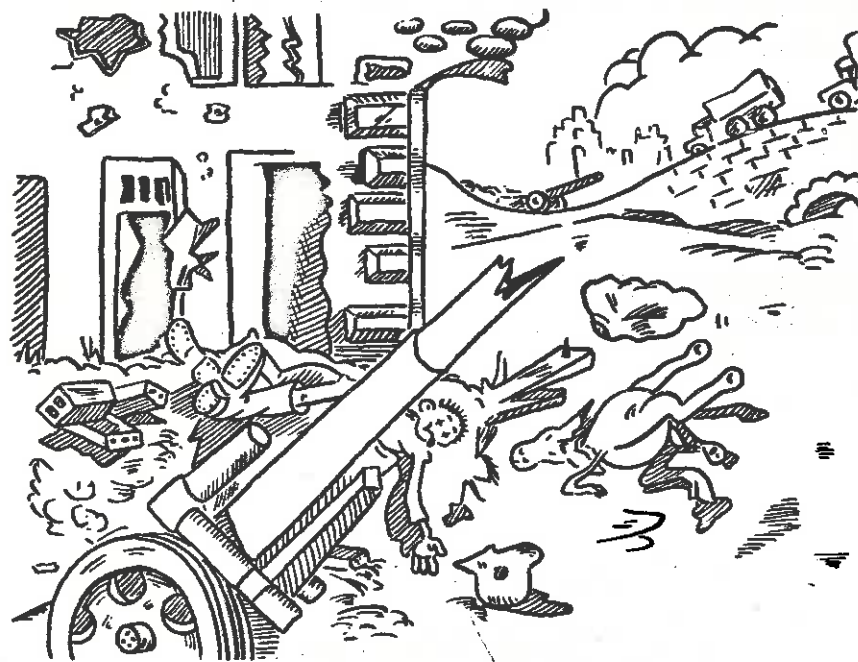


AT 2300 THE NIGHT OF MAY 11 THE
BIG ATTACK WAS BEGUN

On the night of May 10 "B" Battery moved across the river and set itself up to fire in the coming attack. In this position the battery was well within enemy mortar range and, had the Germans discovered the location of the guns, they would very probably have fired heavy concentrations of mortar fire and caused many casualties. At 2300 hours the night of May 11 the big attack was begun which finally resulted in the capture of Rome. It started with an hour-long artillery barrage in which hundreds of guns all along the front fired practically continuously. The night was lit by the bright flashes of the guns, and the din was constant and terrible until about 2400, when the artillery began to let up and the Infantry to advance.

Reports from the Infantry stated that many Germans were captured who were so dazed from the terrific artillery barrage that they were unable to fight and seemed to be in a sort of hypnotic trance. Needless to say, the 173rd had its part in this barrage and the batteries on the south side of the river as well as "B" Battery lobbed a considerable number of rounds into enemy territory.

During the day of May 12 a tremendous pressure was brought to bear against the German divisions, but so far no breakthrough was effected. The Battalion fired 2497 rounds from 2300 the night of the attack until 2300 the next night. On May 13 "C" Battery moved across the river and set up its position near "B" Battery.



THE BREAK-THROUGH

The original over-all plan for this attack involved a breakthrough at Cassino, where the British were to pour into the Liri Valley and start a fast drive up Highway 6 to Rome. With this object in mind, large forces of armored troops and infantry were poured into Cassino, and although the town was threatened with encirclement, the German 3rd Paratroop Regiment was still holding out several days after the attack had been launched. On the 14th of May IInd Corps had advanced about 2000 yards, and the French to the right of IInd Corps had advanced a little bit farther. Pressure was still being built up, and it seemed a matter of hours before the German line would crack at some point and the Allies would pour through. By the 16th of May the French had advanced considerably farther and the 85th and 88th Divisions were still rolling forward slowly and capturing quite a few German prisoners. This same day saw "A" Battery and Headquarters move across the river, and the Battalion was once again together--very close together in fact.

The German troops from Scauri to San Giorgio were facing encirclement, and it was considered probable that they would withdraw along the coast to avoid being taken. This was, in fact, exactly what happened, and the withdrawal was accomplished so speedily that the American troops found it very difficult to keep contact. This resulted, however, in the breakthrough for which everyone had been waiting, for when the Germans started to back up they were never again able to stop and hold for any length of time, and the 88th Division, with the 85th beside it, pushed up the coast at a terrific rate.



FORMIA

On the 18th day of May "C" Battery displaced forward to Formia and was followed at 1730 by "A" Battery.

At this stage of the game, with the Germans moving backward so fast and the Americans trying so hard not only to keep contact but also to keep pressing, the roads were continuously strung with vehicles, almost bumper to bumper, at practically all hours of the day and night. Not only were there tremendous numbers of combat vehicles to be moved forward, but the supplies for the men who were already forward had to be kept up continuously; rations, ammunition, gasoline and other equipment up to and including trucks, all of which are easily lost or destroyed during a fast moving situation. On the next day "B" Battery moved at 1400 hours to San Angelo; "A" and "C" Batteries closed station at 2200 that night and were in position, ready to fire near San Angelo at about 11:00 the next morning.

The Germans at this time were moving so rapidly that even 155 MM guns were not able to keep them in range, and the batteries many times had barely time to register before one of the officers was forward reconnoitering for another position. Sometimes there were no missions fired at all--the Germans would be out of range by the time the battery had moved forward and registered.

On this same day "C" Battery moved to a position northwest of Itri near a small cemetery and was ready to fire at 1700. This was quite a distance from the rest of the Battalion, and communications with the fire direction center were maintained by means of radio. On May 21 the rest of the Battalion, including Hqs. "A" and "B" Batteries, moved to an assembly area near Itri, and that same day "A" Battery and Hqs. took the left road fork out of Itri and started down the winding road to Terracina on the coast.

A part of this winding road, which was literally cut out of the side of the mountain and in places developed a sheer drop of 200 feet on its left edge, had been blown out in one of these spots by the Germans in order to deny the Americans this avenue of approach. This particular spot had been reinforced by the Engineers and the repaired place was declared by them to be safe for heavy artillery. The elements of the 173rd were preceded on this road by a 4.5 gun battalion and the first 4.5 gun which rolled across the reinforced spot had most of the road drop out from under its left wheel just as it almost got across. Fortunately, the prime mover was on solid ground at that time and the gun was dragged to safety, but the remainder of the 4.5 battalion and practically all of Hqs. Battery of the 173rd were

strung out on this narrow road, and most of the vehicles were unable to turn around, so they spent the night sitting on the road. "A" Battery and "B" Battery had been informed of the road trouble in sufficient time to find bivouac areas farther back and were able to pull off into the woods to spend the night. Very early in the morning the road was finally repaired again, and this time everything was moved over it with no further trouble; so bright and early on the morning of the 22nd "A" Battery was in position at the edge of the woods on the south side of the coastal area, and "C" was still in position beside the cemetery northwest of Itri. On that night, however, "C" Battery pulled out and came around to join "B" Battery in the bivouac area.

The next day "B" and "C" both moved up to the little valley between San Biagio and Terracina right behind the front lines. "A" remained in its old position, but it was expected that they would move up on the 24th.

The town of Terracina provided the first delay which IInd Corps had experienced after they got started. A high rocky mountain ridge ran from the central mountain heights west almost to the sea shore, leaving just enough room for a road to go around it and enter the town. This ridge was so steep and so rocky that it was not considered feasible to attempt to cross it with infantry. On the other hand, every time that a vehicle of any sort poked its nose around the corner, it was immediately fired upon at a point-blank range by a couple of anti-tank guns which the Germans had emplaced farther back along the rocky wall so that they commanded the turn in the road. As a result of this difficult situation the attack was held up for an entire day, but finally on the evening of the 24th of May the Germans had apparently had time to withdraw all of their important installations and so they had left a skeleton delaying force which was overwhelmed by a concerted attack and the town was taken with no further trouble.

On the next day the entire Battalion moved up through Terracina almost to the Pontine Marshes, and "B" Battery went into position about halfway between Terracina and the beginning of the Marshes. The rest of the Battalion moved on up and finally went into position near the town of Abbey Di Fossanova. The Germans, in departing from the area of the Marshes, had taken away all of the tremendous pumps which had been used to keep the Marshes drained and had blown up all of the bridges, of which there was one about every block going in all four directions in the area of the Marshes.

This large area, therefore, was not only flooded and unsuitable for use as any type of military position, but was also impossible to travel over and therefore all of the advancing troops were limited to a small narrow gravel road which turned off the coastal highway and followed along the foot of the mountains to the east and bordered the Marshes. The traffic on this road was incredibly heavy and it took hours to travel a distance of a few miles. Engineer bulldozers were plowing over hill and dale attempting to establish two-way traffic so that the people who had moved forward could go back for supplies without interfering with the new people who were still coming forward.

"B" Battery moved out of its position the same day they moved into it, without even having registered and accompanied "A" and "C" to this position at Belvedere.

On May 26 at about 1900 or 2000 the whole Battalion was in position and ready to fire. On May 28 II Corps was relieved by IV Corps, and the Battalion reverted from the 36th F.A. Group to the 77th. Under the direction of 77th Group, a move was made on May 28 to the vicinity of Piperno on the Sezze Road.

On May 30 the C.O. and S-3 reported to the IInd Corps Headquarters in the vicinity of Cori. The junction of the IInd Corps drive with the Anzio

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS II CORPS
Office of the Commanding General
APO 19. U. S. ARMY

27 May 1944.

TO II CORPS:

In an operation that will long be cited as an outstanding example of speed, skill, courage and stamina you have as a team accomplished in a little over two weeks the juncture with the ANZIO BEACHHEAD, the conquest of 472 square miles of enemy held territory, the capture of over 2000 prisoners of war together with much armament and equipment.

You have operated and fought through terrain unbelievably difficult, and broken the enemy's strongly fortified positions. You have advanced nearly 50 miles.

You have accomplished successfully the missions assigned by the Army Commander. The feats accomplished and the high standards set in your victorious battles will incite envy and admiration in your comrades and will instill fear in and exact respect from the enemy.

You are American soldiers and you should be proud of that fact and of the record you have just made. But remember your reputation will endure only if jealously guarded and nourished by you.

I am proud of you and of the privilege of having commanded you in this operation.

Geoffrey Keyes
GEOFFREY KEYES
Major General, U. S. A.
Commanding.

Incl.
Troop List II Corps.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS II CORPS
APO 19 U. S. ARMY

31 May 1944.

TO II CORPS:

Having accomplished your mission in the last operation so successfully you have been honored by the Army Commander by a new assignment in this the final drive for the capture of Rome.

The goal is in sight. You are ready. It is only a question of determination, endurance and speed.

I have confidence in you. I know you will be the first in Rome.

Good luck - Godspeed.

Geoffrey Keyes
GEOFFREY KEYES,
Major General, U. S. A.,
Commanding.

DISTRIBUTION:
"B-1"

31 May 1944: 795

RESTRICTED

Annex "B"

HEADQUARTERS
68th ARMORED FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 251, U. S. Army

1st July 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding Officer,
77th Field Artillery Group.

FROM : Commanding Officer, Battery "C",
173rd Field Artillery Battalion.

1. During the period 21st June 1944 to 29th June 1944 Battery "C", 173rd Field Artillery Battalion was attached to the 68th Armored Field Artillery Battalion to support the attack by Combat Command "B", First Armored Division. During this period the Battery Commander, Captain Hartel, and his officers and men, showed great willingness to cooperate and exceptional aptitude and efficiency in adopting the methods used by armored field artillery. The support given by Captain Hartel and his battery was all that could be asked for.

2. I wish to thank Captain Hartel and his men for their cooperation and support and commend them very highly for the excellent job they did for us.

J. R. Fritchard /s/
J. R. FRITCHARD
Lieut. Col., 68th Arm. F.A. Bn.
Commanding.

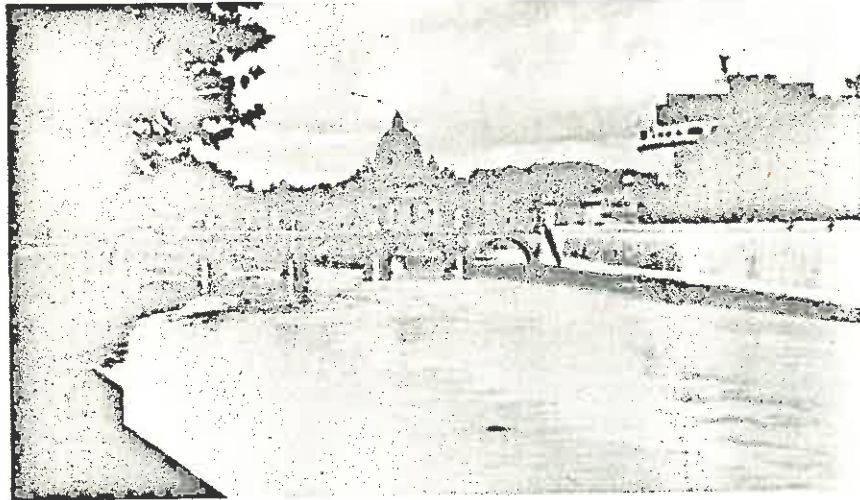
"CERTIFIED A TRUE COPY"

EARL J. ICE
Major., 173d FA BN
Executive

beachhead had been effected on about the 25th day of May in conjunction with a planned break out by the beachhead forces. It was to this sector that II Corps had gone when they were relieved by IV and, when the Colonel returned from Anzio he brought the news that the Battalion was immediately to go back under 36th Group and would move up the next day to positions in the vicinity of Cori.

The Battalion displaced at 0400 from Piperno and closed in the new position at 0700 on the 31st of May. Here they remained, firing normal missions and undergoing one inspection by Col. Henry, the executive officer of the 36th F.A. Group, on June 2. On that same day "C" Battery was given march order and closed station at 2039 hours, arriving in a position in the vicinity of Ardena at 2155. The next morning "A" and "B" Batteries both moved up near "C". "A" going into an assembly area and "B" into firing position. Later in the day "A" also went into firing position.

By that time there were rumors coming back that the Allies were in Rome, but nothing official on the subject had been issued. On the 4th of June "B" and "C" Batteries were given march order and moved up to a position in the vicinity of Frascati. As soon as they were in position, the rest of the Battalion moved up. Enemy air activity was intense after night-fall harassing Hq. Btry. linemen on roads. On the 5th of June all batteries were finally ready to fire in the Frascati position at 0155 hours, and at 0900 "A" Battery closed station and moved to an assembly area.



ROME

A little later in the day they moved to a new position about five kilometers south of Rome on Highway Six. When "A" Battery was ready to fire the rest of the Battalion moved into an assembly area in the vicinity of "A" Battery and on the next morning at 0700 the whole Battalion picked up and went into position on the Forum Mussolini on the north side of the Tiber River in Rome.

"B" Battery was the only battery which was in a position to fire, and it did not fire, mostly due to the fact that the Forum consisted of a number of large buildings with many windows which were still intact, and it would probably have broken every one of them if any of the guns had fired. This was very fortunate because later on the Forum Mussolini became the biggest Fifth Army rest center in Italy, and those very buildings were used as

domatories, Red Cross clubs, dance halls, PX's, shower rooms and all the other things that go with a big recreation center.

The city had been taken on the previous day by troops of the 88th Division, and there were still evidences of the hearty welcome that these Allied soldiers received on their entry into the Eternal City, for the next morning throngs still lined the streets shouting, clapping and throwing flowers at the steady stream of military vehicles which passed through the city and seemed to continue for two or three days.

The only signs of the recent battle were a few German tanks standing in the streets which had been hit and burned. The city had not been bombed except in the railroad yards, and all the countless historical and classical treasures were still intact. It was inevitable that a few of the bombs intended for military targets should go astray, and there was an old church which had been partially destroyed near the edge of the city; otherwise there was little perceptible evidence that Rome had fallen once again.

Naturally the men were quite excited about the fact that they were actually in the city, and many managed by hook or crook to get off duty for a short time and take a quick look at St. Peter's and the Pantheon and some of the other internationally known sights in Rome.

There was a large stadium in the center of the Forum, which had been used for athletic events and various Fascist celebrations, and around the outside of this stadium under the bleachers the Germans had left hundreds of vehicles of every conceivable type. Most of this equipment was Italian, but some of it was German. It was all out of repair in one way or another, and the Jerries had apparently not had time to put together one good one out of three bad ones and had to content themselves with stripping whatever parts they had time to take from the vehicles and flee.

Needless to say, the various auto mechanics in the Battalion were in this big salvage pile up to their necks five minutes after the Battalion arrived at the Forum. As a result, when the Battalion moved out of Rome there were several more vehicles in the convoy than there had been when they moved in. Unfortunately, the Battalion remained in this very choice spot only overnight and the next morning was on its way again, "C" Battery going out first and "A" following and going into position quite a distance away up Highway Two north of Rome, a distance of about six miles. "B" Battery went into an assembly area.

The next day the 8th of June, "B" Battery went into a firing position slightly forward of "A" and "C" and "A" and "C" Batteries closed station. A Battalion assembly area was set up in the general vicinity of these positions, and on the 9th of June "C" Battery and Headquarters went into new bivouac areas. "A" Battery remained and bivouaced in their assembly area. The next morning "B" Battery moved into its bivouac area and for the first time in many weeks, the entire Battalion was out of action.

The word going the rounds at that time was that the Battalion would remain in these bivouac areas and pursue a training program while the 8th Army was to carry the burden of finishing up the supposedly smashed German army in Italy.

Near "A" Battery's area the Germans had either taken over or constructed a number of buildings in the vicinity of a tremendous cement underground building which had been a center of naval radio communications for the Italians. The buildings on the outside had been very cleverly camouflaged with a tremendous chicken wire screen interwoven with vegetation which covered the area of 300 to 400 square yards. In these buildings the Jerries had set up machine and ordnance shops. There were all sorts of machine tools for special purposes in the repair of artillery and other ordnance and many pieces of German, Italian, Russian and French artillery which had been laid up for repairs of one kind or another. Some of them were wired with blocks of TNT which, however, had not been connected to ignitors. There was a pile of Italian sabers, another large pile of German

rifles, lots of small arms ammunition and other things dear to the heart of the souvenir collecting G.I.

The big underground building consisted of two stories of large rooms filled with very powerful radio equipment. The Germans had had time to destroy most of this equipment, and some of the room on the ground floor was being used as a storehouse for a lot of their miscellaneous junk.

The light system, of course, had been ruined, and the place was prowled through by flashlight until finally the U.S. Army Ordnance arrived and put it OFF LIMITS TO ALL TROOPS. At any rate, it proved to be a very interesting exhibition of some of the German administrative set up and the camouflage job was really excellent.

CHAPTER VII

THE BATTALION DEFEATS THE GERMANS

As usual, it took only one day to spike the rumor about the training program, and on the 11th of June "C" Battery was attached to the 36th Inf. Div. Bn. and moved forward into firing position near Montalto on the coastal highway. The next day the rest of the Battalion shoved off and by 2145 that night were in position and ready to fire near the little town of Capalbio.

The Battalion was again under the jurisdiction of IVth Corps and out from under General Jay, who knew so well how heavy artillery should be employed. IVth Corps Artillery moved the Battalion practically every day for gains of range of sometimes not more than a thousand yards.

On June 13 "C" Battery displaced forward to a position near Orbetello. The rest of the Battalion moved up later in the day. The next day "C" Battery again moved forward ahead of the Battalion and was ready to fire in the new position at 2045 hours. They remained along in this position and on the following day were leap-frogged by the remainder of the Battalion which went into an assembly area at 1430 hours and at 1830 moved out to a position in the vicinity of Magliano, followed by "C" Battery. As soon as the Battalion had pulled into the area at Magliano, they immediately turned around and pulled out again and went forward still further to a position in the vicinity of Montiano, where they were ready to fire at 0055 hours.

As may readily be imagined, this sort of business occasioned many difficult problems because of the necessity for the officers' reconnoitering and supervising the displacement of their batteries and road marches all at the same time. Later that afternoon the Battalion picked up again and moved to a new position near Pigo Olivero where the last battery closed and was ready to fire at 2037 hours.

A normal day of firing finally came and everyone got a chance to catch up on his rest; but the next day, the 18th of June, "B" Battery moved out for a position near Grosseto and as soon as it was ready to fire the rest of the Battalion also moved up and went into position in the same area. The next day "A" Battery again moved forward and remained by itself during that night and moved again the next day to a position in the vicinity of Montepescali where "B" and "C" Headquarters had already established themselves.

Here again the Battalion stood still for a day, except that "C" Battery was temporarily attached to the 68th Armored F.A. Regiment of the First Armored Division as of 0700 on June 22. The other two Batteries moved out and went to a new position later in the afternoon.

"A" Battery's No. 1 gun had thrown out several premature bursts and it was taken out of action and went back to Ordnance to be checked over on the 23rd of June, on which day "A" Battery and Headquarters moved up to Gavarrono, and after "A" Battery was ready to fire, "B" Battery and the Rear Fire Direction Center also came up.

On the next day the Battalion moved out in the afternoon and closed into the new position in the vicinity of Falonica late in the evening. On the 25th of June Gen. Crane of IVth Corps Artillery visited the C.P., and later on in the day the Battalion moved a few miles north. The next evening the Battalion moved to positions near Suveretto.

"A" Battery's No. 3 and No. 4 guns went out of action and were re-tubed and back in action again on the same day, the 27th of June, during which time the Battalion remained in place. On the 28th, however, the normal routine was resumed, and the Battalion moved again in the afternoon to a point near San Vincenzo.

Col. Schmidt, 77th Group Commander and very popular with the Battalions in his group, had to go to the hospital for a physical check-up and Col. Ketcham assumed command of the Group for the period of his absence. Maj. Rice, Col. Ketcham's executive, took over the Battalion while he was gone. This switch of command took place on June 29, and it did not interfere with the Battalion displacement which took place in the evening and put the Battalion just north of Bagleri.

The next day "C" Battery returned to the Battalion from its tour with the 1st Armored Division and went into position near where the Battalion was emplaced at the time. "B" Battery's No. 2 and No. 4 guns which had been sent in for new tubes the day before came back to the Battery on that day.

The Battalion remained in this position until the 3rd of July and during this period more guns were re-tubed and the usual missions fired. By late on the night of July 3 the Battalion was established in a new position just south of Riparbella. There was a halt of about a week in this position because the Germans were counter-attacking from the town of Rosignano and were making it very difficult for the Americans to hold the line, much less advance.

OP's were set up and a fairly normal routine established during this period. The routine was broken by the visit on the 6th of July of Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, accompanied by Gen. Clark and other highly placed personnel from Washington who included 173rd's "C" Battery in their extensive inspection itinerary. There was some counter battery fire received by the Battalion during this period and a couple of red alerts serving as a reminder that there was still a war on, even if the Battalion was not displacing daily.

Finally, on the 10th of July, "B" Battery displaced forward to Rosignano and registered with the air OP. The next day "A" and "C" Batteries moved up to the same position in the morning and fired normal missions. "B" Battery displaced again to Castellina on the 12th and was followed on the 13th by the remainder of the Battalion. Also on the 13th a noteworthy event was the departure of Maj. Harry C. Petros, faithful S-3 of Battalion, for the U.S.A. on the rotation plan.

On the 14th "B" Battery's No. 1 gun moved out at 1530 and was followed by the rest of the Battery at 1930 to the vicinity of Pastina. The rest of the Battalion moved to this vicinity the next day, "A" and "C" Batteries moving the No. 1 guns forward ahead of time for registration purposes.

On the 17th of July, still in the vicinity of Pastina, Col. Ketcham returned to take command of the Battalion and it was not until the 19th that

they moved out, this time to St. Ermo, where they remained for two days. On the 21st an order restricting ammunition came down, and each gun was allowed to fire only fifteen rounds per day. On that same day the Battalion moved up to Tripalle.

While the Battalion was in this position, the line stabilized itself for a time, due to the extreme difficulty encountered in trying to take Pisa; so, from the 22nd to the 29th of July the Battalion remained in front of this little town supporting the attack on Pisa.

The Arno River flows through the center of Pisa and is about fifty yards wide. The Germans had completely demolished all bridges and were able to observe from the famous Leaning Tower, as well as the mountains north of the town, and count easily bring their artillery to bear on any number of the American troops on the large flat plain to the south of the town. For this reason, it was apparently finally decided that the lines would be shifted and the main effort be directed up through Florence over Highway 65 to Bologna and thence into the Po Valley. As a result of this decision, some British troops were ordered into the vicinity then occupied by the 173rd, and the Battalion was ordered back to an assembly area at Peccioli, where they were to remain for a week, cleaning and rehabilitating men and equipment.

During the week or so that the Battalion rested in this place, all ordnance, quartermaster, signal, motor and other equipment was inspected by experts, and the Battalion received a commendation on the praiseworthy condition of its material, a condition due to conscientious and careful maintenance in the field.

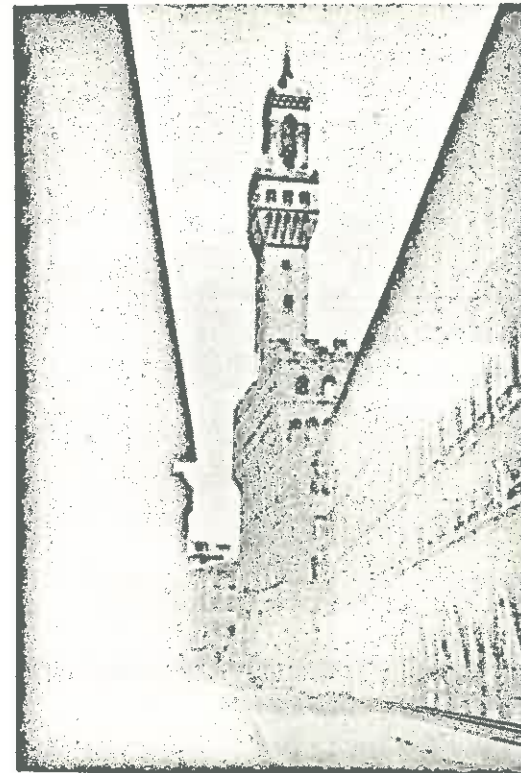
The 985th F.A. Battalion was located a scant mile away during this time and relations were re-established and notes compared by old friends who had not seen each other for many weeks. Also during this time two new F.A. groups were organized, the 423rd and the 424th and Capt. Wiley, commander of "B" Battery, was sent to one of these groups as a Group S-4. Lt. Moates thereupon assumed command of "B" Battery.

On August 4, "C" Battery moved back into the lines and on the next day an assembly area for the other two Batteries was reconnoitred, but the Battalion never got the march order. It was not until the 8th of August that the Battalion finally moved into this assembly area in the vicinity of Podere Urlo. It was a long march and was begun at about 11:00 at night. The Battalion finally closed into the area at approximately 3:00 in the morning.

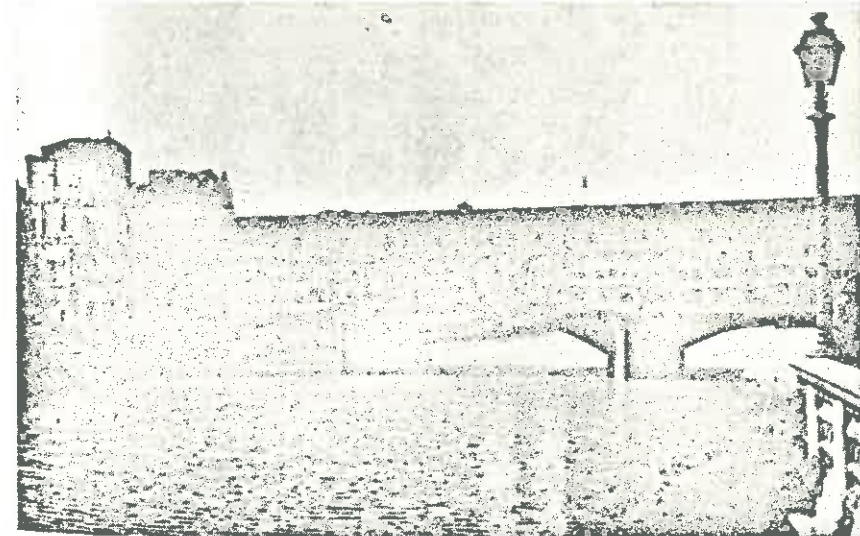
"C" Battery remained in firing position while the rest of the Battalion rested in its assembly area until the 16th of August, during which time there were various inspections and meetings of officers to discuss ways and means of improving the combat efficiency of the Battalion and reconnaissances made in likely position areas. Finally at 2200 on the 16th "A" Battery and the command post closed out and moved to a new position in an oval shaped bowl just below the little town of Monterappoli. "B" Battery arrived the morning of the 17th and "C" the morning of the 18th. The move to Monterappoli carried the Battalion almost as far east as Florence and a few kilometers south of the Arno River.

For five days the Battalion lay in this sweltering valley where the heat all but melted the guns, firing very light missions and apparently waiting for things to get moving in the lines along the river. On the 24th of August the Battalion finally moved out, and the three Batteries were fairly widely scattered in the vicinity of San Paolo very close to the Arno River and not more than four or five kilometers from Florence. Florence, however, had been taken by the British and at this time was still off limits to all American troops.

While the Battalion was in this position, Headquarters Battery and the C.P. were housed in a part of a large villa called Casignano. The villa was inhabited by two old ladies, both of whom spoke English and who had remained in the house even while it was occupied by German soldiers a short



PALAZZO VECCHIO
FLORENCE ITALY



PONTE VECCHIO FLORENCE ITALY

time before the 173rd arrived. The place had been rather heavily shelled but the house had not been damaged to any great extent. There was a nice big front yard dotted with cedar and pine trees, and down to one side of the house where the ground sloped away rather rapidly, the Germans had constructed a very sturdy underground tunnel with a couple of sleeping rooms which apparently had served as a communications center.

The son of the younger of the two ladies turned out to be an aide to Umberto, the son of Vittorio Emmanuel III. Umberto was at the time a sort of figure-head, with the title of Lieutenant General of the Realm, and Luca Dainelli, the aide, came to visit his mother and was shown around the battery positions. He was a very Americanized Italian, having been with the New York Consulate for several years before the war.

Scattered enemy H.E. shells whistled in daily, but caused no damage or casualties. This position was finally vacated on September 6 and new positions taken up just off Highway 65 on the north edge of Florence. During the stay in San Paolo there had been an extensive shift of troops, and now Florence and its environs were manned entirely by Americans, and all the British had either gone back over towards the Adriatic coast or else had moved over the Tyrrhenian coast south of Pisa.

For two days the guns remained here not firing a shot, and finally on the evening of the 9th the entire Battalion moved to Calenzano where they remained for two days firing scattered missions. On the 12th they closed station at 0200 and by 6:30 in the morning had established themselves in a new position in the vicinity of Le Croci.

Once again the Germans were on the move and as the army moved up Highway the little towns were smoking ruins and that smell of death that every soldier remembers hung in the streets.

The two armies moved north on Highway 65 like a giant stone crusher swallowing towns whole and leaving piles of rubble in their wake. For four and a half days the Battalion pounded out ammunition from the vicinity of Le Croci while the Infantry smashed their way into another town further up the road. Finally, the evening of the 17th of September, the Battalion moved on to the next town, Camoggiano.

Here they fired heavy missions for three days, to the accompaniment of considerable enemy shelling. On the 22nd they displaced to Gagliano. It was on the 23rd of September, the first day at Gagliano, that Col. Ketcham, who had led the Battalion through all its trials and tribulations and had made it a unit very highly esteemed in the Fifth Army, was relieved of command and transferred to the 91st Division Headquarters as Artillery Executive. It meant a promotion for the Colonel and so the men of the Battalion were glad to see him go, although they would miss seeing his tall, spare form and square jaw as he calmly stood by watching them move in or out of position at any hour of the day or night. Major Rice, of course, assumed command of the Battalion, and he had been with Col. Ketcham so long that things went on much the same after the Colonel had gone.

While the Battalion was in position at Gagliano, 77th Group Headquarters, who were in a very large villa a couple of miles up the road, put aside one big room for moving pictures, and the men of the Battalion were able to see some movies without having to go back to rest center.

On September 26 at 7:00 in the morning "B" Battery moved on up a road parallel to Highway 65 to a position near the town of Gragnano. The rest of the Battalion came up in the afternoon. It was in this position that "A" Battery had the guns placed immediately in front of an Infantry cannon company, and the little 105 cannons were actually firing over the giant 155 guns.


About 25 yards off to the right of "A" Battery's No. 1 piece there was a very extensive mine field, with trip wires laid to set off a large series of anti-personnel mines of the cement type, which were set up on little stakes and planted like pine trees. For once it was not difficult to keep the circulation down within the position.

HEADQUARTERS II CORPS
APO 19 U.S. ARMY

In the Field
18 September 1944

TO: THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF II CORPS.

You have broken the GOTHIC LINE. I congratulate you upon this significant victory - the first step toward the ultimate destruction of our enemy. You must not pause in your gallant and determined drive, but push the enemy relentlessly, giving him no rest. The final goal is in sight, and I have every confidence that the men of II Corps will give the Fifth Army another Speedy Victory.


GEOFFREY KEYES,
Major General, USL,
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS II CORPS
Office of the Commanding General
APO 19 U.S. Army

330.15 (G1)

In the Field
18 September 1944

Subject: Commendation
To : Commanding General, II Corps Artillery.

I wish to express to you, and through you to every II Corps Artilleryman my sincere appreciation for the magnificent job the artillery has done in assisting to breach the Gothic Line. Your unceasing and accurate fires have hunted out the enemy and harassed him in his every effort to impede our advance. The destruction wreaked upon enemy personnel and materiel is mute testimony to your untiring efforts. The weary cannoneers can square their shoulders with the pride of a tough job well done.

Geoffrey Keyes
GEOFFREY KEYES,
Major General, USA,
Commanding.

330.15 1st Ind. HDJ/jas
HEADQUARTERS II Corps Artillery, APO 19 U.S. Army, 20 September 1944

TO: Commanding Officers, Artillery Units with II Corps.

It is most gratifying to forward this commendation and to know that those higher up realize the efforts exerted by the artillerymen in rendering maximum support in breaching the Gothic Line.

Henry D. Jay
HENRY D. JAY
Brigadier General, U. S. Army,
Commanding

Two days later the Battalion moved up to Traversa crossing the famous Futa Pass in the process. This Pass had been exceedingly hard-fought by the Fifth Army and defended by the Germans with a maximum of material obstacles in the form of anti-tank ditches extending for miles, pill boxes set back into the steep hillsides, extensive road blocks of various types and, of course, the ever-present anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines. The terrain was extremely well suited to this type of defense and the Americans lost many men in driving through the formidable German defenses.

The Pass itself had a good section of road completely blown out where it crossed a very deep ravine, and the Engineers with their bulldozers had made about two miles of new road along the steep mountainside, besides filling in the blown-in place so that there could be two-way traffic over the Pass.

It was at Traversa on the 28th of September that the rain began, and for two days the Italian countryside was treated to a cold, heavy and dreary rain. The Battalion moved on the 1st of October with difficulty because of the mud, to a long flat gently sloping valley just off Highway 6529. Several miles up Highway 65 from Traversa sits Radicose Pass, which actually looks much more like a pass than Futa as the road comes straight up and at the Pass hits the very top of the ridge and starts down again. It is here that Highway 6529 branches off to the right of Highway 65 and winds its way along the mountainside just below the top of the ridge for several miles.

It was this road junction that the Germans shelled so steadily for a long time, and it is said that three donkeys which had been killed by shell fire and carried to the side of the road were within two days completely taken care of by the enemy shell fire so that nothing remained. It was also here at a later date that the big Fifth Army Christmas tree stood during the Christmas season and gave what cheer it could to those passing over this dreary and always cloudy part of the journey between Florence and the front.

The valley where the Battalion went into position was near a small town named Sambuco, which had been very, very badly smashed up by American tanks in driving the Germans out of the valley. Within three days this valley had the most tremendous array of artillery emplaced in it that had probably been gathered together in any equivalent amount of space during the whole campaign. All three of the light battalions of 85th Division artillery, as well as their 155 Howitzers, came, followed by the 403rd 90 MM ack ack guns which were acting as field artillery. Then came the 936th F.A.A. battalion of self-propelled 105's strung itself out just below the ridge top.

All in all there were in the neighborhood of 86 guns in the valley and so close together were the guns, trucks and tents housing all the necessary installations for the various battalions that any enemy shell falling in the valley could not help but hit something. As a matter of fact, a dugout full of men was hit, killing several, and there were other casualties from enemy fire; although, miraculously enough, the valley received a very small quota of fire. Enemy planes were overhead every night, but only once did they drop any bombs, and then they missed the strategic part of the valley. A demolition bomb and some anti-personnel bombs landed across the river from Headquarters Battery of the 173rd.

The rain began again on October 4 and continued off and on, but mostly on, the rest of the week. By this time it was becoming very difficult for trucks to get out of the area and onto the "highway", which itself was nothing more than a mass of mud with a rock bottom about a foot down. As for the valley itself, there was no bottom, and for a distance of about 300 yards all along the road there were deep ruts and snarls in the thick mud where the trucks had chummed their way out.

At the north end of the valley and right beside the road there was a huge twisted piece of black rock jutting thirty or thirty-five feet up into the air,

and this position came to be known to all the soldiers who had been there as "that place by the black rock".

It was obvious several days before it was time to move that it was going to be a very difficult proposition to get any unit out of the valley, much less a battalion of 155 guns. So when, on October 7, the movement order was received, it was decided that "A" and "B" Batteries would close station and start trying for the road at dawn the next morning, and so on the 8th of October began what was without doubt the most difficult displacement ever achieved by the 173rd.

The 90 MM ack ack battalion had some full track prime movers and a few tractors had been borrowed from artillery units in other places as well as the Engineers, and these were put to work helping the guns to get out. By night-fall "A" Battery had managed to get one gun and truck onto the hard road. It had rained all day, and every man in the Battalion had spent the entire day pushing and sloshing around in the knee-deep mud trying to get his battery out.

Headquarters managed to borrow a couple of tractors that weren't in use at the moment and by 10:00 that night had all but one of its trucks on the road. It started out for the new position and was held up on a one-way road where two trucks had met and locked bumpers. Finally this was cleared up and then it was found impossible to make headway in the slick mud on an uphill climb, so a nearby Engineer unit was contacted and at 2:00 in the morning they came out with a bulldozer and pulled the entire Battery up a climb about a half-mile long, one truck at a time. Finally at about 4:30 in the morning the Battery arrived. The C.P. was set up in a field which was rapidly filling with water, and there it remained all the next day, the next night, and half the next day before the firing batteries began to arrive.

The gun batteries had worked steadily day and night with their winches, chains and sometimes three tractors in tandem getting their guns out of the morass. The "black rock" will forever be unforgettable to those men who struggled so hard and long to get away from it; and it was indeed a discouraging sight to see one of the huge guns with two or three tractors and a truck all inching their way along and plowing up great piles of mud in front of the gun shield, stopping every foot or two to replace a broken chain or a snapped shear pin.

By nightfall the 11th of October "A" and "B" Batteries were in the new position in the vicinity of Qunizano, which is a little town down in a valley to the east side of Highway 65 just south of Scanello. On the 12th of October "C" Battery began its ordeal and managed to be in position by noon of the next day with two guns, the rain having stopped and the roads having been improved considerably by the Engineers. One of the two guns came in the 14th and No. 4 gun the 15th of October and finally the Battalion was completely emplaced in the position which it was to occupy for the remainder of the winter.

It soon became apparent that the line was not going to be pushed forward much farther. A scant ten kilometers from Bologna and actually in sight of the Po Valley plain, it was heart-breaking to have to stop, but the mud became so bad that it was almost impossible to move anything but a full track vehicle off Highway 65. Highway 65 itself, which was in dry weather a metallic surface road, became under the terrific and constant traffic, as well as the rain, shelling and bombing, a wide mud trail through the mountains, with many ruts and holes under the soupy mud, and it was difficult at times even to know where the edges of the road were.

The Engineers worked constantly to keep it drained and marked and as suitable as possible for all types of traffic, but it was a never-ending job. Any place off Highway 65 had mud ruts to deep that jeep travel was impossible, and in some cases even command and reconnaissance cars and 3/4 ton weapons carriers got hung up on rocks or clay between the ruts.

The road to 173rd wound down into the valley zigzagging several times to get down the steep hill until it came into Qunizano. "C" Battery was nearest the top of the hill, then "B" and finally "A" was probably 100 yards from the town and actually on the valley floor. In order to get to Headquarters, one had to go into Qunizano and make a right-angle turn between two big stone houses and go up a very narrow, rocky, poorly drained and steep road for a distance of about a quarter of a mile.

The 403rd F.A. ack ack guns were also up this road near Headquarters Battery. Their full track prime movers carrying ammunition in and out of the position soon made this road impossible to travel, even with a 2½ ton G.M.C., which was the biggest truck Headquarters had. It was necessary to draft in to service a pair of oxen and a cart from the nearest farm in order to get rations into the Battery until winter set in in earnest and the ground finally froze.

Out to the front farther up Highway 65 jutted the tall, cone-like Montedelle Formiche. An OP was soon established on this mountain which looked into the outskirts of Bologna and showed a small section of Highway 9 which ran parallel to the Po River along the southern edge of the valley.

During the remainder of the month of October the batteries consolidated and improved their positions as best they could in the rain and mud. "A" Battery's entire gun area was a sea of knee-deep mud which made it extremely difficult for the men to work. They were close enough to the town, however, that they were able to establish some installations in buildings of the town so that some of the men at least had a dry place to live.

Headquarters Battery's position in the middle of a field had become practically untenable, and the majority of the men were finally moved into the barns and buildings of two nearby farms. "B" Battery and "C" Battery likewise took advantage of what buildings were in the vicinity and when everything was finally settled, a majority of the men in the Battalion were fairly comfortably situated at least as compared with the previous winter.

Quite a bit of firing was done during the month, particularly super-charge missions on enemy artillery and ack ack installations, some of which were plotted from aerial photographs, some located from ground OP's, and the rest observed from the air OP's which kept up a constant patrol of the front.

Each of the battalions in the Group had two Cub planes, and they were consolidated under a Group air field organization, which sent them out one or two at a time to patrol the sectors covered by the Group's artillery. The job done by these planes and the pilots and observers who worked in them can hardly be calculated. At a conservative estimate, probably 95% of the observed missions performed by long range artillery was handled by these planes. Their constant presence over the lines not only served the purpose of restricting the enemy's movement, but also cut sizably the amount of counter battery artillery fire which the Group received, for the Germans had come to know that the first truck on the road out in the open or the first flash of a piece of field artillery or anti-aircraft or in some cases even the sight of men in the open, would immediately serve as a target for the American artillery through the observation of a little Cub plane spiraling around two or three thousand feet above them.

During the first week of November, II Corps established a mammoth rest center at Montecatini. Montecatini had been originally a very fashionable spot where the elite of Italy had come to take the waters. There was a considerable system of hot springs boiling under the ground there, and Montecatini had several large establishments where one could go and lie in a long bath tub and soak in these sulphurous waters. The usual accessories, massage and steam bath, were of course present. There were somewhere in the neighborhood of 200 hotels in this little town, which is located about half-way between Florence and Pisa and it made an ideal spot for the comfortable housing of a large number of men.



MACHINE GUN
PRACTICE
QUINZANO
ITALY



The 173rd was given a very nice, roomy villa and Lt. Richards and Lt. White, with a small detail of cooks and other useful men, were sent off to set things up. The entertainment in the town consisted of a large Red Cross club and at least two USO shows at all times. Despite the fact that the town was very small and there weren't enough girls to go around and not many things to do after one had seen the shows, the camp was quite successful for the 173rd, largely through the efforts of Lt. Richards, Lt. White and Lt. Schroeder. A small bar was set up in one of the rooms and games were made available. A week at Montecatini proved in many cases actually to be a rest, which is indeed a rare thing to be said of a "rest" camp.

For the next three or four months large numbers of men were sent weekly to this camp, and the quota for the Fifth Army rest center in Florence was also filled. The Batteries all operated on as few men as could possibly load and fire the guns and carry on the administrative and communications work, and probably every man in the Battalion who so desired made at least two trips to rest camp during this period.

Another thing that made the winter much more pleasant was the fact that the men were issued heavy wool socks and water-proof shoe pacs, which were almost water-proof. This alleviated a situation which had been very bothersome the winter before, and the feet were kept moderately warm and dry. A new type bed roll was also issued, which was a sort of sleeping bag and proved to be fairly warm and comfortable for a soldier who didn't thrash around too much in his sleep. A new type of jacket was issued which had a removable pile lining, and all in all, what with additional pyramidal tents and tent stoves, the Battalion was quite well equipped for the winter weather. Stoves were improvised from 90 MM shell casings, and as long as the gasoline supply lasted, they were very efficient for heating pup tents and other small rooms and dugouts.

During November "C" Battery attempted to set up a ground OP on Hill 622. For two days they were unable to get up into the hill because of enemy fire. Finally after waiting a couple of days till things cooled down "A" Battery sent up a party and was able to establish the OP.

Beginning about this time the Germans apparently discovered that there was someone in the valley who had been giving trouble, because they started to reciprocate and a few shells started to come in almost every day scattered over the entire Battalion area. The front line having quieted down, enemy planes started to come down Highway 65 every evening to see what they could see. Red alerts were frequent even in afternoons, and some of the evening alerts gave a pretty good anti-air craft show when the planes were visible.

Due to the difficulty of moving, Ordnance came to the Battalion for re-tubing the guns instead of the Battalions' taking the guns to Ordnance, and they came to the area and began re-tubing on the 9th of November. On November 10 an hour or so after dark "A" Battery's No. 1 gun in firing a mission blew off its breech block and ring. One man was killed and nine wounded. The block itself was buried about three or four feet in the ground, and although no one can ever be certain what causes these things, it was believed that the breech ring had a defect in the steel. This accident made the men a little nervous for a short time because this tube had been a new one and had only about 100 rounds on it, but as weeks went on and all the rest of the guns functioned perfectly, confidence was restored.

The air activity over the front during this period was terrific. P-47's and P-51's were dive bombing and strafing all day long every clear day, and they could be watched very easily from the Battalion position, although of course, their targets were not visible. Bombing raids were also frequent, and these were signaled by missions which came down from Corps to fire on enemy ack ack batteries at given times. This usually meant that bomb-

ers were going to be in that area, and they wanted the German ack ack people to be too busy dodging shells to fire at the American planes.

On the first of December Major James M. Moreman reported to the Battalion as a replacement for Major Petros, who had left on rotation almost 6 months before. He was assigned as S-3.

On the 5th of December "C" Battery received a high burst directly over their position. It did no damage, but evidently the Germans were able to draw some sort of line on "C" Battery, for these things became more frequent. On the 10th a couple of shells landed right in their area, one of them just about lunch time and right beside a group of men who were going from the gun to the mess truck. Two were killed and five injured. More shelling came in the 11th and increased in intensity, but no one was hit. From then on it continued almost daily, apparently searching out the valley, for the rounds never landed very close together and there were quite a few bursts over the area every day.

On December 21 two or three officers went to view a demonstration of the new V-T fuse, which had a small radar unit inside of it and after being armed, caused the shell to explode upon passing within approximately thirty feet of any solid object. This new fuse was to be kept very hush hush and had been tried out by the Navy, where shells which did not go off could not be picked up by the enemy. It was said that these fuses would not be used by our artillery until the General Staff believed the war to be in its last six months.

During December the weather began to get more wintry. It grew cold, and the sky was overcast and cloudy a large part of the day and there was some snow. Visibility was very poor, not only from the ground OP's, but also from the air, and a few days went by when there was no firing at all; however, II Corps or 77th Group generally had some air photo plots for interdiction missions, even when the Battalion could scrape up on observed fires.

Headquarters Battery was given a new radio on memorandum receipt by II Corps, which was to be used for long range airplane shoots by Spit Fires and P-51's, and for the remainder of the winter this method of registration and observed fire on targets of opportunity was used often and successfully. Due to the speed at which these planes flew, they were able to go far into enemy territory and shoot missions which had been much too dangerous for slow-flying Cubs.

Christmas came and went and proved to be pretty merry. There was plenty of turkey, cranberry sauce and the usual trimmings for a Christmas dinner, as well as countless packages of candy, cake, cookies and other little specialties from home, which rolled in from the APO by the truck load almost every day for the two weeks preceeding Christmas.

During the lulls, a lively contest to determine the cribbage champ of headquarters furnished no end of amusement, with Major Hinkley and Lt. Richards nip and tuck for the honors. A foursome of Hearts in between competitions also furnished a long lived memory in the banter between Maj. Hinkley and Captain Burns. Many new and unorthodox means of combining foods sent from home in Christmas packages came into being at this time.

The day after Christmas a little ceremony was held in the "B" Battery area where General Henry D. Jay, accompanied by Col. Ketcham and Lt. Col. Rice, fired the 100,000th round to come out of a 173rd gun in combat. "B" entertained later with a camouflaged "C" ration dinner.

On the 28th of December "C" Battery received another shelling which killed two more men and wounded four. Shells also landed in the "B" Battery and Headquarters Battery areas, but no one was hurt.

Capt. Warner, the 77th Group dentist, had come to live at Headquarters in November, and he had set up his little dental clinic in the ante-room of one of the farm houses. He surveyed the teeth of all the men in the Battalion, and those who needed work of not too complicated a nature were

taken care of during the two or three months that he remained there. Besides the soldiers, he naturally had a large civilian clientele, and almost every day a ragged Italian would come in who had heard of Il Dentista at Calzolari's farm and had come to see what could be done about his toothache, which usually meant an extraction.

Dr. Pease, the Battalion surgeon, also had his share of Italian customers, and one of his secret desires was realized when he delivered a baby of the shoemaker's wife in the little group of cottages nearby.

And so the year 1944 drifted to a snowy close, and the activities of the Battalion up to and including December 31 might be summarized as follows: total number of days in combat since December 13, 1943, when the Battalion first entered combat, 373; days of rest, 12; total number of rounds fired to date, 103,173; total of battle casualties killed in action, 12; wounded, 35.

The New Year was rung in with the usual celebrations and another big turkey dinner was made possible by the Quartermaster. Business continued as usual, however, for the Battalion fired 308 rounds on New Year's Day.

January 4 the Battalion was shelled fairly heavily, and "C" Battery had two men hurt. The 6th and 7th of January the visibility was extremely poor, and there were no rounds fired either day.

About the 10th of January the Germans launched a limited offensive attack over on the west coast against the 92nd Division. They were so successful that it was the general concensus of opinion that they might have rolled clear into Lucca if they had been prepared to do so. As a result of this scare, plans were made for a shift of the whole front slightly to the rear in order to occupy positions more suitable to defense in case of a strong counter attack. Consequently the 12th and 13th of January were employed by the Battalion in the preparation of a position several miles to the rear and just off Highway 65 on the road to Firenzuola. There was about three or four feet of snow all over the positions to be occupied, and it was very difficult to prepare possible emplacements for the guns.

Also on the 12th, Lt. Robert R. Uhler, one of the Assistance S-3's of the Battalion was transferred to the 3-Section of 77th F.A. Group Headquarters, which meant a promotion for him. Two days later the Battalion was transferred to the 423rd F.A. Group commanded by Colonel Workman. Under the new Group the Battalion was required to lay all the wire necessary for occupation of the retrograde position, so the situation looked fairly serious. It may be stated at this time, however, that it was never found necessary to use these positions; in fact, throughout the entire combat service of the Battalion every displacement was in a forward direction.

It was about this time that a couple of interesting air photos were sent down from II Corps which located beautifully all twelve of the Battalions' guns lying in the snow with dark green camouflage nets over them. It suggested strongly that a change in camouflage procedure was called for. The next day the nets were removed, white paint was secured, and the Battalion began to paint the guns white. After the job was done one could barely see a gun just across the valley, the white paint was so effective. Further precautions were taken by the gun crews who, when not actually working on the guns, shoveled snow into the area between the guns on the trails so that these black spots would not be evident from above.

So January passed, and the Battalion was practically frozen into its little valley and rolled out the rounds when it could see anything at which to shoot.

The rounds rolled in regularly. Headquarters Battery received a shaking-up on the 30th of January when a large enemy shell struck the corner of the building in which Message Center was located; however, due to the thick stone walls of which these buildings were constructed and the fact that the shell struck a glancing blow, the wall was not penetrated and no one was hurt. Much damage was done to radio vehicles parked in this area.

The Front line in the sector remained practically the same during this month.

HEADQUARTERS
MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS
UNITED STATES ARMY
APO 512

1 January 1945

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

Never before has the vital importance of the Italian Front been so obvious as in this crisis of the great counter-offensive which the Germans have launched against our forces in Luxembourg and Belgium.

The great number of men and the vast amount of supply needed by the Germans to pursue the Italian Campaign is costing him dearly now in his all-out, desperate counter-attack on the Western Front.

Anything short of a superhuman effort on our part, any slackening in our effort, means a longer and more difficult war. It is not enough for us merely to hold and engage the enemy force. We must carry the fight to him and destroy him. We must force him to pour more and more men and supplies into Italy.

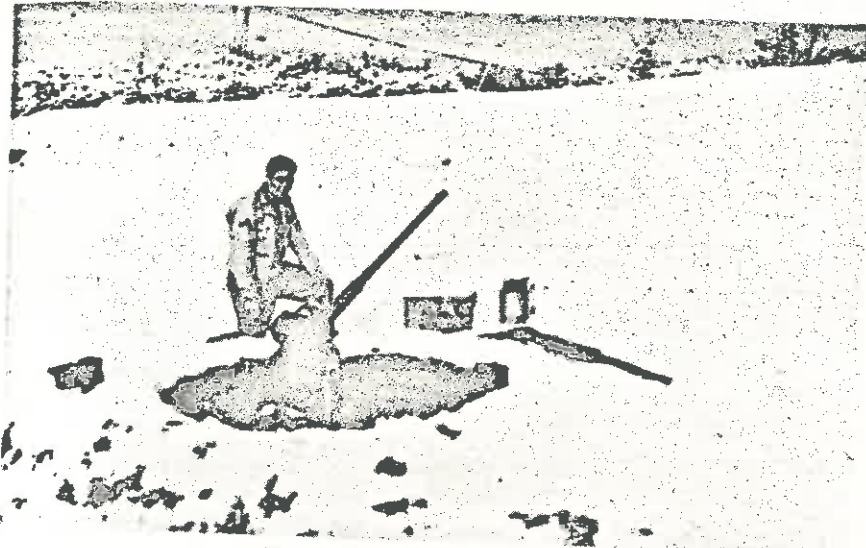
As we enter the New Year I call on every one of you, in every branch of the Service, to drive yourselves to the utmost, to give your last ounce of courage and determination, and to destroy the enemy ruthlessly wherever you find him. Only by putting all that we have into this final battle for victory can we be assured that the New Year will bring us the peace and the reunion with our own that we all so much desire. May good fortune attend your efforts.

Joseph T. McFarney
JOSEPH T. MCFARNEY
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army
Commanding.

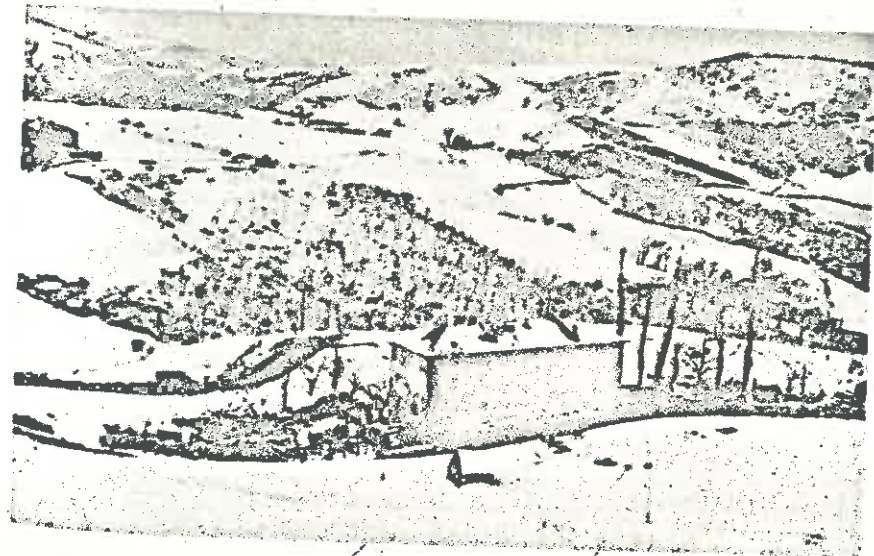
DISTRIBUTION:

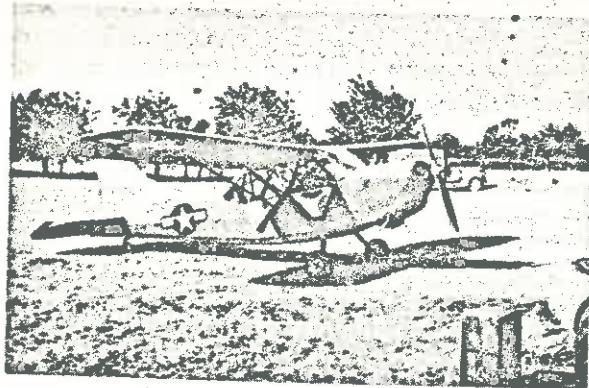
"2"

-1-



SERVICE BATTERY POSITION
MONGHIDORO ITALY

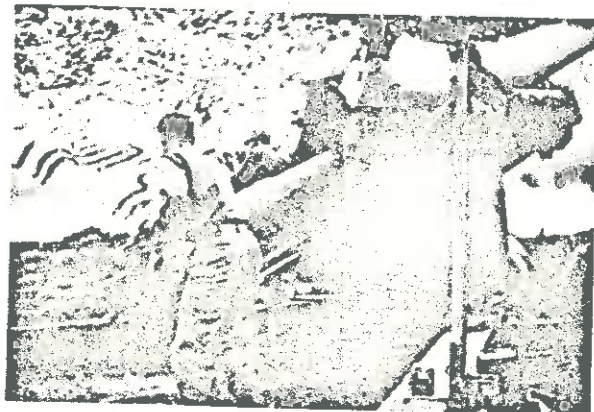




MANY MISSIONS
WERE FIRED WITH
THE AID OF OUR
AIR OBSERVERS



HEADQUARTERS
FIRE DIRECTION
CENTER
QUINZANO, ITALY



GUN POSITION
QUINZANO
ITALY

The month of February passed much the same way, with the Battalion still under 423rd F.A. Group, and it quickly slid into what new routine was necessary under a new Group Commander. The rounds continued to go out, and the rounds continued to come in, and red alerts continued frequently. The weeks passed swiftly, and March was broken up by a visit from Col. Ketcham, the former Battalion Commander, who was now a full colonel and Executive Officer of the 91st Division Artillery.

Service Battery had a few hot evenings because they were back down Highway 65 near Monghidoro, and both sides of the road were piled high with ammunition in either direction. When enemy shells began to land not far away and enemy planes began to drop bombs in the vicinity. Service Battery could not help but become a little hot under the collar. There was no place else to stack the ammunition, as it had to be practically on the road in order for trucks to get to it to load it, and it couldn't be too far back because it would take too long for the trucks to get back and forth with their loads, so Service Battery sweated it out completely surrounded by high explosives, which, incidentally, were never hit by the enemy.

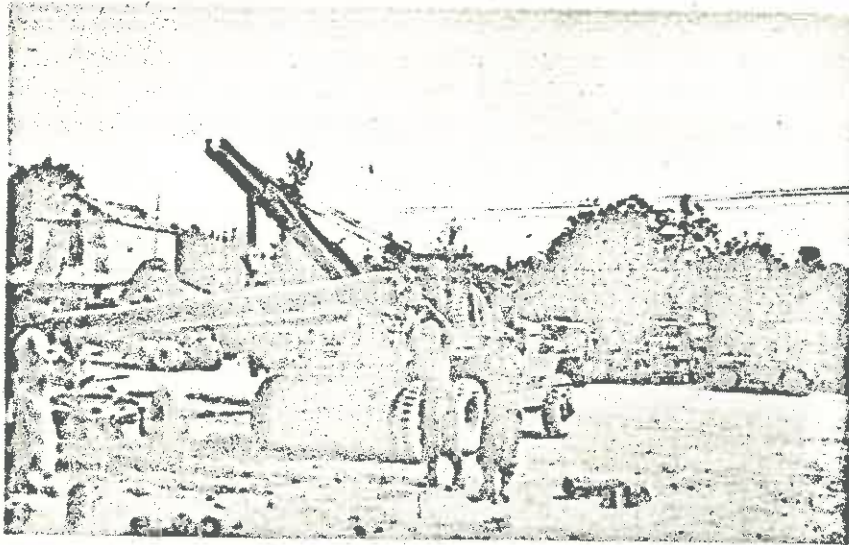
During these difficult times when sometimes it seemed an impossibility that rations, ammunition and all the other necessary supplies could be brought in with any regularity at all, Service Battery performed their functions nobly, and the 173rd never lacked any equipment that was available to anyone else. Service Battery also performed almost herculean tasks in its field during the days of extremely rapid movement, when it had to maintain contact with the various classes of supply dumps to the rear, and at the same time keep tabs on where the Battalion was so that it could get the stuff to the firing Batteries. In fact, on the 10th of February, Service Battery was recommended for the award of Meritorious Service Unit Plaque which it certainly deserved for the job it had done.

In February the Battalion received another piece of ordnance to play around with in the form of one 8" Howitzer. It was attached temporarily to "A" Battery and put into position about 400 yards forward of "A" Battery's guns. This instrument was used almost exclusively for precision and destruction missions, and any houses which were suspected of harboring enemy OP's or other installations were fired on by the Howitzer through the medium of the air OP's. It proved to be phenomenally accurate in the medium ranges, and the observers often reported three hits out of five rounds on an ordinary sized house. The shell for this Howitzer weighs about 200 pounds, and four or five hits were enough to make quite a mess out of a stone house. This Howitzer remained a part of the Battalion until it finally left Quinzano, when it was left to rejoin its old unit.

On the 11th of March "B" Battery took all its guns out at once for re-tubing; sent 51 men to Montecatini, sent 20 men to 94th Ordnance with the guns; and kept the rest in position.

On the March 16 the 173rd was reassigned to its old friend 77th F.A. Group, which was for the time being under the command of Col. Chapman, the former Executive Officer. On the next day the 8" Howitzer was badly shelled and put out of action for a short time, which led to its being placed in a new position the next day.

"B" Battery returned with shining new tubes on the 22nd and resumed its old firing position, and on the next day "A" Battery made the same arrangement, sending a number of men to Montecatini, and some with the guns, and a few remained in position. They came back on the 29th and "C" Battery left on the 30th. Thus passed the month of March with the usual amount of out-going and in-coming missions and red alerts, the one big change being in the weather, which broke and began to show signs of spring. Everyone began to get a little more on his toes because it was a foregone conclusion that as soon as the weather got right Fifth Army would make a strong attack, and the Battalion would be on its way again.



GUNS ARE SENT BACK TO
MONTECATINI FOR RE-TUBING



ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS
April, 1945

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY

**Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Forces
in the Mediterranean Theatre**

Final victory is near. The German Forces are now very groggy and only need one mighty punch to knock them out for good. The moment has now come for us to take the field for the last battle which will end the war in Europe. You know what our comrades in the West and in the East are doing on the battlefields. It is now our turn to play our decisive part. It will not be a walk-over; a mortally wounded beast can still be very dangerous. You must be prepared for a hard and bitter fight; but the end is quite certain — there is not the slightest shadow of doubt about that. You, who have won every battle you have fought, are going to win this last one.

Forward then into battle with confidence, faith and determination to see it through to the end. Godspeed and good luck to you all.

H. R. Alexander

Field-Marshal,
Supreme Allied Commander,
Mediterranean Theatre.

HEADQUARTERS II CORPS
APO 19 U.S. ARMY

In the Field
10 April 1945

To II Corps.

The time has come to complete the job we left unfinished last October.

Do not underrate your enemy but remember that even at his best, you drove him from his Gothic Line, from Loiano, Belmonte, Formiche, Grando, Stance and Battaglia.

I am confident that with that same courage and determination you will drive him from these remaining hills and force him to surrender in the Po Valley.

You will thus justify the Army Commander's selection of you for the place of honor in this final operation and you will reap your full share of glory in the Final Victory now within the grasp of your gallant comrades on other fronts.

Here's to a final "Speedy" Victory!

Good luck - Godspeed.


GEOFFREY KEISS,
Major General, USA,
Commanding.

- 1 -

Col. Isaacson, former commanding officer of the 910th F.A. of the 85th Division, was given command of the 77th Group and came around on the second of April to make his initial inspection. On April 5 Major James M. Moreman returned from detached service with Fifth Army Group and was assigned as Battalion Executive Officer. The next day "C" Battery came back from the re-tubing factory and re-emplaced itself in its old position, and once again the 173rd was exerting its full firing power.

Finally on the 15th of April announcement of the big day arrived, and as usual "D" Day was that day; H-Hour was 2230. The 16th, 17th and 18 were extremely busy days. The Battalion fired 900-1000 rounds each day, and a couple of the Batteries had to change their center lines to give added support in a different sector. On the 19th the Battalion moved out to an assembly area on Highway 64. From here reconnaissance parties went forward to look for positions, and by 7:30 that night all batteries were ready to fire in the vicinity of Sabino.

It appeared that the main attack was not to go through Bologna as had been previously surmised, but that the break-through had occurred a short distance west, where the 10th Mountain Division, which had been in the line a short time, performed so well in softening up the line for the break-through.

The next day the Battalion was moved up one Battery at a time to Mazzelli. On the 21st the batteries moved again, one at a time, to Casalecchio.

A short review of the situation is in order at this point for a proper understanding of the incredible events to follow. Upon breaking through the line the Sixth South African Armoured Division, followed by various American armored units, tore up the main roads with all possible speed, stopping for nothing except enemy resistance.

The terrain was completely different from that which the Fifth and Eight Armies had so laboriously taken during the preceding year and a half of grinding up hill and down, always under observation of the enemy. Here was a wide expanse of perfectly flat plain with an extensive network of straight, level roads, the more important ones surfaced with black-top. As the armored columns spear-headed north on the two or three parallel main roads toward the Po Valley, the Infantry followed as best it could, doing a little mopping up and attempting to retain contact with the fast-moving tanks. It was impossible to do both and more important that the contact be maintained.

The first and most important result of this rather weird situation was a healthy scattering of Germans fairly evenly distributed over the areas between the roads, and so it happened that several times the reconnaissance parties, upon approaching farm houses or other small buildings in their search for shelter for their installations, would find them inhabited by a few Germans, left behind as snipers. They surrendered when their ammunition was exhausted. They were pretty sick and tired of the whole thing -- their trucks and gasoline had given out; Allied units on the roads had split their forces up; and most of them had no idea where the front was or even where their own unit officers were.

Communications had been completely disrupted, and those Germans who had not been able to retreat fast enough to stay behind the etherial German line were either giving themselves up or organizing into small groups to try to discover where they were and possibly sabotage the Allied effort a little bit from their vantage point behind the lines. And so it was that on April 22 at Casalecchio, the Battalion began to take prisoners, and before many days had passed, a fast and efficient routine for processing prisoners had been developed.

The Battalion moved first to San Giovanni, and upon arrival received a message from 77th F.A. Group for "A" and "C" Batteries simply to remain in position but not prepare to fire, and another move forward to Crevalcore was made later in the afternoon by the entire Battalion.

On the 23rd of April the Battalion moved to the vicinity of San Felice. From this position the batteries were able to reach the Po Valley. That evening another Long Tom battery, "A" Battery of the 530th F.A. Bn., was attached to the 173rd and called "D" Battery. A position was immediately reconnoitered, and this battery was put into action. In the late afternoon the entire Battalion moved to the vicinity of Gavello. On the 24th the Battalion displaced to Villa Poma. "D" Battery did not go into position but remained in assembly.

At this time the Battalion was extremely close to the Po Valley, and it seemed obvious that the next move would be a crossing. The nearest possible crossing point was located almost due north of the position and consisted of two towns, Revere and Ostiglia, one on each side of the river. Naturally the Germans had blown the bridge in between, also knocked down a railroad bridge. There was a considerable amount of fire coming into the town of Revere, which was on the south side of the river.

Some of the Infantry had crossed in assault boats but thus far all of the Field Artillery was still on the south bank. In their rapid retreat to the Po River, the Germans had had to abandon quite a large amount of equipment--trucks in need of small parts and sometimes even minor repairs were left by the roadside because there was no time to stop and fix them. The Americans were following so closely upon their heels that the bridges across the Po River proved to be serious bottlenecks, and the entire town of Revere on the south side of the river was jammed with German vehicles of all types. Piazzas were crowded with them, and they were lined up nose to tail in most of the streets where they had not been cleared away. Some of them had been burned, but the great majority of them had just been left as is, full of a miscellaneous assortment of German equipment, which included practically everything except pistols, cameras and binoculars, which were the number one souvenir of the theatre.

There were countless records, rifles, machine guns, small arms ammunition of all types, hand grenades, clothing, food, tools and many other handy items which were appropriated if they could be carried.

The German horse-drawn artillery had also been left, and there were many horses roaming the countryside which were rapidly being taken over by the Italian farmers as fast as the GI's moved on and gave them up as temporary sources of diversion. It was said that when the first American Infantry troops entered the town of Revere practically no one was on foot. They were driving German army trucks, motorcycles, Volkswagens, and riding bicycles or horses.

On April 25 the Battalion received a special field order which designated "B" and "C" Batteries as parts of two special task forces which would cross the river with fast moving trucks, tanks, and artillery as soon as the Engineers could complete a bridge.

"B" Battery was to join with the 88th Division task force and "C" Battery the 91st Division. "A" and "D" Batteries were to cross the next day along with Headquarters; however, the Colonel desired to get Headquarters across the river with all possible haste and so decided to try to take them across as a part of the two firing batteries. A dispersal area had been set up along the bank of the river where the pontoon bridge was being built. The bridge was scheduled to be completed at 1800, but, due to unforeseen difficulties, the river was not completely spanned until about 0500 the next morning.

The Battalion spent the night lined up on the bank of the river with numerous other trucks and tanks forming a solid block of material about 300 x 100 yards, a target that could hardly be missed by the German night raiders. True to form, just at dusk the first German plane arrived, and when it got approximately over the bridge area, a terrific ack ack barrage was thrown at it, and the plane veered off with all possible haste and went back home without doing any damage. As it became apparent that the bridge

would not be completely prepared until morning, the machine guns were mounted and manned, and the men scattered themselves out as best they could to try to snatch a little sleep.

The Luftwaffe came over four or five times during the night, and in the early morning hours just before dawn it apparently became light enough for the pilots to see the bridge, because they dipped down and strafed it; however, there was no traffic on the bridge at the time so no casualties resulted.

At the last minute it had been decided also to ring in "A" and "D" Batteries on the crossing and by 2:00 on the 26th the entire Battalion was on the north side of the river and reconnoitering for positions for Headquarters and the two free batteries, which were finally set up in the vicinity of Raconova. Later in the afternoon they were moved once more up to another San Giovanni.

On the 27th, when it became obvious that there was to be no concerted German resistance, the special task forces were broken up and the normal organization was resumed. "B" and "C" Batteries rejoined the Battalion at Zevio, where Headquarters, "A" and "D" had moved in the morning.

The entire Battalion moved out from Zevio at 5:00 the morning of the 28th and went into bivouac area nearby awaiting further orders. Headquarters moved ahead that same afternoon to Montebello, leaving the batteries behind. That night the Battery was awakened by a number of shots, and a small fire fight took place in the area, which resulted in a complete rout of five Germans who had been walking down the nearby levee and had been accosted by a guard, Sgt. John Heit. No one was hurt, but the entire Battery from that time on was very much on the alert, particularly at night.

"C" Battery in the meantime had actually been involved in an extensive fire fight back at Montebello, in which they killed eleven Germans and wounded one. One man from "C" Battery was slightly wounded. On the afternoon of the 29th the entire Battalion emplaced in the vicinity of Vicenza.

At 5:00 the next morning "B" Battery moved forward to San Pietro in Gu. At 10:00 the rest of the Battalion received march order and remained in place for further orders. At 2:00 the Battalion was ordered to the vicinity of Castelfranco. The Battalion was in column on the road and was halted by MP's who reported that there was a large concentration of Germans who had gathered together and cut the road a couple of miles ahead and had the American Infantry there pinned down.

A reconnaissance was immediately made down the road for a distance of several miles and nothing was discovered so it was decided that the Battalion would move on with everyone alerted and the machine guns manned. It then proceeded uneventfully to Castelfranco.

As soon as the Battalion got into position an officer from motor bn. arrived to report that there were sixty Germans at a farm about two kilometers distant. Twenty men from each battery with machine guns and rocket launchers were immediately sent out but the Germans had apparently skipped by the time they got there and it was too dark to look for them.

On the next day in reconnoitering around it was discovered that there was a PW cage located in Castelfranco which had grown up from ten prisoners and four guards to about 1500 PW's and four guards in the last two days. Prisoners were being picked up on every hand, and some were coming in of their own volition; and as soon as the word got around that there was a PW cage at any spot, it was immediately swamped with prisoners. The Battalion furnished about twenty men to help guard the cage in Castelfranco until the MP's could take it over. On the same day a detachment

of men went to San Martino and came back with twenty-one PW's.

At about 2:00 in the afternoon the Battalion received march order and was to wait for further orders coming by one of the Battalion cub planes. Lt. Harms arrived at about 3:00 and in landing on the road, was pushed a little by the wind, and one wing tip hit a tree causing minor damage to the plane. Lt. Harms suffered injuries to his knee and Lt. Meeker was shaken up. The orders which they carried sent the Battalion back to Vicenza, where it was to go into bivouac. From there it was to organize a constant road guard- -which would keep the main road open at all times and safe from marauding bands of Germans and prevent single cars or small parties from being ambushed from the side of the road.

For the past several days the line had been so ill defined and the Germans moving so fast that there had been no actual resistance of any kind and the Battalion, although moving daily and setting up to fire in each position in case resistance was met by the forward elements, fired very few rounds and these mostly for registration purposes.

While the batteries were organizing their road patrols, word came on the evening of the 2nd of May that the German troops clear up into Southern Austria had surrendered and the war was over for the Fifth Army.

RESTRICTED

Sgt. JOURNAL

HEADQUARTERS II CORPS
APO 19 U. S. ARMY

30 April 1945

TO: The Officers and Men of II Corps.

The German Army in ITALY has been destroyed.

Spearheading the overwhelming drive of the Fifth Army, you have played a major role in this destruction. In addition to capturing over 37 thousand of the enemy's finest fighting troops, our hospitals are filled with his wounded, and your scene of advance is strewn with his dead and his war material.

You drove through the strongest enemy defensive positions in NORTH ITALY, you forced the crossings of the PO, ADIGE, and BRENTA RIVERS with such speed and relentlessness that you slashed through the main routes of retreat of the fleeing German Army, encircling great numbers of his demoralized troops.

On the eve of the regrouping of our Armies for the closing phase of the ITALIAN Campaign, I want to express to each of you my appreciation of all that you have accomplished as individuals and as a team, and my pride in having commanded you in your historic victory.

Geoffrey Keyes
GEOFFREY KEYES,
Lieutenant General U.S.A.,
Commanding.

DISTRIBUTION:

1 copy per Co and Sep Detachment, II Corps Troop List 29 Apr 45.

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS FIFTH ARMY
APO-464 U.S. ARMY

2 May, 1945

TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE FIFTH ARMY:

The enemy in Italy has surrendered unconditionally, and the bitter Italian campaign has ended. Its hardships and tribulations are now behind, but to the men of the Fifth Army who have fought so gloriously through to victory, they will remain unforgettable memories. They will be forged, too, in the history of this war as a record of the inspired bravery and the traditional courage of free peoples.

The long months of steady, difficult operations over perhaps the most formidable terrain that any army has had to fight against the most seasoned and the toughest troops that the enemy could produce - mark a campaign which not only opened the assault upon the continent of Europe but which, in the shattering blows that it has struck, has contributed in a very great measure to that final victory in the West which is now in sight.

It is fitting that this campaign should have culminated in your magnificent performance in the final battles of these past few weeks. The accomplishments of every fighting unit have been superb, officers and men rising to the inspired heights. Storming rapidly and relentlessly out of your Winter positions in the Apennines - through defenses heavily prepared and in great depth - manned by an enemy resisting to the last because of a fanatical belief in his own abortive cause, you swarmed out of the valley of the Po to overwhelm him. Creating confusion and chaos in his ranks, by the weight and fury of your attack, in scarcely more than two weeks you captured enormous numbers of personnel, seized huge quantities of stores of equipment, inflicted thousands of casualties, and generated the widespread demoralization which rendered utterly ineffective one of the best fighting machines that the enemy had been able to place on the battlefield.

Throughout all operations, the feats performed by service and supporting units have been prodigious. Your accomplishments engendered in the combat elements a confidence which permitted them a complete freedom of action and enabled them to go forward in the knowledge you would not fail them.

You are all - every man and every officer - of all of the nationalities which go to make up this Army - deserving of the high praise that grateful nations now extend to you.

Please accept my own humble tribute. I regret that I cannot find words to express fully and adequately the sincerity of my respect for the character and fighting qualities of you, the members of this magnificent Army. I am proud - as only the Commander of a valiant, victorious army can be - and deeply gratified by your splendid victory.

L. K. Truscott, Jr.
L. K. TRUSCOTT, JR.
Lieutenant General, U. S. Army
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS 15TH ARMY GROUP

3 May 1945

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

I take great pleasure in conveying to each American officer and enlisted man in 15th Army Group the following message received by me from the President of the United States:

"ON THE OCCASION OF THE FINAL BRILLIANT VICTORY OF THE ALLIED ARMIES IN ITALY IN IMPOSING UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER UPON THE ENEMY, I WISH TO CONVEY TO THE AMERICAN FORCES UNDER YOUR COMMAND AND TO YOU PERSONALLY THE APPRECIATION AND GRATITUDE OF THE PRESIDENT AND OF THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES. NO PRAISE IS ADEQUATE FOR THE HEROIC ACHIEVEMENTS AND MAGNIFICENT COURAGE OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL UNDER YOUR COMMAND DURING THIS LONG AND TRYING CAMPAIGN.

"AMERICA IS PROUD OF THE ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTION MADE BY YOUR AMERICAN ARMIES TO THE FINAL ALLIED VICTORY IN ITALY. OUR THANKS FOR YOUR GALLANT LEADERSHIP AND THE DEATHLESS VALOR OF YOUR MEN.

SIGNED - HARRY S. TRUMAN."

Mark W. Clark

MARK W. CLARK
General, USA
Commanding

HEADQUARTERS II CORPS
APO 19
US ARMY

In the Field
23 May 1945

333-15 (CS)

Subject: Message of congratulations.
To : Division and Separate Unit Commanders, II Corps.

It is with great pride and satisfaction the following letter received from General Mark W. Clark, Commanding General, 15th Army Group and former Commanding General, II Corps, is published to the command:

"A year ago this month the Fifth Army, including your II Corps, was engaged in the great actions which smashed the Gustav and Hitler Lines, made possible the junction with our forces at Anzio and which led on to Rome and beyond. The part II Corps took in that drive is one I recall with great admiration, and it will become as much a part of your history as will your victorious actions in the offensive just completed. In that victory II Corps ever was in the forefront, conducting its operations with skill, initiative and aggressiveness.

You started from the Apennines, overlooking the Bologna area. You participated in the capture of Bologna, smashed across the Po, pounded through the Adige Line and swung north to meet the Seventh Army. I ask you to convey to all your officers and men the fact that I consider your operations in the past year to be in the great tradition of II Corps. Good luck to all of you."

BY COMMAND OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL KEYES

R.A. Risdien
R.A. RISDIEN
Lt. Col., A.G.D.,
Adjutant General.

DISTRIBUTION
"B-1"

23 May '45 450

-1-

CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTALION IS DISSOLVED

By the next morning the role of the 173rd F.A. Bn. in the clean-up job had been chosen, that of cleaning PW's at Bassano del Grappa, a pretty little town at the very foot of the Alps in the Dolomite section. On the 4th of May at 5:45 the reconnaissance parties left for Bassano to set up a Battalion camp. By afternoon of that day the camp was established, and organization of the PW routine was begun.

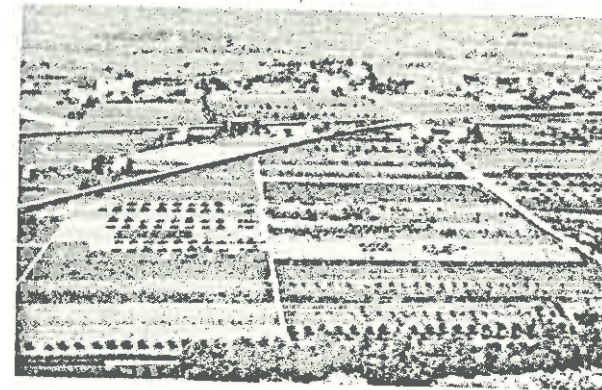
Also on the 4th of May it was reported that the German troops in Norway, Denmark and Northern Germany had surrendered to the Allies. This left only the Central German and Balkan fronts still fighting.

The next day additional tentage, cots and other administrative equipment were brought from Florence, and the Battalion was able to set up a fairly comfortable garrison.

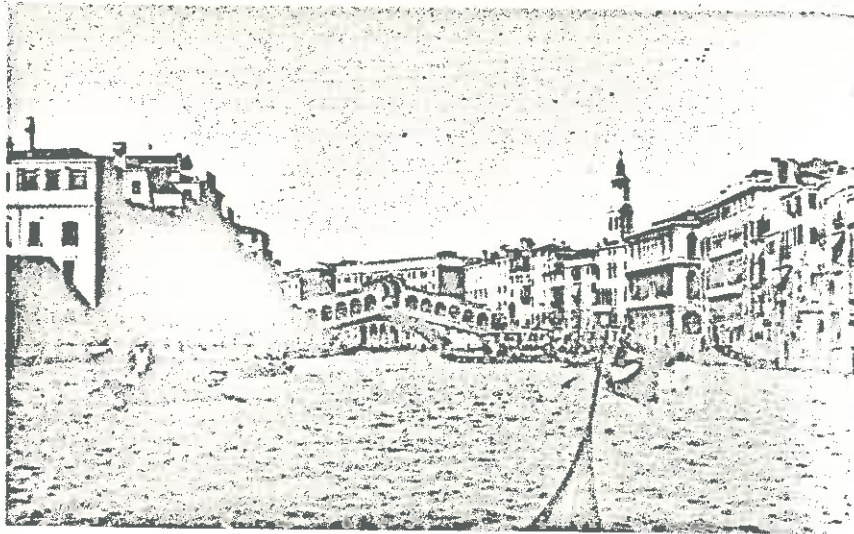
The PW stockades had been marked off but were not enclosed by wire or fences of any kind. They were simply large fields with occasional hedge rows to separate one from the other. For the next two or three days the prisoners poured in and were guarded by the members of the Battalion.

On the 6th several of the men were sent home on rotation, also Capt. Fred Pease, the Battalion was selected as one of the lucky individuals who were to return to their homes the day after the war was over and be that much ahead in getting that very desirable discharge from the U.S. Army.

A light Battalion training program was set up to go along with the guarding and work with the PW's. In addition the two battalions who had also come to the Bassano area to handle prisoners pooled their resources with the 173rd, and a Field Artillery MP patrol was established in the town of Bassano to insure that the soldiers kept their jackets buttoned, etc.



AERIAL VIEW OF THE BATTALION
AT BASSANO DEL GRAPPO



GRAND CANAL VENICE, ITALY

Tours to Venice were begun and about fifty men a day made the trip until everyone who desired to had seen the old city of gondolas. The city of Venice had been bombed only very slightly and that just in the port area, so that it showed none of the ravages of war. The one concession that had been made to the battle raging around it was a thick wall of sand bags and boards which covered the entire facade of the famous Cathedral of St. Mark and brick supports which had been built in to assure that the numerous gothic arches running along the ground floor of the Ducal Palace did not cave in from possible bombing raids. The pigeons in St. Mark's Square were still very much in evidence, as were the vendors of corn to throw to them.

The gondolas were crowded in the canals by the motor boats of the various military officials, both American and British, and many amphibious jeeps and ducks which were used to transport soldiers from one place to another. The Venetians had put into business everything that could float and were doing a terrific business with the GI's on the canals.

Later on large rest camps were established for the Americans on the Lido, one of the larger islands across about a quarter of a mile of lagoon from the city itself. These rest centers were in the large hotels which still remained on the Lido (some of them on the beach had been destroyed by mines, apparently in the anticipation of a possible amphibious attack). The swimming was wonderful and Venice proved to be another of those rest camps where the soldiers really got a rest.

Night life in the city was moderately riotous, but it was entirely different from that enjoyed in larger cities, where there were street lights and automobiles.

The 8th of May was officially announced as V.E. Day and the next day was to be a holiday for all troops not on duty.

A small house taken over in Bassano by 77th F. A. Group and made into a 77th Group officers' club where beer or spumante, a sort of Italian champagne could be purchased in the evenings.

The Battalion insignia, which had been approved by the War Depart-

ment many months before, was drawn by Sgt. Starck and taken to Florence to serve as a model in having some pins made for the Battalion.

In the meantime the batteries had been rotating the PW duties, which consisted of receiving the prisoners, going through all of their belongings taking all army equipment and leaving them with only clothing and personal articles. After this stripping job, they were again shipped out as soon as possible to a much larger establishment located further south in the town of Modena. Starting on the 20th of May another unit came in to take over the guarding and disarming of the prisoners, and the role of the 173rd became one of furnishing escorts and transportation for moving of the Germans to Modena. This continued until about the 29th of May with several parties usually going out from each battery every day.

Some of the convoys utilized the Germans' own vehicles and toward the end of the detail the Quartermaster Corps was sending large numbers of the semi-trailers in which the guards packed fifty Germans standing, and then the escort usually consisted of a jeep or 3/4 ton truck on either end with an officer or high-ranking non-commissioned officer in charge to turn over the prisoners on arrival at Modena.

In the meantime many of the men were able to make a short, one-day jaunt to Milan, which is the big industrial city of Italy. Parts of it had been rather badly broken up by bombs, but enough remained to show that it had been a very modern and well appointed city. It was from Milan that the final order of the Battalion insignia pins was completed.

On the 29th of May "B" Battery was ordered to Verona for a special detail. "A" Battery was ordered to proceed to the town of Ghedi and there to pick up a large number of PW's and deliver them to Montecatini. On the 31st the Battalion was detached from the 77th F.A. Group and II Corps and assigned directly to the Fifth Army Transportation Section.

During the next two or three days the Battalion finally gathered itself together and set up a tent camp on the outskirts of a little suburb of Verona known as San Martino.

Here, as a part of Fifth Army transportation corps, the Battalion acted as guard and administrator for a German PW camp which was equipped with German vehicles in good repair, and these men and vehicles were distributed around for the many transportation jobs of all sorts that came as aftermath of war. This went on for a couple of weeks, and then the order came relieving the outfit of this task, and everyone began to see a boat trip in the offing.

The Battalion then moved to a very lovely spot on the shore of Lake Garda, where the 10th Mountain Division had been holed up since the end of the war. So, for about three days, there was sun bathing, swimming and general good times while everyone waited with bated breath for that order which was said to be imminent that would start the Battalion on its way back to the good old U.S.A. The order was not long in coming and in about the last week of June the 173rd F.A. picked up bag and baggage and went to Florence. Here it became a part of the famous F.R.T.A. (Florence Redeployment Training Area).

During the several days at Lake Garda all men with less than 85 points had been sent to various low point units, and the Battalion after this weeding out consisted of some 296 men, all of whom were housed in one long room in a tobacco factory located as Cascine Park on the western edge of Florence.

The word was that the Battalion was in Category 4, a category of units slated to go home and be disbanded with all non-essential personnel discharged. According to the schedule at the F.R.T.A., the Battalion was due to go home in late July, so the first week or so was spent turning in equipment, settling up accounts and getting done as much as possible of the preliminary work along the lines of the big bust up. Along about the

end of July it became apparent that the movement of troops back to the States was slightly behind schedule, and the middle of August was then set as the date of embarkment. Early in August the 10th Mountain Division arrived suddenly from nowhere and was camped in the park as a unit for about a week, after which time it went to Naples and Leghorn under high priority and embarked immediately for the U.S. Their category was No. 2 and they were scheduled for a 30- or 45-day furlough in the States and then the Pacific theatre. Imagine their chagrin when the Japanese war ended August 14, a few days before their arrival in the States.

Along about this time a number of officers and men were being required from the Fifth Army for possible Pacific replacements. All officers with less than 100 points and all enlisted men with less than 96 points were called out from the Battalion. The officers were sent to Naples for a quick boat ride back to the States, and the enlisted men were sent up as replacements into Northern Italy to the 88th Division, which was doing the police job. This meant a delay of several months in getting home and there was considerable dissent in the ranks, but as is usual in the Army it availed nothing and the men left for points north, leaving behind them a mere skeleton of the old National Guardsmen who had been in long enough to have 96 or more points.

From then on the disintegration of the Battalion gradually took place, six or eight men at a time, as the debarkation centers cleared out the high point men and lowered the point quota every two or three days. The plan then was to disband and completely deactivate the Battalion at the F.R. T.A., and one officer volunteered to stay behind until the orders came through to sign what necessary papers there would be. The last men moved out of Florence on the 2nd of September, leaving Lt. Winston R. Breck commanding a Battalion consisting of only himself.

During the two months' stay in Florence every possible effort was made to keep the men of the Battalion occupied. There was a Battalion school set up in which some twelve subjects were being taught and which received an enthusiastic attendance from many of the soldiers who were intending to return home and continue their educations.

Trips to interesting spots in and around Florence were frequently organized for those interested. The Fifth Army made available a trip to Switzerland, and a few of the men and officers were able to make this trip. There was also a rest camp set up along the Riviera, one at Cannes for enlisted men only, and one at Nice for officers only, and there were small but regular quotas of men sent to these places.

Even at that, it was probably the longest two months that most of the men had spent since they had left home. The only days which would move past more slowly would be those spent on the ship as it plowed its way across the Atlantic toward the Statue of Liberty.

With the rapid end of the Japanese war, the men who had been sent to the 88th Division appeared in the debarkation centers, and many of them went home beside the fellows who had stayed behind at Florence, so that they were not unduly delayed after all.

And so ended the story of the gallant 173rd F.A. Battalion having spent more than 500 days in combat and having fired more than 130,000 rounds and earned a reputation as bright and shining as any unit could have won.

THE END

HEADQUARTERS, 173RD F.A.BN.

A.P.O. 464 U.S. ARMY

19 JUNE 1945

ROSTER OF PERSONNEL RECEIVING DECORATIONS

SILVER STAR

Pvt. Albert L. Sorrell

LEGION OF MERIT

2nd Lt. Floyd M. Painter
Lt. Col. Harry T. Ketcham

SOLDIERS MEDAL

T5 Edwin A. Bush
Pfc. Glenn Hall
Pfc. William Powers

Bronze Star Medal

Capt. Paul K. Wiley
Lt. Col. Harry T. Ketcham
Capt. Harold E. Cunningham
Capt. Edward A. Hartl
Capt. Robert L. Johnson
Capt. Gilliam C. Moates
Sgt. Joseph J. O'Keefe
1st Lt. Claude P. Craemer
Major Paul P. Hinkley
Lt. Col. Earl J. Rice
Capt. Angelo Vincelli
1st Lt. Charles C. Hotle
S/Sgt. Pharon J. Des Jardins
Pfc. Peter Kadingo
Pfc. Uriah Slaughter
Cpl. Harold H. Klieforth
Pfc. Theodore Koufopoulos
S/Sgt. Lenin M. Ferri
Pfc. Charles A. Boldman
Sgt. Joseph R. Rose
1st Lt. Jack N. Mc Cord
2nd Lt. Atwood N. Johnson
S/Sgt. Llewellyn R. Zielie
1st Sgt. Stanley J. Swiatko
Sgt. Edward H. Votava
Cpl. Everett T. Abernathy
1st Sgt. Victor P. Krueger
1st Sgt. Bernie J. Nedweski
2nd Lt. James R. Fox
S/Sgt. Clarence H. Welkener
Pfc. Louis Amirto
Pvt. Mario Aiello
M/Sgt. Walter J. Smith
S/Sgt. Walter K. Ritter
Cpl. Richard G. Upjohn
S/Sgt. Edward F. Neitzel
T/Sgt. Paul R. Krumme

Cwo. Herbert A. Miller
Cpl. George E. Mc Daniel
Capt. Benton H. Burns
Capt. Hoyt Parker
1st Lt. Floyd C. Schroeder
T/Sgt. Andrew Kolson
S/Sgt. Anthony J. Checoco
Sgt. Melvin J. Wendt
T-4 Vernon M. Craney
T-4 George S. Weber
T-5 Joseph C. Pierce
T-5 Glenn G. Buirley
T-5 Anthony F. Novak
Cpl. Louis R. Kosek
T-5 Herbert C. Smuhl
1st Sgt. Robert L. Gordon
Sgt. Paul J. Davies
Sgt. Wayne F. Wendt
T-4 Joseph P. Weslowski
T-5 Raymond Lawrence

First OLC to Bronze Star Medal

Lt. Col. Earl J. Rice
Capt. Angelo Vincelli
Capt. Gilliam C. Moates
Capt. Edward A. Hartl

Air Medals
 1st Lt. Charles A. Herbison
 1st Lt. Wallace H. Hoy
 1st Lt. George A. Harms
 1st Lt. Thomas N. Hurst
 1st Lt. Franklin W. Meeker
 1st Lt. George K. Richards
 1st Lt. Robert C. Sankey
 1st Lt. Winston R. Breck

OLC To Air Medals
 1st Lt. Robert C. Sankey (2)
 1st Lt. Wallace H. Hoy (9)
 1st Lt. Winston R. Breck (1)
 1st Lt. George A. Harms (2)
 1st Lt. Thomas N. Hurst (2)
 1st Lt. Franklin W. Meeker (6)

Croix De Guerre (French)
 1st Lt. Franklin W. Meeker

Croce Al Merito di Guerra (Italian)
 Lt. Col. Earl J. Rice

BATTLE CASUALTIES

173rd Field Artillery Battalion

	MONTH	KILLED		MONTH	WOUNDED	
		MONTH	TOTAL		MONTH	TOTAL
December	1943	3	3	3	3	
January	1944	1 DOW	4	5	8	
February		0	4	1	9	
March		0	4	0	9	
April		2(1 DOW)	6	6	15	
May		0	6	1	16	
June		0	6	2	18	
July		0	6	3	21	
August		0	6	1	22	
September		0	6	0	22	
October		0	6	0	22	
November		1	7	10	32	
December		5	12	8	40	
January	1945	0	12	2	42	
February		0	12	0	42	
March		0	12	0	42	
April		0	12	4	46	

The Battalion was subjected to the counterbattery fires of the enemy on (190) One Hundred and Ninety occasions. Damage to automotive equipment was quite frequent but never beyond repair capabilities of the Bn. Motor Maintenance Section. Four (4) guns, (3) 155 m.m. and the attached 8" Howitzer were damaged to render them out of action but ordnance placed them in serviceable condition within (24) twenty-four hours on these occasions.

Close combat was frequent especially on follow up of breakthrough to Rome, and in the Po Valley sectors. On these occasions only one (1) casualty was sustained (through hand grenade fragmentation.)

ROUNDS FIRED IN COMBAT (155 m.m.)
173rd Field Artillery Battalion

	ROUNDS FIRED	
	FOR THE MONTH	TOTAL
13 December 1943 to 31 December 1943	2286	2286
1944		
January	9536	11822
February	7223	19745
March	10561	30306
April	4913	35219
May	11177	46396
June	10374	56770
July	15794	72564
August	1757	74321
September	9497	83818
October	10188	94006
November	4525	98531
December	4642	103173
1945		
January	3971	107144
February	5160	112304
March	5299	117603
April	12274	129877

HEADQUARTERS ROSTER

Aiello, Mario E.
 Alexander, Carroll L.
 Allen, Richard H.
 Almond, Fred E.
 Altic, Ned C.
 Amirto, Louis
 Anderson, Gordon
 Anderson, William
 Arndt
 Arnell, T.W.
 Axtell, Albert E.

Bailey, Edwin E.
 Banach, Stanley A. Jr.
 Baranowski, Raymond
 Barbat, Steve
 Barker, Charles W.
 Bauer, Henry J.
 Bauman, Donald J.
 Beechey, Edwin T.
 Benney, George
 Bilowsky, Nicholas Jr.
 Bishop, George A.
 Blackburn, Claude L.
 Bohannon, Fred G.
 Boldman, Charles E.
 Borchardt, Harvey
 Bouchard, Lawrence J.
 Bradley, Lyle L.
 Brady, Vincent G.
 Brietzke, Arthur L.
 Brietzke, Ervin
 Brietzke, William E.
 Brigance, Joel T.
 Brinkley, James W.
 Brown, Elmer E.
 Brown, Jack P.
 Bueschel, Herbert
 Buirley, Glenn G.
 Buksa, Sam T.
 Burgess, Virgil
 Burns, Benton H.
 Bumside, Delbert C.
 Burt, James E.
 Buskirk, Clarence H.
 Buza, Arnold J.
 Byers, George F.
 Byns, Carl E.

Carder, William T.
 Carey, Clarence E. Jr.
 Carviou, Henry H.
 Castongia, Ruel L.
 Checota, Anthony J.
 Cherty, Paul
 Cherty, Peter
 Close, Garland H.
 Coffman, James W.
 Coggeshall, David R.
 Copen, James
 Croston, Esker
 Crowley, Cornelius
 Cunningham, Harold E.
 Curson, Frank F.
 Curtis, Norman P.

Davis, Harry
 Deau, Raymond A.
 Dennis, Joe R. Jr.
 Dick, Ray O.
 Dimaria, Leonard S.
 Dobrogowski, George R.
 Dosemagen, Ted
 Dura, Paul
 Duran, Frutosa

Edwards, John W.
 Englund, Kenneth
 Erb, Robert C.

Ferri, Lenin M.
 Felsch, Arthur
 Fleischmann, Clarence H.
 Flintrop, Elmer
 Foran, Tom
 Forstrom, Roy W.
 Friel, John
 Freytag, Robert J.

Geier, Harold
 Gimpl, Joseph
 Goldschmidt, Albert
 Grabow, Orson
 Greene, Chester J.
 Greening, Robert
 Gurule, Everett

Hafner, Clarence
 Hamolka, LeRoy
 Hanson, Charles
 Hare, Roy
 Harbrich, Kurt
 Harlow, Verner
 Hartl, Edward
 Haubrich, Edward
 Haubrich, Marvin A.
 Hayes, Gerald
 Heinz, LaVern
 Heit, John
 Hicks, Lonnie
 Hinkley, Paul P.
 Hinnrichs, Malvin H.
 Holcome, William T.
 Hollenbeck, Stan
 Holzer, Edward
 Holehouse, James E.
 Hooglund, Walter
 Hotle, Charles C.
 Hoy, Wallace H.
 Hynes, Francis J.

Irvin, Thomas H.

Johnson, Atwood M.
 Johnson, Herbert L.
 Johnson, Robert L.

Kaiser, Walter
 Kalas, James A.
 Katz, Aaron
 Kaufapoulos, Theodore
 Kawalkowski, Peter J.
 Kay, Lester
 Kayser, Carl
 Keckler, Vincent E.
 Ketchum, Harry T.
 Klingler, Ervin O.
 Kloss, Paul S.
 Kolson, Andrew Jr.
 Konyon, John N.
 Krawczyk, Milton J.
 Kressin, Edward R.
 Kuhl, Fred
 Kuhl, John
 Kulick, Edwin L.

Laing, Walter A.
 Lang, Francis
 LaVoy, Francis
 Lawrence, Raymond J.
 Lewandowski, John
 Lewko, John
 Lipski, Raymond A.
 Lynch, Raymond A.

Mallett, Henry A.
 Manuel, James R.
 Marlenga, Martin
 Martin, Mike
 Mayfield, Clovis C.
 McEachron, Dale A.
 McNulty, Edward T.
 Meador, Herman W.
 Meeker, Franklin W.
 Melinski, Frank
 Mellum, Hoarce J.
 Meyer, Martin
 Meyer, William F.
 Millager, Harry
 Miller, Clarence
 Miller, Herbert A.
 Moreman, James M.
 Morrissey, Charles P.
 Mosley, Wallace A.

Nedweski, Bernie J.
 Nedweski, Peter P.
 Neilson, Robert

O'Conner, Robert J.

Painter, Floyd M.
 Patrizzi, Joe
 Pearson, Jack
 Pease, Fred
 Peterson, Henry
 Peterson, Theodore
 Petros, Harry C.
 Phillips, Samuel W.
 Piernikowski, Benedict R.
 Pita, Manuel
 Poklasny, Louis
 Polewski, Louis
 Polgar, Joe E.
 Prengel, Alex T.
 Price, Standish

Raboin, John
Randall, Clifford
Ranzoni, Frank
Regan, Charles A. J.
Reiger, Harold M.
Rice, Earl J.
Richards, George K.
Riebe, Chester S.
Riemer, Harold E.
Rivera, Steve
Romano, William
Ruiz, Trinidad
Rutchik, Tony

Sadowski, Eugene
Sankey, Robert C.
Sawicki, Stanley
Schauble, Alfred H.
Scherschel, William
Schoner, Francis X.
Sethne, Lief
Sethne, Norman
Shepherd, John T.
Silverberg, Irving J.
Slocum, Charles H.

ROSTER FOR "A" BTRY

Abernathy, Everett T.
Addington, James D.
Annesley, Lloyd D.
Antosz, Michael J.
Arkontaky, Peter J.

Bach, Clarence W.
Bajewski, Paul
Bedwell, Alfred
Bieniewski, Joseph
Boxrucker, Albert
Brost, Lawrence
Brown, Edward
Burgess, Charles
Burris, Calvin

Cabaugh, Herbert N.
Carleton, William N.
Carmichael, Fred H.
Carrillo, Rupert

Smiecienski, Walter J.
Smith, George H.
Smolander, Robert S.
Sorenson, Richard
Stahl, Dan
Starck, William N.
Sucharsky, Clarence J.

Thompson, John

Uhler, Robert C.

Vagnati, Joseph
Villines, Claude

Ward, William A.
Weber, George S.
Weinstein, David
Welkener, Clarence H.
Wilde, George S.
Woolf, Raleigh

Yantorni, Ben

Zenoni, Orien

Chandler, Harold
Clark, Elmer C.
Coppersmith, Manuel J.
Covert, Albert B.
Crames, Claude
Craney, Vernon M.
Cravener, Clifton C.
Crawford, Gordon L.

Davis, Julius C.
Delp, Arylo H.
Demarco, William L.
Dickerson, Joseph R.
Dimaria, Leonard S.
Drury, Allen W.

Elder, Lewis
Ely, Ralph
Eubanks, William R.

Fagan, James J.
Fleming, John T.
Frampton, James D.

Garnett, William P.
Garretson, Raymond H.
Gilboy, Paul
Gilboy, Ralph
Gonzales, Natividad
Greer, Fred
Gubur, James
Guanajuato, Felix
Graham, David

Hansen, Carl E.
Hanson, Grant O.
Hanson, Wallace
Harlow, Edward
Henken, John J.
Hikade, Robert
Howlett, Roy L.

Jackson, Marcus T. Jr.
Jari, Victor
Jerone, Thomas A.
Johnson, Charles T.
Joiner, Clifton
Joiner, Curtis V.
Jorgenson, Clarence

Kedzierski, Robert J.
Keel, Charles A.
Kennedy, Craig L.
Kerr, James M.
Kessler, Albert R.
Kitowski, Robert F.
Klima, Steve
Kloth, Edward
Kluetsch, Urban
Kohl, Merlin L.
Kosek, Frank
Kreitzer, Marvin F.

La Court, Robert H.
Lambart, Elmer E.
Latham, Maston H.
Latl, Fred
Lazecki, Stephen
Ledford, Willard B.
Lee, Arthur L.

Leon, Nicholas
Loomis, Wayne W.
Lott, Fred

Martin, Ray
Martin, Robert A.
Martin, Rupert
Martin, Willis R.
McKee, Howard S.
McQuillan, Marshall J.
Merkwan, George M.
Meyers, Henry
Mierunski, William T.
Miles, Lawrence
Miller, Ernest R.
Miller, John F.
Miller, Joseph
Mortenson, Harry W.
Morua, Francisco C.

Nogle, Robert

Olson, Charles

Pacyga, Emil J.
Palenchar, Andrew B.
Pantelakis, Peter G.
Parker, Hoyt
Parker, James C.
Pederson, Anton E.
Penten, Joseph W.
Peterson, Glen A.
Pieper, Henry W.
Pierce, Joseph C.
Plazinski, John J.
Pochabet, Alex
Polus, William S.
Price, Standish G.
Propes, William M.

Rachuba, Edward A.
Ramberg, Otis M.
Reid, William
Resnick, Murray J.
Rice, Gene R.
Robbins, Kenneth
Robertson, Arthur
Rodriguez, Raymondo A.
Rogers, Edward L.
Ronk, Edward G.

Roszkowski, Michael J.
Roy, Sims L.
Rust, William D.

Sammons, Robert L.
Schneider, Francis H.
Schroeder, Floyd C.
Setzer, Alfred
Sievert, Joseph N.
Simpson, Ted E.
Smith, Howard
Smuhl, Herbert C.
Sosbee, Clifton V.
Spallus, Paul
Spampinato, Antonia Jr.
Spear, Alfred L.
Staples, Carl M.
Stauf, Albert J.
Stork, Jack F.
Swiatko, Stanley J.

Taylor, Leonard J.
Tietz, Warren E.
Turner, Red

Vogler, Robert W.
Votava, Edward H.

Waitman, Calvin J.
Wendt, Melvin F.
Wenzel, Donald D.
Wesolowski, Joseph P.
Westland, Wilbur C.
White, Louis C.
Whyler, Donald E.
Wiese, Alvin F.
Wikan, Elmer
Wikan, Walter
Wilde, George S.
Williamson, John H.
Wittman, Russell J.
Wodenka, Frank A.
Woodward, James F.
Wright, Kenneth D.

Yaroma, Peter S.
Yelvington, Arnold E.

Zakrzewski, Stephen J.
Zielie, Llewellyn R.

ROSTER FOR "B" BATTERY

Allen, Douglas E.
Amati, Guerino E.
Arnett, Lemuel J.
Azley, James O.

Barnard, Stanley G.
Beck, Jack P.
Belongia, Wilbert J.
Benitez, Guadalupe
Biehale, Eddie D.
Bodart, Reginald A.
Bozynski, Francis J.

Clark, James W.
Conway, James O.
Corley, John H.
Creager, Mervin W.

Davis, Bert C.

DesJardins, Pharon Jr.
Dierken, Robert E.
Doljac, Joseph N.
Doyle, Edwin R.
Dunn, Harry

Ellsworth, Paul C.
Embry, McClellan
Eschner, Harlan
Evans, Vernon B.
Exferd, Norval J.

Fernandes, Antonio J.
Fox, James R.

Gannaway, Robert L.
Gant, Ernest L.
Gaston, Harry N.
Gill, Charles W.

Gillette, Luther V.
Goldschmidt, Albert R.
Gordon, Robert L.
Gore, Eli
Griffin, John P.
Grove, Richard S.

Haebig, Clarence E.
Hall, Edward K.
Hall, Glenn
Haubrich, Oscar Jr.
Heffner, Robert R.
Hicks, Paul W.
Hiser, Hugh I.
Hoff, Gilman O.
Hromco, Stephen J.

Jendrusiak, Andrew A.
Johnson, Russell W.
Jordon, Bruce E.

Kadingo, John
Kadingo, Peter
Kaffana, John M.
Kellman, Carl A.
Klieforth, Harold H.
Koch, Paul D.
Koczta, Alexander T.
Koester, Eugene O.
Kondick, Frank J.
Konopka, Louis S.
Kralovetz, Sylvester G.
Kulak, Stephen J.
Kurkowski, Edwin P.

Laird, Francis H.
Lambert, Charlie E.
LeFevre, Marvin C.
Letsom, Warren H.
Lewis, Chesley
Lockhart, Jack N.
Luebke, Wilbur A.

Marion, Wilfred M.
Martinez, Salvador H.
McCord, Jack N.
Meador, Robert L.
Message, Charles L.
Milburn, Donald Jr.
Miller, Harold D.

Miller, John J.
Mills, Kale M.
Moates, Silliam C.
Montoya, Abenicio J.
Moss, James L.
Moyers, James E.

Niespodzianski, Theodore W.
Nipper, James W.
Noe, Bennie
Noel, Donald

O'Conner, John S.
O'Keefe, Joseph J.
Olivarez, Francisco
Onofrey, James C.
Ory, Roger J.
Osmon, Harry H.

Panasewicz, Louis
Pare, Raymond G.
Parker, Wilbert T.
Pasalich, Richard
Payton, Eugene R.
Pelley, Chester L.
Pena, Reynaldo P.
Pepper, Irvin C.
Perrish, Albert
Perry, Bernard E.
Peterson, Fred H.
Petrelle, James V.
Plauty, Edwin D.
Poindexter, James W.
Polichronopolis, Arthur
Polzin, Harold
Powers, William
Prelco, Joseph J.
Putman, Robert A.

Raynolds, Raymond E.
Reed, Luke
Remley, Lewis K.
Richardson, William P.
Richey, Jesse C.
Riddlebarger, John W.
Robinson, William P.
Rodriguez, Miguel J.
Rodriguez, Jesus V.
Rose, Joseph R.
Runion, Orvil L.

Sacco, John J.
Scheppner, William E.
Schindel, Henry
Schlorf, Clarence L.
Schmidt, Walter A.
Seponski, Joseph L.
Sharp, Roy C.
Siegert, Joseph D.
Skorud, Leonard
Skrivanek, Charlie W.
Slaughter, Uriah
Sletten, Elbin E.
Smith, Robert E.
Smykal, Laddie W.
South mayd, Wilbur
Stambaugh, Clifford D.
Stefankiewicz, Joseph F.
Stockwell, Robert E.

Tafoya, Rudolfo S.
Tetting, Lloyd C.
Thomson, Lloyd
Tuhua, Eugene M.

Valcour, Roger H.
Vergenz, Clarence J.
Vigil, Eduuardo C.

Waller, Edwin J.
Watson, Clarence H.
Welsh, James J.
Wennersten, Hennig R.
Weyant, Richard W.
White, Winford L.
Wilde, Harold H.
Winkelman, Donald R.

Zapf, LeRoy F.

Roster for "C" Battery

Abel, Herbert R.
Alton, Vern C.
Arenas, Lorenzo
Armes, Noel C.
Azucidio, Edward

Bailey, George
Bartz, Everett A.
Berger, William P.
Blankenship, Alden C.
Blevins, Hollis D.
Borchardt, Harvey E.
Breck, Winston R.
Bubon, John
Burke, Clarence B.
Bush, Edwin A.
Bush, George

Cepex, James E.
Colvard, Jesse S.

Dahn, Glen M.
Danahy, Henry J.
Darrin, Joseph M.
Davies, Paul J.

Davis, Evan J.
Dean, Ray G.
Decker, Raymond L.
DeLong, Ivan B.
Dempsey, Rufus J.
Domenico, Charles
Dowdy, Dwight L.
Dziekciasz, Leo J.
Dzurick, Francis A.

Ellinger, Raymond F.
Elliot, Mathew J. Jr.
Engel, Ewald G.
Ertl, John F.

Fogus, Forest

Garguilo, Joseph L.
Glatzel, Raymond N.
Gonynor, Francis J.
Griffin, William
Groehler, Ben
Grossnickle, Ralph U.
Grube, James
Gulkowski, Sigmund J.
Gulotta, Tony

Haefs, Raymond H.
Hartl, Edward C.
Hartung, George U.
Hartwig, Waldemar O.
Hatfield, Carl
Heiser, Herbert
Hindman, Walter G.
Hoeft, Leslie W.
Horton, Linwood W.
Hotle, Charles C.
Howell, George E.
Hoeft, Norman

Iwen, George

Jacobs, Edgar H.
Jiko, Walter

Keel, Ferdinand R.
Kelley, Walter W.
Kiechen, Stanley E.
Kinney, Gus L.
Kosek, Louis R.
Krausse, Fred W.
Krizan, Joseph
Krueger, Robert W.
Krueger, Victor P.
Kubly, Fritz H.

Laher, Herbert F.
Larson, Roger S.
Leaman, Earl J.
Lekies, Walter

Maas, Ervin E.
Maeder, Herman W.
McDaniel, George E.
McDaniel, Oscar
McDermott, William J. Jr.
McFalls, Fred
McGraw, Cecil E.
McKemy, William
McLaughlin, Albert L.
Michelangelo, Mark A.
Miller, Peter W.
Mireles, Jorge F.
Montoya, Daniel
Moore, Joseph E.
Murphy, Lawrence R.

Napier, William
Neff, Ray E.
Neitzel, Edward F.
Neitzer, Theodore G.
Novak, Anthony F.

Pagel, Harold A.
Pepper, Erwin
Petras, Lewis J.
Phillips, G. J.
Pizzeri, Camillo L.
Puglsey, Henry J.

Reed, Cecil A.
Reynolds, Donald G.
Reynolds, Raymond
Ried, Raymond R.
Riley, Arthur L.
Ritter, Walter K.
Roop, Fred H.
Ross, Henry

Sandonato, Anthony
Schmid, Edward X.
Schueneman, Paul
Schultz, Victor H.
Simanic, Nicholas A.
Singrey, Russell E.
Slagel, Merrill L.
Smith, Clarence
Sorrell, Albert L.
Stefanini, Frank
Stenke, Francis W.
Stroud, Ralph W.
Surprise, Marlin C.
Sweat, Woodrow
Storbeck, Herman

Talledge, Everett R.
Thompson, Ryno H.
Todd, Edward F.

Upjohn, Richard

Velasquez, Edward

Wendt, Otto
Wendt, Wayne F.
Westbrook, William R.

Wilde, Harold
Wiley, Paul K.

Young, Russell E.

Zuehlke, Reinhard

Roster for Service Battery

Allen, Douglas
Armitage, Harold

Baillies, Robert T.
Benson, Earl L.
Bernazzani, John J.
Bliss, James
Bowens, Bennie

Cano, Paul
Clark, William C. J.
Craemer, Claude P.

DeLuca, Freddie J.
Donarski, Ralph J.

Fenoglio, Bruno

Gevaert, Henry T.

Hoff, Eugene N.
Hoskens, Edward

Krumme, Paul R.

LaHoda, Charles J.
Lange, Elmer F.
Louison, Luther C.

Macsurak, Stephen J.

Matza, Sam H.
McCarey, Thomas J.
Morajda, Julius J.
Mortenson, Alton C.

Nowak, Alfred D.

Reckner, Ervin A.
Reda, Louis J.
Richter, Albert J.

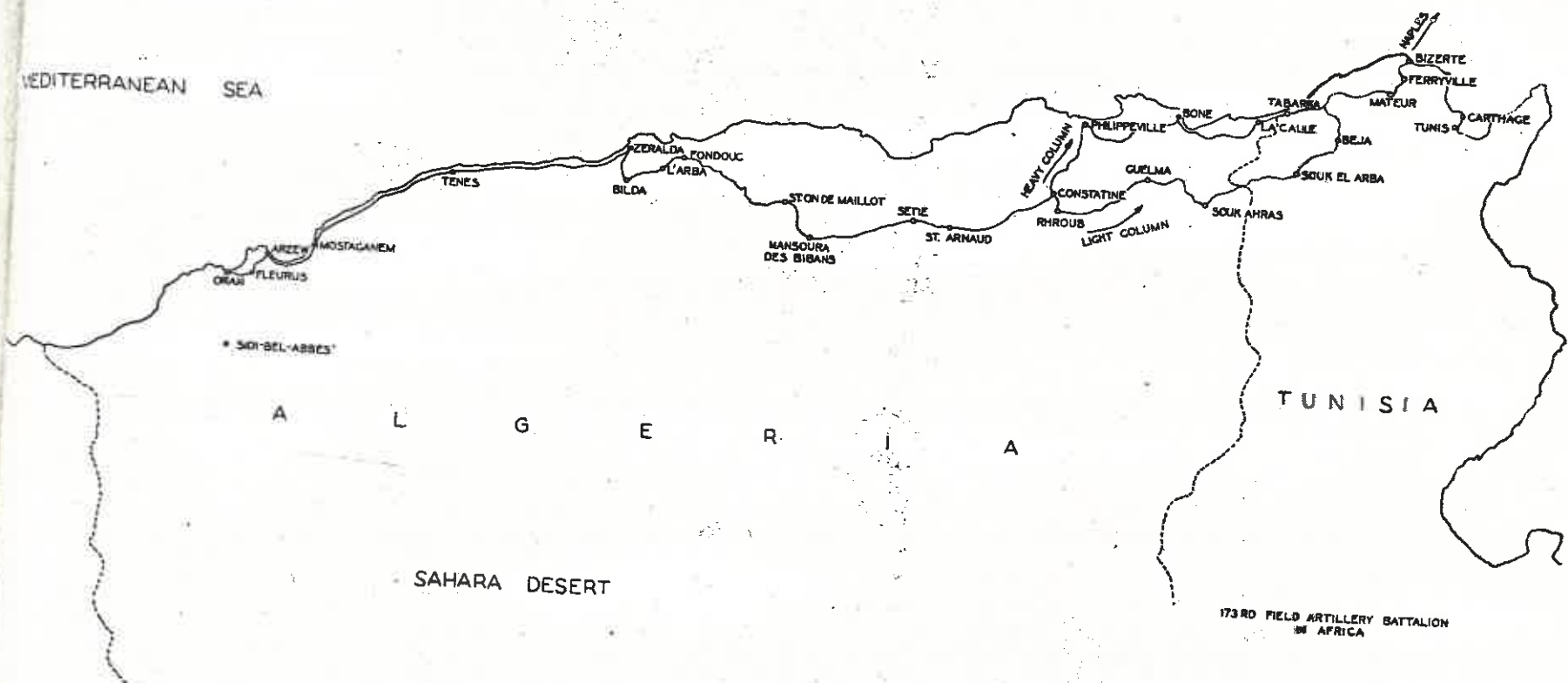
Sanchez, Miquel A.
Sargent, Claude
Schneck, Edward G.
Schoenebeck, Robert A.
Schroeder, Robert
Schultz, Maynard E.
Sherman, John
Smith, John D. Jr.
Smith, Walter J.
Snyder, Robert G.

Vagnati, Joseph E.
Vincelli, Angello

Waraxa, Eugene J.
Wesolowski, Robert J.
Williams, Goodman G.

Zeutzus, Earl F.

MEDITERRANEAN SEA



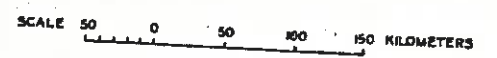
* SID BEL ABBES *

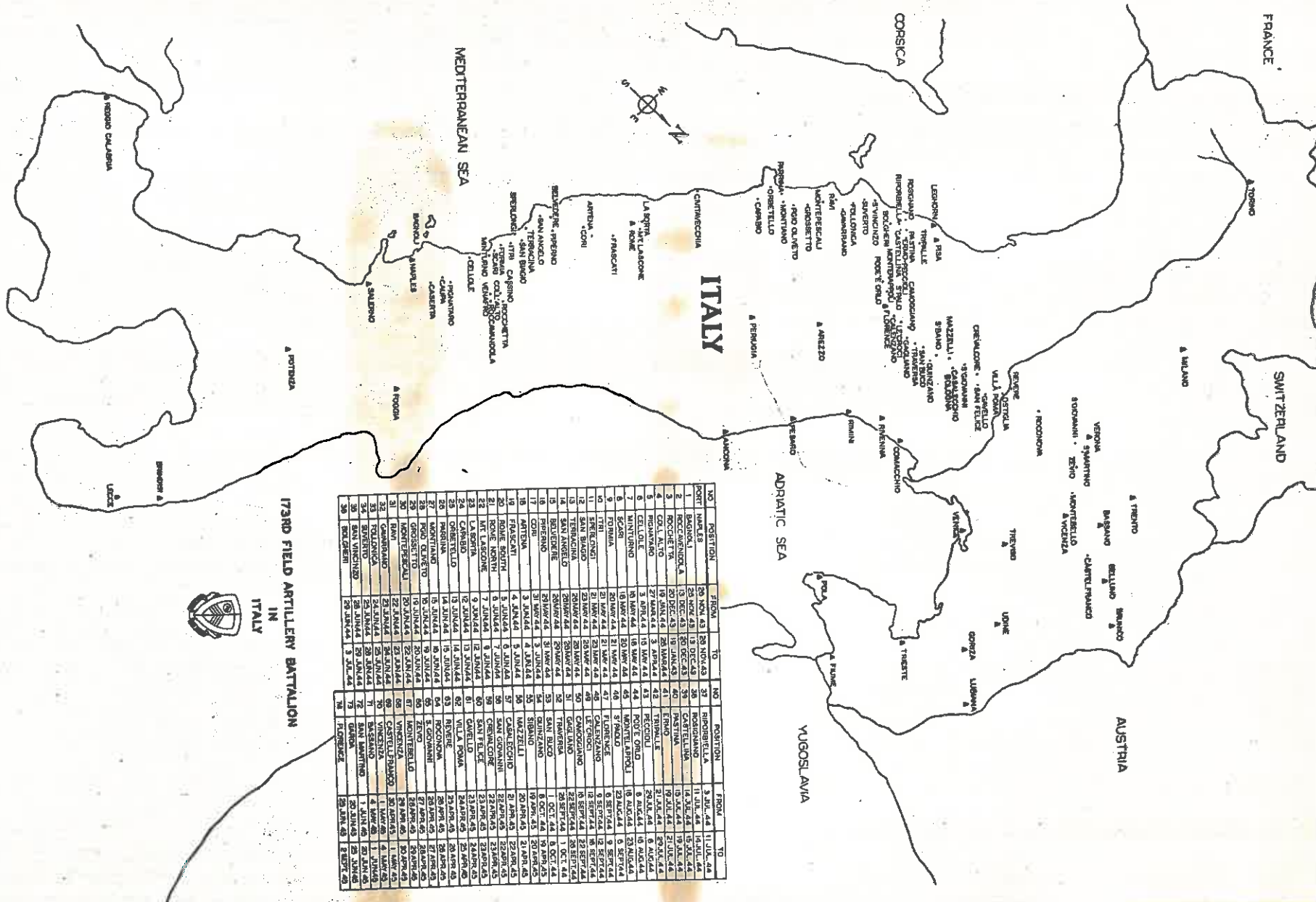
A L G E R A

TUNISIA

SAHARA DESERT

173RD FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
IN AFRICA





NO	POSITION	FROM	TO	NO	POSITION	FROM	TO
1	PORT SERRA	20 NOV 43	20 NOV 43	32	ROVERELLA	3 JUL 44	11 JUL 44
2	ROCCAMONDO	20 NOV 43	13 DEC 43	33	ROVERIANO	11 JUL 44	16 JUL 44
3	ROCCATELLO	20 DEC 43	20 DEC 43	34	ROVERETO	15 JUL 44	19 JUL 44
4	COLLE ALTO	19 JAN 44	19 JAN 44	35	ROVERETO	19 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
5	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	20 APR 44	36	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
6	PROVINCIA	18 MAR 44	18 MAR 44	37	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
7	PROVINCIA	18 MAR 44	18 MAR 44	38	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
8	PROVINCIA	20 MAR 44	20 MAR 44	39	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
9	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	40	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
10	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	41	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
11	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	42	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
12	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	43	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
13	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	44	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
14	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	45	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
15	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	46	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
16	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	47	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
17	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	48	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
18	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	49	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
19	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	50	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
20	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	51	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
21	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	52	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
22	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	53	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
23	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	54	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
24	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	55	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
25	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	56	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
26	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	57	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
27	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	58	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
28	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	59	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
29	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	60	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
30	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	61	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
31	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	62	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
32	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	63	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
33	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	64	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
34	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	65	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
35	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	66	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
36	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	67	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
37	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	68	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
38	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	69	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
39	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	70	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
40	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	71	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
41	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	72	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
42	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	73	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
43	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	74	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
44	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	75	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
45	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	76	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
46	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	77	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
47	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	78	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
48	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	79	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
49	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	80	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44
50	PROVINCIA	21 MAR 44	21 MAR 44	81	ROVERETO	21 JUL 44	21 JUL 44

73RD FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
IN
ITALY

