

143 D INFANTRY

AFTER ACTION REPORTS

WORLD WAR II

1943 - 1945

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C O N T E N T S

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OPERATIONS AVALANCHE

143 RCT

FROM

9 SEPTEMBER 1943

TO

20 SEPTEMBER 1943

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INTRODUCTION

This narrative does not attempt to discuss in detail all that took place within the Regiment during the establishment of the beachhead in ITALY by the First American Division to land on the European continent. It can serve no other purpose than to give the reader a general picture of what happened. Frequent reference may be made to the unit journal for a more detailed record of the events. Description of the terrain and key terrain features in the SALERNO area may be found in the intelligence annex to the Regimental Field Order which is in the Unit Journal file.

On 3 September 1943, the main body of Group III, under the command of Colonel WILLIAM H. MARTIN, was loaded on the U. S. S. STANTON, U. S. S. CHASE, U. S. S. FUNSTON, U. S. S. ANDROMEDA, U. S. S. PROCYON, and the H. M. S. BOXER. Combat loading of vehicles, equipment and supplies had been accomplished prior to this time. The 420 officers and 5679 enlisted men under Colonel MARTIN'S command were personnel of the 143d Infantry, 133d Field Artillery Battalion, 155th Field Artillery Battalion, Division Headquarters and Headquarters Company, VI Corps Headquarters, 36th Reconnaissance Troops, 751st Tank Battalion, and various other smaller attached units, such as the detachment from the Counter-Intelligence Corps, and a VI Corps Surgical Team. Colonel MARTIN, with his command group were aboard the U. S. S. STANTON, (See passenger list for names and assignment of personnel to ship).

At noon on the 5 September 1943, all ships were sealed and the convoy set sail at 1530 in an EASTWARD direction. Up to this time our destination and mission had been kept secret and was known only by a few Commanders and Staff Officers who had worked continuously the preceding two weeks to perfect plans for the "Operations Avalanche". After the convoy was under way maps of the beaches along the Gulf of SALERNO were distributed and the briefing of all officers and men began. While enroute, daily fire, abandon ship, and air attack drills were held.

Day was 9 September 1943 and H-Hour was 0530.

OPERATIONS AVALANCHE

Mission of the 143d Infantry (Division reserve initially) was to land Beach Red, two (2) BCT's abreast simultaneously, at H plus 180 on D-Day. One (1) BCT (1st Battalion) in reserve land on Beach Red at H plus 180 plus time of craft becoming available on D-Day, in accordance with boat team member plan and debarkation plan. Advance EAST to railroad, quickly reorganize, march at once to vicinity of road junction two and one-half (2½) miles NORTHWEST of CAPACCIO, and be prepared to take over the front between CICERALE and FELITTO, inclusive with RCT, less 1st Battalion. Be prepared to take over mission of RCT 141 or RCT 142, if ordered to do so by CG, 36th Infantry Division.

All troops of the 143d CT were briefed prior to debarkation on the assigned mission and had been familiarized with terrain to be encountered. Maps and aerial photos had been distributed aboard the ships, thus making the briefing of troops more complete. Colonel MARTIN, Commanding Officer of the 143d CT, and his command group were aboard the U. S. S. STANTON, with the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry. At ~~0800~~ on D-Day, just prior to debarkation, radio communication was established with the Division CP which was aboard the U.S.S. CHASE. According to previous plans, boat teams 1, 2, 3, and 4 were called to debarkation stations beginning at 0415. The Command Group was called to the debarkation station at ~~0500~~, was loaded, and proceeded to shore with the third wave.

Boat Waves of the 2d Battalion landed in the following order: 1st Wave at ~~0640~~, 2d Wave ~~0640~~, 3d Wave ~~0745~~, and 4th Wave at ~~0800~~ on Beach Red. The 3d Battalion landed simultaneously with the 2d Battalion, and proceeded under considerable enemy artillery fire to the NORTH - SOUTH railroad which ran through PAESTUM, a distance of approximately one and one-half (1½) miles inland. The Command Group moved EASTWARD from the beach along the FUUNRELLO RIVER for a distance of approximately one (1) mile, then cut SOUTHEAST toward PAESTUM. During the movement of the Command Group towards PAESTUM, one member of the group, Sgt GEORGE A. MADDEN, was fatally injured and evacuated. Machine gun and sniper fire was coming from several directions. It could be seen that the 2d and 3d Battalions were having considerable trouble reducing machine gun nests, and eliminating snipers. Had these machine gun nests and snipers been dealt with, and eliminated prior to arrival of the Regiment on the beach, the landing would have been much easier. It was necessary to attack PAESTUM and clean the town out before the 2d and 3d Battalions could advance. Company "I" reported that one (1) machine gun nest which had been by-passed by troops who were in the initial landing was firing on them and that it had been eliminated by mortar fire. The two (2) Battalions pushed forward under heavy enemy artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire to the railroad EAST of PAESTUM, which had been designated as a reorganization point.

As Colonel MARTIN proceeded from the beach along the FUUNRELLO RIVER to PAESTUM he encountered numerous groups of men who had been scattered by artillery and mortar fire. He gathered these men together and sent them to reorganization points along the railroad. Near the PAESTUM railroad station he met Lt Colonel BARIETT, 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, who reported that the Battalion had successfully landed and was reorganizing along the railroad. Insofar as was known, casualties had been light, however, men were scattered

considerably due to enemy artillery fire. Various officers and men met along the railroad reported tank attacks at different places between the sea and the beach. These reports were unconfirmed, both as to the number of tanks and direction of attack. It is known that there were a few scattered tanks in the vicinity. Colonel MARTIN directed these stragglers and scattered groups to the Battalion positions along the railroad, and by 1900 he had succeeded in reorganizing the two attack Battalions. He instructed the Commanding Officers of the 2d Battalion and 3d Battalion to push forward to an assembly area NORTH-EAST of CAPACCIO. He then proceeded to the Division Command Post at VANNULO.
WEST

The Command Group moved past the Division CP and selected a Regimental CP about 400 yards SOUTHEAST of Division. Colonel MARTIN, upon rejoining the Command Group, was able to observe the progress of the two Battalions. His position afforded good observation of both the NORTH and SOUTH forward slopes of MT SOPRANO, and it was evident that before the Regiment could proceed to the assigned assembly areas, the town of CAPACCIO had to be cleared of the enemy. Since there was some doubt as to whether or not the enemy occupied CAPACCIO, Colonel MARTIN ordered Lt Colonel BARNETT of the 3d Battalion to send one (1) rifle company to take the town and the remainder of the Battalion to proceed to the assembly area. At the same time Lt Colonel JONES, Commanding Officer of the 2d Battalion, was ordered to send one (1) rifle company to take Hill 586, NORTH of CAPACCIO. Word was received from the 3d Battalion that Company "L" was to attack CAPACCIO at 1530, and from the 2d Battalion that Company "F" was on the way to Hill 586.

Shortly after this a messenger reported that the Division Command Post was in the front of an enemy tank attack which was driving SOUTH along Highway 18. Most fortunate was the fact that 2d Lt WHITAKER, Cannon Company, 143d Infantry, on his way to the Regimental CP, was near the Division CP at this time, with one of his 75mm Self-Propelled mounts. Also in position near the road was a 105mm artillery piece of the 151st Field Artillery. Swiftly Lt WHITAKER swung his mount into position and opened fire on the approaching tanks. Although the duel was one sided, in favor of the Germans, Lt WHITAKER accounted for the destruction of three (3) of the tanks, and scored hits on two (2) others, making possible the capture of the occupants of the two (2) hit tanks. Hits were also scored by the 105 Howitzer of the 151st Field Artillery. The attack was repelled. Swift, accurate, and courageous performance by Lt WHITAKER'S gun crew, together with the action of the 105mm Howitzer of the 151st Field Artillery, was an important factor in protecting the beachhead, and the Division CP at this critical time. According to eye witnesses, the Germans used thirteen (13) Mark IV Special Tanks in this attack.

In the meantime Company "K" was moving into Regimental reserve near the Regimental CP, as directed in the Field Order for the landing. With this reserve in position, the situation was somewhat more secure.

In planning of the Company "L" attack on CAPACCIO, Lt Colonel BARNETT requested artillery fire on the town to precede the attack. As mentioned before, Colonel MARTIN had excellent observation of the town from the CP, and he did not believe that the enemy occupied the town, therefore the request for artillery fire was refused. In refusing the request, Colonel MARTIN made it clear

that he did not want to shell the town unless opposition was met. In his message to Lt Colonel BARNETT he directed that the artillery observer be sent forward to determine the need for artillery fire. In reply to the message, Colonel MARTIN was informed that the artillery observer had no communication with his Batteries or fire control center. In order that the 3d Battalion would have some support, one (1) Platoon of the Cannon Company, commanded by Lt WHITAKER, and one (1) platoon of the Antitank Company, commanded by Lt HAYES, was attached to them as support. The remainder of the Cannon Company was ordered to move into position and to be prepared to fire on CAPACCIO if necessary. Immediately messages were sent to both Lt Colonel JONES and Lt Colonel BARNETT directing them to send the Liaison Officer back to Division for radios if they did not have radios with them.

Captain LYNCH, Liaison Officer from Regimental Headquarters to Division, reported to Colonel MARTIN at 1715 with the directive from General WALKER to send a company to take CAPACCIO; to put out security elements on the high ground, and to be prepared to be committed at any time. Company "L" had already been sent to take CAPACCIO - Company "F" was already on the high ground (Hill 586), and reorganization had progressed sufficiently to guarantee effective committal of the Regiment where needed.

We were able to report to Division at 1815 the successful occupation of CAPACCIO. This report was made within one hour after Captain LYNCH had brought the order from Division Headquarters for this to be done. The two Battalions were in position (assembly areas), less Company "L", as directed in the Field Order. Colonel MARTIN sent a message to Lt Colonel JONES and Lt Colonel BARNETT to hold in present location; Company "F" to consolidate and be prepared to move on call; all available vehicles to be sent for more ammunition; place all around patrols; 142d CT on 2d Battalion left; 141st CT on 3d Battalion right, and having considerable resistance (Colonel MARTIN learned this in conference with General WALKER).

At 1910 Captain CRAFT, Commanding Company "K", was ordered to move his company, to take and hold the hill at the base of MT SOTTANE, extending his line to CAPACCIO. The 3d Battalion was ordered to keep out patrols and make frequent reports, negative or otherwise. OP's and patrols of both Battalions continued active and alert throughout the night. Enemy artillery fire had ceased by nightfall, and except for enemy aerial strafing and bombing of the positions, things were very quiet.

Considering all, the day had been very successful. The 2d and 3d Battalions were in proper position, and the 1st Battalion, commanded by Lt Colonel WALKER had reverted to Division reserve, and was in position near the Division CP. Effort was made to obtain a casualty list, but accurate reports were impossible to obtain because a number of men had become lost from their organizations and were gradually drifting in. It was known that 2d Lt ANTHONY HAUCK of Company "F" was killed on the beach by shrapnel, and that Lt JEP REESE of Company "L" received a leg injury and was evacuated. The fine spirit and aggressive manner in which the 143d Infantry moved from the beach under enemy

artillery, machine gun, and mortar fire, demonstrated a courage and determination worthy of special note. At all times the officers and non-commissioned officers kept their men moving continuously to the assigned objective. The 143d Infantry as part of the 36th Division, was the first American Division to land on the European continent and the first Division to meet and defeat German opposition at the beach during this war.

Before daylight on 10 September 1943, the Regimental CP was moved forward to another position in order to get closer to the Battalions, and to prevent shelling of the CP, which may have been spotted the previous day by enemy observers.

At daybreak the 3d Battalion was attacked by a patrol of seven (7) German armored cars (four (4) wheeled armored vehicles), along the main highway running SOUTHEAST from CAPACCIO. These armored cars were engaged by the Antitank platoon of the 3d Battalion Headquarters Company, one (1) section of attached 57mm Antitank guns of the Antitank Company, and out-posted riflemen. Three (3) of the enemy cars were destroyed and the others captured. Eight (8) enemy were killed and fourteen (14) captured, including one (1) officer. Examination and questioning of the prisoners by Captain LUNDAY, Regimental S-2, revealed that the prisoners were from the 1st and 2d Companies, AA, 16th Panzer Division. Much valuable information of immediate value to higher Headquarters was obtained from the captured officer.

Orders were issued by Colonel MARTIN, through Captain LUNDAY, for the following reconnaissance and observation patrols, to operate throughout the 10th of September: (1) 2d Battalion to send a reconnaissance patrol to the NORTH slope of MT SOPRANO, set up an OP to observe the highway along VALLI DELLA LUSI; (2) 3d Battalion to push reconnaissance patrols along the road EAST of CAPACCIO toward TRENTINARA; (3) Intelligence and reconnaissance platoon to send motor patrol along the road EAST of CAPACCIO, to the stream crossing one (1) mile NORTHEAST of TRENTINARA; (4) Regimental OP to be established on MT SOTTANE to observe the road from CAPACCIO to TRENTINARA, and foot patrol from the OP were to move to positions to observe the road near GIUNGANO. Reports of these patrols were negative insofar as pertained to observation of the enemy. However, information of the terrain NORTHEAST, EAST and SOUTHEAST of MT SOPRANO, and MT SOTTANE was of a great deal of importance. As a matter of fact, the information concerning the enemy was of vital importance. The 2d Battalion OP had observation as far as ALBANELLIA.

At 1600, Company "K" was ordered to extend its line by sending one (1) platoon to occupy a position near GIUNGANO. In addition the platoon would be in position to protect the right flank of the Battalion.

During the entire day, reconnaissance patrols by both the 2d and 3d Battalions and the I & R Platoon had been very active. Enemy resistance was not encountered at any place by the patrols. The only contact during the day was that of the enemy attack made by the seven (7) armored vehicles which were destroyed or captured in the morning by the 3d Battalion. Patrolling continued during the night.

On the morning of 11 September 1943 Division G-2 notified Captain [redacted] of the unconfirmed information obtained from the German officer captured on the morning of the 10th by the 3d Battalion, indicated that the 16th Panzer Division, after defending the beaches was to withdraw toward POTENZA, then move WEST toward CONTURSI, to be joined by the 26th Panzer Division, then attack the beachhead. G-2 stated that such action was possible and that should the attack occur it could probably come within the next 36 hours. Both the 2d and 3d Battalions were advised of this possibility.

For the most part, 11 September 1943 was devoted to the extension of the Regimental zone of action, from its established positions through the medium of patrols. With the exception of an I & R patrol dispatched in the morning, to contact the 142d Infantry near ROCCADASPIDE, reconnaissance activity was directed mainly toward the SOUTHEAST; however, the 2d Battalion sent motor patrols to CICERALE and the nearby high ground, and the 3d Battalion sent foot patrols to MT VESOLE. The 3d Battalion patrolled to MONTEFORTE, and the high ground NORTH of MT MONTEFORTE. This patrol reported civilian information of the enemy's presence 20 kilometers SOUTH of MONTEFORTE, and reports of GIUNGANO civilians were that the enemy had left there going EASTWARD. This exploration was extended by an I & R squad commencing shortly after noon toward MONTEFORTE, MAGLIANO VETERE, STIO, and the CALORE RIVER crossing EAST of STIO. Its report at 2030 confirmed the enemy's vacating that zone. Although five (5) destroyed enemy tanks were discovered enroute, at least two (2) of them were destroyed by the enemy themselves. STIO civilians reported all types of enemy vehicles moving in the direction of VALLO and LAURINO. The patrol also reported that the CALORE RIVER bridge was a very high structure and it would require a very high demolition charge, and the river bank, though dry, had such extremely steep banks that destruction of the bridge would prevent crossing. The Combat Team patrolling, along with the intelligence information, indicated that there was small possibility of further enemy activity from the SOUTHEAST, and later events confirmed this assumption. At 1830 on 11 September 1943, the 143d Regimental Combat Team had accomplished its mission.

On the morning of 12 September, rapidly developing events became more complicated, which resulted in the two (2) remaining Battalions being split into two different sectors, with two separate missions; one defending, and the other attacking. The 2d Battalion had occupied the high ground NORTHEAST of LO FEUDO the previous night. Early in the morning Colonel MARTIN had advised Lt Colonel BARNETT and the Regimental Staff to be prepared to move on call and indicated the probable route which was NORTHWEST toward LO FEUDO. Original plans received from the Division Commander were for the 2d Battalion to move into a defensive position on MT CHIRICO and for the 3d Battalion to occupy the position vacated by the 2d Battalion. Movement of the 2d and 3d Battalions began at 0930.

While this movement was taking place, the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, in position on the high ground at ALTAVILLA, was engaged with the enemy protecting their position against a strong counter-attack which eventually forced

and, and the adjacent high ridges to the NORTH and SOUTH of ALTAVILLA. As the enemy held this position they had observation of the entire road lead to the sea.

At noon Colonel MARTIN was called to the Division CP and given new instructions. The 2d Battalion was to move from MT CHIRICO into a defensive position NORTHEAST of PERSANO between the CALORE and SELE RIVERS, there relieving the 179th Infantry, of the 45th Division. New plans were formulated for the committal of the 3d Battalion in an attack on the high ridge NORTHWEST of ALTAVILLA. This attack was to be made in conjunction with an attack on Hill 424, which was NORTHEAST of the town, by the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry. The 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, which had been badly depleted, was to be reorganized and used where needed for the operation. All three Battalions, plus attached supporting units were to be under the command of Colonel MARTIN.

Colonel MARTIN went forward to the 2d Battalion CP and gave Lt Colonel JONES the plan for the employment of his Battalion in a defensive sector between the CALORE and SELE RIVERS. Upon receiving these instructions Lt Colonel JONES went to the new position on reconnaissance while his Battalion was moving from MT CHIRICO to an assembly area near the CALORE. The 3d Battalion moved forward toward an assembly area WEST of ALTAVILLA in preparation for the attack which was to begin at 0600, 13 September. This movement entailed a march of approximately twenty-two (22) miles from the Battalion's position on the morning of 12 September 1943.

The bridges across the LA COSA RIVER, EAST of MT CHIRICO and across the CALORE, SOUTH of PERSANO, had been destroyed by the enemy, but by 1630, Captain PETREE, Commanding Company "C", 111th Engineers, reported that by-passes at both bridges had been made and that his detector parties were sweeping the by-passes of mines, and the roads NORTH and EAST of the two (2) bridges. This made possible the move of both the 2d and 3d Battalions to their respective positions.

After getting the 2d and 3d Battalions under way, Colonel MARTIN, accompanied by the Headquarters Commandant, the Communications Officer, Artillery Observers and Liaison Officers, and the Commanding Officer of the attached Engineers, proceeded from the Regimental CP, which had moved from CAPACCIO to LO FEUDO, to the vicinity of and WEST of ALTAVILLA where he was to meet Colonel SHRYOCK, assistant Division Artillery Commander, and the Commanding Officer of the 751st Tank Battalion, to coordinate the attack on ALTAVILLA. Before the conference, Colonel MARTIN selected the site for the CP, and made reconnaissance of the ALTAVILLA area which was under intense artillery and mortar fire. Prior to nightfall he was joined by Lt Colonel BARNETT at the destroyed bridge across the LA COSA RIVER. Lt Colonel BARNETT was therefore able to make a hasty daylight reconnaissance of the position he was to attack.

An interesting feature of G-2 information received earlier in the afternoon of 12 September, was an unconfirmed report that forty (40) tanks were moving SOUTHEAST of CASTILIVITA. It may have been these tanks which on the afternoon of 13 September were partially successful in attacking the 2d Battalion. For antitank protection the 2d Battalion had attached one (1) platoon of the Cannon Company, one (1) platoon of the Antitank Company, plus the Battalion's own Antitank platoon. Although the Gorman attack on our 2d Battalion

on 13 September was partially successful, the 2d Battalion accomplished its mission of preventing the attack from crossing the CALORE RIVER from the SOUTH and SOUTHWEST. Further discussion concerning the attack on the 2d Battalion will be taken up later.

The actual Field Order issued for the attack of ALTAVILLA and the defense of PERSANO was issued at midnight on 12 September by Colonel MARTIN to the assembled commanders of the units of the 143d Infantry and attached units. Artillery support included the 132d Field Artillery Battalion in support of the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry; the 151st Field Artillery Battalion in support of the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry; one (1) Battery of the 155th Field Artillery in general support. Should the need arise, all artillery was to be prepared to support in mass the 2d Battalion between the SELE and CALORE, or the attack on ALTAVILLA. Our 2d Battalion was to move into position two (2) miles NORTH-EAST of PERSANO between the SELE and CALORE RIVERS, and relieve elements of the 179th Infantry (45th Division), which were already in position. Its mission was to hold this area against any enemy attack and to protect the right flank of the 45th Division. Beginning at ~~0600~~ 13 September our 3d Battalion was to attack and occupy the high ground NORTH and EAST of ALTAVILLA, and to drive the Germans NORTH and EAST of the CALORE RIVER, and to expel all hostile elements SOUTH and WEST of the CALORE RIVER. The 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry was ordered to move to the Hill SOUTHEAST of ALTAVILLA, and at ~~0600~~ attack in the direction of Hill 424, ejecting the enemy and quickly reorganize to repel counter-attacks. As stated before, the reorganized and greatly reduced 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, was ordered into reserve, to be prepared to attack ALTAVILLA or to extend their line of either flank. All told, the 1st Battalion 142d Infantry, had only about 250 men and about 10 officers with which to perform a mission. Most of their strength had been depleted in an attempt to hold ALTAVILLA. Also in support of both Battalions at ALTAVILLA was Cannon Company, less one platoon; the Antitank Company, less one platoon, which took up position to take under fire any hostile elements coming from the NORTH or SOUTH into the valley WEST of ALTAVILLA; and the 751st Tank Battalion was ordered into position to meet any hostile armored vehicles coming in the NORTH or SOUTH of the valley and to over-run any enemy Infantry should they penetrate the NORTH part of the valley.

Artillery preparation for the attack on ALTAVILLA began at ~~0545~~ and lifted 600 yards at ~~0600~~, firing at that range until ~~0630~~. At ~~0815~~ our 3d Battalion had pushed from the NORTHWEST, up the ridge toward ALTAVILLA, under sniper and mortar fire. As yet there were no casualties to report, nor could the enemy be seen. The 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, was receiving sniper and machine gun fire from ALTAVILLA which was causing them some delay. When Lt Colonel BARNETT arrived at the top of the ridge he was to occupy he found it necessary to send one company (less one platoon) into ALTAVILLA to protect his right flank. He actually occupied the hill NORTHWEST of ALTAVILLA at ~~1200~~. Intermittent artillery fire continued from that time until ~~1630~~. He assembled his Company Commanders and issued an attack order to push on to Hill 424. The attack was to begin at 1715; Company "L" on the right and Company "I" on the left with Company "K" in position in ALTAVILLA protecting the right flank. Fifteen (15) minutes before the attack began, the enemy counter-attacked, preceded by mortar and artillery concentrations. It was timely that his attack

order was issued at 1630, because when the enemy attacked, the Battalion was ready for them. According to the Company Commander of Company "L", the Battalion repelled five (5) enemy attacks between 1700 and nightfall. Casualties were light, and although it is not known exactly how many were killed in this engagement, only twenty (20) casualties were brought to the Aid Station for first aid.

Just prior to darkness Lt Colonel BARNETT received information that the enemy had infiltrated around both flanks, and that snipers and machine guns were going into position to the Battalion rear. Patrols were sent out to confirm these reports. Radio communications had become practically nil, making it impossible for forward observers to call for fire on known enemy targets. Company "K" was being forced out of their positions in ALTAVILLA by the encirclement of enemy Infantry and infiltration of enemy Infantry into the town.

Messages were sent to both the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, to withdraw from their positions to the vicinity of MT CHIRICO. These messages were received by both Battalion Commanders; however, the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, with the enemy to their rear, was unable to withdraw. Lt Colonel BARNETT needed sufficient time to make appropriate reconnaissance and prepare defensive positions in order to execute the withdrawal. On the other hand the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, was in a better position to withdraw and did so. Prior to their withdrawal, Lt Colonel McDONALD had been re-enforced by the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, which had been committed in order to prevent the enemy from surrounding the entire position.

Earlier in the afternoon, the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, had moved into its defensive positions, with Company "G" on the OP line, 2½ miles NORTHEAST of PERSANO. The MIR was established with Company "E" on the right, and Company "F" on the left. During the movement of the Battalion into this position, considerable enemy artillery fire was falling in that vicinity, and NORTH of the SELE RIVER. Antitank guns were put into position, and hasty mines were laid in front of the Battalion positions. Reconnaissance patrols reported that neither the left nor the right flank were protected by friendly troops. On the right flank of the 2d Battalion, the nearest friendly troops were the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, which were engaged on the ridge NORTH of ALTAVILLA, however, their lines did not extend NORTH/EST to the CALORE RIVER. The left flank of the 2d Battalion was exposed, and according to the plan this flank was to be protected by elements of the 45th Division. At 1600 the OPL was hit by a tank attack on its left flank. When this report reached Regimental Headquarters, Colonel MARTIN directed artillery fire in front of the 2d Battalion positions in order to repel the enemy attacks. As the pressure grew on the OPL, Lt Colonel JONES ordered Company "G" to withdraw to a reserve position near the Battalion CP. Enemy tanks pushed forward on both the right and left flanks, overrunning the right flank of Company "E", and the left flank of Company "F", and continued SOUTHWEST toward PERSANO. All the fire of the Battalion was laid down on the attacking tanks, and the men of the 2d Battalion fought gallantly to defend their positions, however, the Battalion was badly cut up by the attack. Just before the attack occurred, Captain ANDREWS, S-1 of the Battalion, had been sent to the Regimental CP to report the situation.

He was told to phone the information immediately to the Division G-3, which he did, and was told by G-3 to get a message to his Battalion Commander to "defend the position at all cost". When he returned to the by-pass at the CALORE crossing he found that the Battalion had been completely surrounded, and that it was impossible to get to the Battalion Commander. The mission of the 2d Battalion had been to hold the position and defend the right flank of the 45th Division. Elements of the 45th Division never reached their positions, which left both flanks of the Battalion open, since a 2½ mile gap existed on the right flank. This condition, which was beyond the control of the 2d Battalion Commander is believed to be directly responsible for the destruction of the Battalion. The majority of the Battalion was either captured, killed, or wounded (see Appendix). Only nine (9) officers and approximately three hundred twenty-five (325) enlisted men were able to escape. Captain EMMETT F. ALLAMON, 2d Battalion Medical Officer, who was captured during this engagement and later escaped, gives an eye witness account of the attack, his capture and subsequent escape, as follows:

"I was captured by German Infantry 15 September 1943, about two (2) hours after my Battalion had been penetrated by tanks approaching from front and rear separating us into small detached groups. I was detached from the eight men and one officer of my medical detachment captured with me; and sent to the rear in an ambulance hauling part of the eleven wounded men captured in my aid station. We were taken about two miles back to a German aid station and prison dump where I encountered another group of my medics including Captain DAVID L. BEAVERS and Staff Sergeant FRANK T. HOLLAND who were allowed to assist me in dressing American casualties as they were brought in."

"We spent the night caring for wounded prisoners only one of whom died under our care. The next morning I had the uninjured prisoners dig a grave and the German guards withdrew to a respectful distance allowing me and all the Americans present to hold a brief ceremony. We marked the grave with a crude stake which our captors later replaced with a substantial and artistic cross. After the ceremony the 'stabsarzt' asked me if I would agree to go back to the front with a selected enlisted man to care for the wounded Americans who were captured. I assented emphatically - less out of consideration for 'my wounded comrades' than for the better possibilities to escape. I selected Staff Sergeant HOLLAND and about noon we pulled back into PERSANO, the village that my battalion had attempted to defend the day before."

"We never saw any more American casualties. We traveled with the 'stabsarzt', PAUL SCHOLL, and his personal staff of six enlisted men, visiting from one aid station to another, under our own artillery fire until the following night when our captors started a general and enthusiastic retreat. After driving two nights in a tremendous motor column that stopped during daylight hours to hide from our dreaded planes, our truck pulled off on a side road leading to BARAGIANO. They camouflaged the vehicle and then went to sleep. Sgt HOLLAND seized some toilet paper to serve as an excuse if he were noticed and strolled away on the opposite side of the truck from the driver. The driver fell asleep too. I moved his leg off my musette bag without awakening him, packed it with German cigarettes and rations, looked longingly at

the pistol strapped to the sleeping guard, decided not to tempt fate by taking it, strolled down the road ahead of the truck and away from the tank parked behind it. I ducked into a little ravine along which I climbed the mountain. In seventy minutes I crawled over the crest and knew that I was free again. That night in the mountains I found Sgt HOLLAND. The next day in a secluded valley inaccessible to any vehicle we were taken in by a lovely Italian family, refugees from MURO LUOGANO. We spent three days with them waiting for British or American troops to come up within marching distance. The two girls washed our clothes, perfumed our handkerchiefs and worked hard to teach us Italian. We left in spite of their protests when an Italian walked nine miles across the mountains to inform us that a British patrol was in the village, RIOIGLIANO, and would wait for us. Our messenger had lived in New York, spoke English and thinks that the Republicans will run McARTHUR for president, but that ROOSEVELT will be elected for a fourth term."

"The mayor, the doctor and the priest were waiting for us on the village square backed by the hundred or so inhabitants arrayed in their best and cleanest clothes. The mayor made a little speech of welcome in excellent English. The crowd cheered and fell in behind the mayor to escort us to the British patrol car half a kilometer down the road."

"The British whisked us across their sector stopping at each Headquarters for "a spot of tea and a grilling". After a day of hitch-hiking across our own sector we were back to routine duty."

Orders were received from the Division Commander to withdraw all front line units in the vicinity of ALTAVILLA to defensive positions along the high ground at MT CHRICO at midnight 13, 14 September 1943. All units engaged at ALTAVILLA were able to withdraw with the exception of the 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, which had been surrounded by the enemy, but Colonel MARTIN expected that by skillful handling on the part of the Battalion Commander, the Battalion could be withdrawn after dark on the 14th. This estimate of the situation on the part of Colonel MARTIN proved to be correct. That night twenty (20) officers and five hundred thirty-six (536) enlisted men of the 3d Battalion were withdrawn in small groups from ALTAVILLA to the Regimental CP.

In accomplishing the difficult task of withdrawing his Battalion, Lt Colonel BARNETT demonstrated unusual skill and extraordinary courage and determination. He made personal reconnaissance of possible routes and organized his men into groups, while, at the same time, he held the enemy preventing penetration of his line. During the engagement, Captain ALFRED J. LAUGHLIN, Battalion S-3, while heroically performing his duties, was severely wounded and left with other wounded men under the care of Captain KRATKA, 3d Battalion surgeon. It was impossible to evacuate them with the rest of the battalion due to the fact that only able-bodied men would have a chance to slip through the enemy lines. Fortunately, however, Captain KRATKA, although made prisoner by the Germans, was later left at SCORZO on Highway 19, and returned to American evacuation hospitals. Captain KRATKA'S own statement concerning the incident is quoted:

"On the night of 14 September 1943, our Medical outfit, consisting of

two (2) officers - Captain MONROE and I - and about six (6) aid men were captured by a German patrol at approximately 2245."

"We were taken to a large church in the town of ALTAVILLA. There I found about six (6) more aid men of the 3d Battalion, and many wounded. During the night I helped evacuate many of our wounded who had been found by the Germans. They had one battalion surgeon who helped us treat our wounded. Captain MONROE was incapable of working due to a badly sprained ankle."

"The following morning, 15 September, I enlisted the aid of my aid men and about thirty (30) of our captured non-wounded enlisted men from the 3d Battalion. We evacuated all the rest of our wounded all morning and finally had accumulated about forty (40) casualties of all types. This included the following officers: Captain LAUGHLIN, Captain YATES, and 2d Lt DEACON. Captain LAUGHLIN was badly wounded in the left shoulder and chest."

"On the day of 15 September, the Germans evacuated about seventy-five (75) captured American soldiers capable of walking. The rest, i.e., the forty (40) casualties and Captain MONROE and myself were taken to their 1st Evacuation hospital at a town of SCORZO on route 19. They told us we were about twenty (20) miles from ALTAVILLA."

"They kept us here until 18 September. During this time we were in charge of our wounded. We also received about fifteen (15) casualties from the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, on 16 September. I actively directed the amputation of the right arm and part of the upper arm of a soldier who was brought in with two others, all American, on the 16th. The Germans had a well equipped operating and trained "Senators". Their asepsis was good considering the circumstances. They only had one Captain and one Sub-Lieutenant running their entire unit. They carried a complete mobile kitchen and their own field rations. They treated our wounded well, although I experienced difficulty in getting attention for our wounded as the German aid men didn't speak English. With the use of morphine syrets and sulphadiazene tablets we salvaged from our outfit, the condition of our wounded was good. All now continued on sulphadiazene."

"On 18 September at 1100, the Germans evacuated all of our walking wounded, including Captain MONROE, Captain YATES and Captain BEAVERS. I understood that I was left because of two children. I interrogated the sub-lieutenant medical officer who spoke English and was very friendly. He told me their Division would pull out that night about twenty (20) miles and I would be left with all the non-walking wounded (28) and two days rations for food for all of us."

"The German hospital left me and the wounded on the afternoon of the 19th. I rationed out the food which consisted of sardine cans, jam, six loaves of bread, and some cans for a liverwurst spread. I commandeered the service of two (2) fairly able casualties for chow and general duty for the wounded. The spirit of the men was good."

"On the morning of the 20th I sent an English speaking Italian off as a messenger to our lines. To prevent allied strafing of our building I employed several home made red cross flags. Many Italians began to appear and I managed to acquire many eggs and some bread. The Italian peasant farmers were very friendly and helpful."

"The morning of September 21, a jeep arrived with an officer from the 36th Division. They had received our message. They went back and we received about seven (7) ambulances from both a parachute battalion and the Clearing Company of the 111th Medical Battalion, 36th Division."

"In summary, of approximately fifty (50) American casualties, none had died. Two casualties had head injuries, two shot thru the spine, and one thru the abdomen. At least six had fractures and the remainder had various types of shrapnel wounds."

It is believed that the following officers who are listed as missing were captured by the enemy: Captain YATES (also wounded), Commanding Officer, Company "I"; 2d Lt BARRETT, Company "I"; Captain CRAFT, Commanding Officer, Company "K"; 2d Lt YENCO, Company "K"; 2d Lt ROSS, Company "L"; 2d Lt O'LEARY, Company "L"; 1st Lt ROY L. GOAD, Company "M". Wounded during the engagement: Captain LAUGHLIN, Battalion S-3; 1st Lt HAND, Company "M". Thirty-one (31) were killed; approximately forty-eight (48) wounded and evacuated, and one hundred eighty-six (186) are still missing.

Brig Gen O'DANIEL, attached to the 36th Division, joined Colonel MARTIN at 0100, 14 September and assumed command of the defensive sector at MT CHIRICO. His defensive lines extended SOUTHEAST from the junction of the LA COSA - CALORE RIVERS to the SOUTHEAST flank of MT CHIRICO. To defend this sector he had under his command the 1st Battalion, 142d Infantry, 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, 3d Battalion, 143d Infantry, 2d Battalion, 141st Infantry, Company "K", 141st Infantry, detachment of the 636th TD Battalion, 751st Tank Battalion, initially the 36th Engineers, Antitank and Cannon Companies, 143d Infantry, and the remainder of the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry. After assuming command of this sector Gen O'DANIEL called a meeting of the Regimental Staff officers and assigned each a specific task to perform in connection with the defensive position. He issued orders to all commanders that the position would be held at all cost and that under no circumstances would there be a withdrawal. Plans were made for counter-attack, and massing of reserves to repel enemy penetrations at any point along the line, and to bolster the position. Antitank 57s, and the Cannon Company's Self-Propelled mounts were employed at vantage points on MT CHIRICO. The 751st Tank Battalion and the 636th TD Battalion occupied positions in the flat NORTH/EAST of MT CHIRICO.

At 0930 on 14 September an estimated Company of German Mark IV Special tanks, supported by Infantry, attacked the left flank of MT CHIRICO. Rapidly the Antitank, Cannon, and tank destroyer weapons went into action, accounting for the destruction of two (2) tanks, and the dispersal of the remainder, forcing a withdrawal. Several Germans were killed near the crossing of the LA COSA RIVER, WEST of MT CHIRICO. No doubt the Germans learned from this that there were no weak points in the line which could be easily penetrated. Later in the afternoon patrols were sent across the LA COSA RIVER to the NORTH to determine the identity and strength of the Germans. The patrols

returned reporting no contact nor observation of enemy activity.

During the afternoon of the 14th, small groups of men from our 2d Battalion reported to the Regimental CP, and by nightfall eight (8) officers and one hundred ninety (190) enlisted men of the Battalion were accounted for. The first group of officers and men to reach the CP were led by the Battalion Executive Officer, Major BULDAIN, who had made contact with Captain STEFFEN, Commanding Officer of Company "G". Captain STEFFEN, with most of his company, had been able to escape the Germans by the nature of the withdrawal from out-post line of resistance. He had been ordered to withdraw to the Battalion right flank to a reserve position near the Battalion CP. The tank attack had hit the left flank from the EAST, and continued WEST toward PERSANO, then SOUTH to the Battalion rear, cutting Company "G" off from the designated reserve position. Under cover of darkness he moved his Company SOUTH of the CALORE RIVER where he was met by Major BULDAIN. Other groups of men reporting on the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th, had escaped capture by hiding in the brush and trees along the CALORE. On the 19th, nine (9) officers and three hundred twenty-five (325) enlisted men had reported in. Of the remainder, of the Battalion forty-seven (47) were killed, thirty-six (36) wounded, and the four hundred twenty-five (425) missing are believed to be captured.

As the 2d Battalion men reported in to the Regimental CP, they were put into the line to re-enforce and strengthen the defensive position, and our 3d Battalion was held in reserve.

Gen O'DANIEL in contemplating the use of our 3d Battalion ordered Lt Colonel BARNETT to prepare three plans for counter-attack and to organize for constant patrolling. These patrols operated to the EAST and NORTHEAST in conjunction with patrols of the Regimental I & R platoon and the front line Battalion patrols. The most likely direction of an enemy attack, as concluded from the reports of the patrols and the reconnaissance attacks by the enemy on our positions, was from the NORTH and NORTHEAST following the CALORE RIVER line to MT CHIRICO. Enemy artillery and mortar fire fell intermittently on our position from 14 September to the 18th, from the direction of ALTAVILLA and NORTH of ALTAVILLA, causing several casualties. At ~~0500~~ on the morning of 16 September 1943, a pattern of enemy mortar shells fell in the vicinity of the 3d Battalion reserve positions, killing 1st Lt MALLORY C. MILLER, Battalion S-4, and seven (7) enlisted men. Sixteen men were wounded and evacuated, including Lt Colonel BARNETT, and 1st Lt ROBERT H. SKILES. Command of the Battalion passed to Major HOWARD K. DODGEN, Executive Officer.

Roadjustment and reorganization of the defensive sector took place on the morning of the 17th. Gen O'DANIEL'S defensive sector was shortened in order to consolidate his front line units and to make possible extension in depth. The line from the junction of the LA COSA - CALORE RIVERS, extending SOUTHEAST to the NORTH slope of MT CHIRICO was placed under the command of Brig Gen WILBUR, and Brig Gen O'DANIEL'S line extended from the NORTH slope of MT CHIRICO along the LA COSA SOUTHEAST for about 1800 yards. Company "L", 143d Infantry, occupied the left flank front line position and the

remainder of the 3d Battalion in reserve continued to improve its position while our 2d Battalion dug in along the center of the MLR. The enemy continued to shell our position.

Elements of the 82d Airborne Division moving up from the right of the defensive sector occupied the high ground SOUTH of ALTAVILLA on the afternoon of the 17th. G-2 informed us that some enemy occupied the ALTAVILLA area, however, the bulk of his force appeared to be to the WEST and NORTHWEST. The 3d Battalion 143d Infantry, as part of Task Force No. 2, commanded by Gen O'DANIEL, was ordered on the afternoon of the 18th to move forward from MT CHIRICO with one (1) platoon of attached engineers at 1930 to the high ground NORTH and NORTHWEST of ALTAVILLA, and prepare defensive positions. On our 3d Battalion right the 2d Battalion 141st Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 142d Infantry, also a part of Task Force No. 2, was to occupy the high ground to the EAST and SOUTHEAST of ALTAVILLA. Task Force No. 1, commanded by Gen WILBUR, was to occupy a defensive sector beginning on the left flank of our 3d Battalion and extending NORTHWEST to the GALORE. Three (3) Infantry Battalions, two (2) platoons of Engineers, and one (1) platoon of the 191st Tank Battalion comprised Task Force No. 2. Staff for the force was provided from the 143d Infantry Regimental Staff. Occupation of the positions were made without opposition and reports of patrols indicated that the enemy was withdrawing rapidly to the NORTHEAST. During the 19th and 20th, the Force continued to improve its position on this high ground around ALTAVILLA. It was not until this high ground was securely held that the beachhead became secure.

Much of the action and many of the orders issued during the operation are not discussed in this narrative. For specific times, dates and the manner of issuance of those orders, reference is made to the unit journal, attached to the original copy of the narrative. It will also be noted that little reference is made to the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry. On 11 September 1943, the 1st Battalion was sent on an amphibious operation NORTH of SALERNO with a Ranger Force, and since that time little has been heard of their operation, however, reports, records, and histories of their operation will be collected and submitted as a supplement to this narrative at a later date.

OPERATIONS AVALANCHE

FIRST BATTALION 143 RCT

FROM

9 SEPTEMBER 1943

TO

4 OCTOBER 1943

SUPPLEMENT

TO

OPERATIONS AVALANCHE

143 RCT

INTRODUCTION

This narrative does not attempt to discuss in detail all of the events that took place within the Battalion from its landing at PAESTUM to its relief at GUIGLIANO. It will cover generally the beach landing and subsequent events up to September 12, when the Battalion was attached to the First Ranger Battalion, under the command of Lt Col BILL DARBY. As near as possible a detailed account will be given of the experiences of the unit from September 12 to October 4, 1943, when the battalion was relieved by the 505th Parachute Regiment and the First Battalion was ordered back to a bivouac area North of NAPLES. The Battalion as part of the 36th Infantry Division, shares the unique honor of being the first American troops to land on European soil and the first beach landing against German troops. It also has the distinction of serving with Lt Col BILL DARBY'S Rangers, and of serving with the 23rd Armored Brigade, famous in the annals of the 8th Army history, and being the first American troops to enter the city of NAPLES. This "Play by Play Account" will not glorify any individual or unit, but a true picture will be given, as near as possible, of what happened. Unfortunately, the Unit Journal was destroyed by enemy shell fire and this record was obtained from the diaries of Major LAND and Capt PEDERSON and the few sheets recovered from the Unit Journal. The description of the terrain and key terrain features may be supplemented by reference to the Division Field Order, and Intelligence Summaries of the Xth British Corps.

Operations AVALANCHE for the First Battalion, 9 September 1943 to 4 October 1943, may be divided into four phases, namely: (1) Landing on Red Beach as part of RCT 143; (2) Amphibious Operation at MATORI under the command of Brigadier General WILBUR, as part of a task force assigned to First Ranger Battalion; (3) Mountain fighting in defense of "88 Pass", as part of the Ranger Force; (4) The succeeding operations across the plains of NAPLES until withdrawn on 4 October, from occupation of GUIGLIANO and MORANO to rest area in the vicinity of NAPLES. During the fourth phase the Battalion was attached in succession to the First Ranger Battalion, 23rd Armored Brigade, 82nd AB Division, Royal Scott Greys, 23rd Armored Brigade, 82nd AB Division, 504th Parachute Regiment, 505th Parachute Regiment, 82nd AB Division.

Details of loading and the sailing of the convoy and briefing of troops may be found in the Historical Record of RCT 143, Operations AVALANCHE.

OPERATIONS AVALANCHE

The mission of the First Battalion, as part of 143d RCT was to land on Beach Red at H plus 180 plus time of craft becoming available on D-Day in accordance with RCT landing plan, advance inland to Regimental reorganizational line, then proceed as part of RCT to assembly area, vicinity RJ 2½ miles NW of CAPACCIO and revert to Division reserve.

According to plan, boat waves 1, 2, and 4 were called to debarkation stations at ~~0500~~, the 3rd wave to not load as soon as boats were available. As part of the Battalion reconnaissance plan, Lt BURRAGE, Battalion S-2, was sent forward with earlier boat waves of RCT 142, leaving the U.S.S. CHASE at ~~0100~~ and landing at ~~0600~~. The reconnaissance party pushed inland to vicinity PAESTUM and remained in observation until arrival of the battalion. The battalion, (less Co "B" in 3rd wave), landed as a group at ~~0800~~, 9 September 1943, and pushed inland to Regimental reorganization line in the vicinity of railroad station NW of PAESTUM. At this point the battalion (minus Co B) was reorganized, and Lt Col WALKER, CO, sent the Liaison Officer, Lt DARKES, to the Division CP which had been established in the vicinity of VANNULO. During the movement across the beach the battalion was subjected to constant artillery and mortar shelling, but due to the aggressiveness of their advance the battalion suffered few casualties. News of tank movements to the North and Northwest came via runner from adjacent units and the anti-tank defense of the battalion was alerted for immediate action. Lt Col WALKER, as commander of the Division reserve was ordered to report to the Division CP. He and Capt NEWELL, Battalion S-3, reported to Division CP as ordered; and the Battalion, under Major LAND, was moved to the vicinity of VANNULO.

The Battalion immediately posted local security for the Division CP and two observation posts were established under the direction of the G-2.

Early on the morning of 12 September, Company A as part of a task force, under the command of Brigadier General WILBUR was ordered to embark at Beach Red for Amphibious Operation at MAIORI. Company A, with one medium tank company, one tank destroyer company, one company 540th Shore Engineers, one company 36th Combat Engineers, and Battery A, 133d FA, composed the force and was ordered to report to Lt Col BILL DARBY, First Ranger Battalion, upon landing at MAIORI. Major LAND was assigned as Executive Officer, Lt BURRAGE as S-3, and Lt EVANS as S-1. Just prior to sailing the composition of the force was changed to include the entire First Battalion. Lt Col WALKER was assigned as commander of the task force and his staff took over their normal duties. Company A and attached units, Brigadier General WILBUR, Lt BURRAGE, Lt GRAHAM, Lt KLEIN, embarked from Red Beach and landed unopposed at MAIORI at ~~0600~~. The remainder of the battalion completed loading at dusk on the 12th and after securing proper release from Naval authorities embarked at midnight. The force had no instructions except to "land at MAIORI and report to Lt Col BILL DARBY, Ranger Commander". The only map available for the operation was a road map, scale 1/200,000. The majority of the boat commanders had no orders, but under the leadership of the commander of LCI 81, did a remarkable job of navigation in strange waters. After several "soundings" on precipitous beaches the Battalion landed

unopposed at 0500 on 13 September 1943. The advance party met the battalion at the MAIORI beach and guided them to an assembly area in the town. Lt Col WALKER and Capt NEWELL reported to Lt Col DARBY at the "Town Hotel", where the latter and General WILBUR were in conference. Lt Col WALKER was assigned the mission of reinforcing the Ranger Force which was defending a pulley bone ridge of mountains around a small valley that opened into the MAIORI Bay. To the North of this ridge was the NAPLES plains and the route of the 5th Army to its objective, the city of NAPLES. The Ranger Force was composed of the First, Third, and Fourth Ranger Battalions, 85rd Chemical Battalion, and part of the 519th FA Battalion. This Ranger Force had landed unopposed on 9 September at MAIORI and captured the mountain tops around the town after little resistance. The Germans were quite persistent in their attempts to dislodge the 400 odd Rangers from the heights, since it was evident that this was a key terrain feature along the axis of advance of the British 7th Armored Division.

Lt Col WALKER, Capt NEWELL, and reconnaissance details accompanied Lt Col DARBY up the miles of torturous road to "88 pass", and a thorough reconnaissance was made of the positions to be occupied by the First Battalion. Major LAND, Battalion Executive Officer, started the Battalion on the long trek up the hills at 0830 and at 1130 the battalion came under the first enemy small arms fire. As the battalion moved up in column, a German patrol that had broken through the ridge defenses of the Rangers from the North, fired on Company C. Lt Col WALKER, who had rejoined the battalion, ordered a platoon of Company C up the slope and sent a platoon of Company A on a flanking movement along the ridge to neutralize the German fire. At this time enemy mortars began shelling the road. Mortar fire of the Weapons Platoon of Company C killed Lt GREENLY and three enlisted men and wounded five enlisted men. After a brisk engagement in which one German was killed and a machine gun knocked out, the balance of the patrol escaped over the hill. The battalion continued its advance up the valley to a point at 1,000 yards Southeast of "88 pass", where company commanders took charge of their companies and moved up the ridge to reinforce the Ranger line. In the initial occupation of defensive positions along the ridge line, the First Battalion was to occupy the middle sector consisting of a saddle with the hill adjacent on either side. Co A was to occupy the left hill and Co B the right. Proceeding Co B encountered machine gun nest set up in a stone house in the saddle. The patrol closed in on the position and overran the gun. One German was killed and the rest fled leaving their machine gun, several pistols and a wealth of ammunition. No casualties were suffered by Company B. On the morning of 14 September 1943, the period of watching and waiting began - watching for Jerry with his over ready mortar, 88, and machine pistol, and waiting for the British to break through at CAMARELLE into the NAPLES plains towards NOGERA and PAGANI.

The mountains on either side of "88 pass" are lofty and precipitous and on the long ridge to the East side, the First Battalion guarded until the 28th. The Rangers hold the mountain ridges to the West and Southwest towards AMALFI. There was little physical contact with the enemy. Constant patrolling on either side, day and night, kept each force informed on the disposition of troops. Artillery and mortar shelling of the MAIORI valley occurred throughout the day and spasmodic shelling was received at night. During the entire period Btry A, 133d FA, under Lt DERRYBERRY sent round after round into troop concentrations and vehicle columns on the NAPLES plains. Lt STEIGLITZ, the Battalion FO, was at the

OP constantly directing fire and no observed vehicle escaped his fire. Btry 4 was under terrific counter battery fire, but at no time did the gun crews relax their fire. Intordictory fire on all RJ's and CR's was laid at night to harass onomy columns. Too much praise cannot be given this Battery. Capt COWIN, Battalion LO, obtained fire from all available artillery units in the area and with the aid of Capt THOMPSON of the Royal Artillery directed the gun fire of two British Cruisers on numerous onomy battery positions, supply dumps, and vehicle columns. Much credit is due the Battalion Intelligence Section for observation and timely reports on onomy movements and gun positions. This group under the guidance of Sgt PENN, who was wounded while on duty at the OP, remained at their posts under constant shelling until properly relieved.

Throughout this phase of operation the Battalion received excellent air support and air missions requested through the Xth British Corps produced disaster on every occasion on the onomy forces.

During the early stages of the defense of "88 pass", Lt OSBURNE was evacuated with an ear injury. Since that time Lt POLLACK has acted in a dual capacity as T/O and S-4. With his able assistant, S/Sgt PATTERSON, Lt POLLACK has very capably coped with the supply problem of the battalion. At times the supply line was 70 miles in length, but at all times all classes of supply were on position as per schedule.

On 18 September 1943, Co B was relieved by two companies of the 325th Glider Infantry, and reverted to Force reserve. On 20 Sept. 1943, CO, 325th Infantry, called for help as their right flank had been overrun by the onomy. This right flank was resting on MT SAN ANGELO, the tallest of this group of mountains and presented a problem in its defense. There was no cover except small crevices between the rocks and its entire area was open to shell fire from the onomy. Lt Col WALKER ordered Co B to MT SAN ANGELO, repel the counterattack and hold the position until relieved by CO, 325th Glider Infantry. Capt WASKOW received the order at 1500 and at 1640 was on top of the mountain with his company and had reported to 325th Seagull. Capt WASKOW says, "I think the men deserve a lot of credit for this move. We had never scaled that mountain before in less than three hours, but not a man fell out on this climb. I was more proud of my company that day than at any other time. Lt GRIFFIN of Co D and his platoon deserve a lot of credit also, for he was right there with his entire platoon. We were ordered to take the ground that had been overrun, but on my reconnaissance I found that Jerry had withdrawn except for an occasional sniper, so we occupied this position. We got settled just after dark and were heavily shelled all during the night and the next day, but we created enough fuss of our own to make him think we had a larger force there - at least we were never attacked any more. The next day, a company of Parachute troops of the 504th relieved me and I reverted to Force again."

On the night of 18 September 1943, Lt Col WALKER made a detailed plan for a raid in the valley in the vicinity of NOGERA to determine the onomy strength and disposition. Company B, commanded by Capt WASKOW, was assigned the mission and H-hour was 2100. As per schedule Capt WASKOW moved his company through Co A's sector, over the ridge and down into the valley. During the movement down the hill, prearranged mortar fire was laid on all possible onomy gun positions along the route of advance and no opposition was encountered by Company "B".

The company objective was reached without loss of the element of surprise, although some light signals were observed in NOCERA. With the company disposed to form a base of fire, Lt WILSON of Co B was sent forward with his rifle platoon to investigate a large house on the edge of NOCERA. Enemy activity had been observed there for the two days previous and Lt WILSON had the mission of reconnoitering the house and vicinity for possible enemy occupation. While this platoon was advancing Co B occupied their objective and covered Lt WILSON'S movement. Upon reaching the point some 100 yards from the house the platoon was pinned down by sudden bursts of machine gun and machine pistol fire from the vicinity of the house. In the fire fight that ensued, Co B lost three men and killed three Germans and destroyed two machine gun nests. Lt WILSON by cool daring under enemy fire was able to complete his mission and withdraw to the company. Capt WASKOW then started the withdrawal of the company back up the hill. During this movement, upon signal from Capt WASKOW by a green star cluster, heavy machine gun fire from Company D under Lt DASHNER covered their withdrawal back through the sector held by Company A. Patrols returned to the area the next day and reported the enemy had moved out, leaving their equipment behind. At ~~0700~~ on the 19 September 1943, Capt WASKOW submitted detailed sketch of enemy position on the hill. This proved valuable in the "big push".

On 19 September 1943, the battalion was visited by several celebrities. Lt Gen CLARK visited "88 pass", inspected our position and laid plans for a coordinated movement of the 7th Armored Division across the plains of NAPLES. Later in the day, RICHARD TREGASKIS of GUADACANAL DIARY fame and ROBERT CAPPA of LIFE MAGAZINE took up quarters at LAND LODGE in "88 pass". TREGASKIS assembled his material for a story quickly and departed, but CAPPA stayed on and accompanied the First Battalion throughout its journey all the way into NAPLES.

During the remainder of the time around the pass our contact with the enemy consisted of patrols into NOCERA, PAGANI, and ST EGIDIO DEL MONTE ALBINO. The troops were under constant 88 and mortar fire, and it was after Company "A" was relieved on the ridge by the 504th Parachute Regiment that Lt MESSENGER was killed on 24 September 1943. On 25 September 1943, the British 23rd Armored Brigade started their vehicles up the long trail from MAIORI to "88 pass". (The "88 pass" as referred to in this narrative is located at TRAMONTI. It was dubbed "88 pass" because of the fact that some of the 88's passed over the CP and some did not).

Actual planning for the big push on to the NAPLES plains began on 21 September 1943 and were completed on the 22nd. Due to the slow advance of the 7th Armored Division around CAMARELLE the Battalion was held in constant alert awaiting the precise moment when the breakthrough from the East came, because the two advances would have to be simultaneous in order to accomplish the mission. The operation was delayed from day to day until the afternoon of the 27th. H-hour for the Rangers, who were to occupy BLOODY KNOLL on our left, was at ~~1700~~; ~~1800~~ for the First Battalion. Lt Col WALKER and his party started up the hill at ~~1800~~ and Major LAND moved the Battalion to an assembly area on the reverse slope of the ridge to the South of NOCERA. There was no relief for the Battalion after venturing on to the plains and the ammunition supply was ably handled by Lt YOUNG. With the assistance of Italians and requisitioned horses the A & P Platoon moved a tremendous amount of ammunition to the top of the ridge along the axis of advance. Two units of fire for the battalion were moved in this manner. Lt YOUNG

says, "That was quite an experience. The animals seemed to be in good shape, but after being loaded they did not prove equal to the trip up the mountain. One horse was loaded with 12 rounds of 81mm HE Light. Upon placing the 12th round on his back, he dropped in his tracks and never walked another step. I started up the trail with 60 Italians loaded with ammunition, lost part of them and was until the wee hours of the morning returning the group to MAIORI. The majority of the ammunition was hand carried by my platoon and details from the companies." As the column passed this ammo dump, each man was given the maximum amount of ammunition he could carry and was to be dumped at the foot of the hill in a new ammunition dump to be established. In some cases a man was given a bandolier of ammunition, or a round of 81 or 60 mortar or perhaps several signal flares. By this method (not found in the Bonning booklet) the Battalion was assured of sufficient ammunition for the days to come.

In this operation the mission of the First Battalion was to move North across the ridge into the valley and capture the town of ST EGIDO, then on order from the 46th Recon Co. (British) one company was to be sent forward from EGIDO, to seize and occupy ST LORENZO. The Battalion started out after word had been received from Company A that the forward assembly area, which was located at the base of the mountain, had been outposted. The trail down the mountain was faint, winding, and shell pocked. Although guides were posted along the route and contact was checked at frequent intervals, the descent was slow and it was early on the morning of the 28th when the battalion was in position to occupy its objective. At ~~0900~~ the Battalion entered ST EGIDO amid the ring of church bells and the throwing of flowers. No resistance was encountered in the occupation, and Company B was ordered forward to occupy ST LORENZO. Capt WASKOW reported occupation complete at 12~~00~~, and both cities were fortified against a counter-attack. The battalion occupied these two cities and were attached to the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment on the 29th. On the 30th of September the battalion was attached to the 23rd Armored Brigade, with the mission of accompanying them into the city of NAPLES. At ~~0800~~, the battalion reached SCAFATI and Company A was attached to the Royal Scott Greys. The balance of the battalion pushed ahead with the Armored through the cities of POMPEI, and de-trucked in TORRE DEL GRECO.

At TORRE DEL GRECO the battalion was ordered to seize and occupy a tall hill to the Northwest of the city which was to be used as an artillery OP for the British Royal Artillery. The hill was topped by an immense castle and was protected by approximately 300 Germans entrenched at its base. The distance from the LD to the objective was approximately 3 miles. The terrain was close, in that it was heavily wooded and honeycombed with tall concrete walls about ten feet high, creating both compartments and corridors. This was most difficult terrain for combat. In this battle of the "stone walls" the enemy had every advantage of the cover and positions and had to be hand grenaded on most occasions.

Company B was designated as the assault company, with Company C to follow in close support. Company A not being available since it was still attached to the Royal Scott Greys. The attack pushed off at 10~~50~~ and immediately ran into heavy machine gun fire and snipers in well selected positions. Company B advanced towards its objective but was pinned down about 2,000 yards from the LD.

Company C was committed on the right flank and all automatic weapons of the battalion were coordinated to further support the advance. The battalion was subjected to deadly sniper fire from all sides, and all of the casualties were from aimed small arms fire. The battalion received excellent artillery support from Col MITCHELL'S Royal Artillery and cooperated with the battalion in every way possible. When it was evident that the objective would not be reached until 1700, Col MITCHELL ordered Col WALKER to withdraw the battalion to establish a firm base in the vicinity of TORRE DEL GRECO. On 1 October 1943, the battalion was detached from the 23rd Armored Brigade and attached to the 505th Parachute Regiment with orders to continue the advance to the North by Loris. After reporting to Col GALVIN, CO of the 505th Parachute Regiment, Lt Col WALKER issued necessary orders for movement with the new parent unit at 1030. At 1100 orders were received reattaching the battalion to the 23rd Armored Brigade and Co A was returned to the Battalion. Lt Gen CLARK visited the battalion at 1230 and assured Major LAND that this unit would be the first American outfit to enter the city of NAPLES. At 1330 in ST GIOVANNI Co A was put on General Sherman Tanks of the 23rd Armored and continued their advance into NAPLES. Capt PEDERSON, accompanied by T/5 DI STEFANO and Cpl SPANGLE, were sent forward to the 82d AB Division CP in NAPLES to secure transportation for movement of battalion from the outskirts of NAPLES to PONTICELLI. On the way into the heart of the city this party encountered several riots between the Fascists and civilians. Being unable to secure transportation Capt PEDERSON and party returned to battalion CP and reported same to Lt Col WALKER. Lt Col WALKER and party went forward to PONTICELLI to reconnoiter new position and Major LAND started the battalion by marching to PONTICELLI and CERCOLA. A few Germans were encountered, captured and evacuated through normal PW channels. On 3 October 1943 at 0900, after outposting the river just North of NAPLES, the battalion entered MUGANO. Opposition was encountered in forms of German patrols, snipers and artillery fire. At 1100 Company B was detached and under the command of Capt WASKOW, seized and occupied the city of MORANO. In the occupation of MORANO, Co B passed through the outskirts of CASTELVELLANO before the British arrived. According to plan, they should have occupied the town some two hours ahead of Co B. CASTELVELLANO was infested with booby traps and mines - all hastily laid. Co B disarmed part of the "boobies" and was able to point out several teller mines to the British tanks when they arrived. Co B also broke up a riot in CASTELVELLANO caused by a mass lynching of some prominent fascists by the citizens. In occupying MORANO and searching it, they found quite a lot of German equipment which was turned over to the advanced detachment of the British. They also discovered an English soldier who had escaped and had been living with the Italians for about a week before they arrived. He was dressed in civilian clothes and was living practically at the Germans feet. He was turned over to the Royal Scott Greys for transfer to his organization. An interesting experience happened to Co B in MORANO. In Capt WASKOW'S words, "we were moving down the main street of MORANO and noticed a well dressed citizen running towards us with a cigar in one hand and waving a cane with the other. On approaching us he shouted "hey bud , what's doing in the United States". He turned out to be an American citizen who was detained here after Pearl Harbor. He took me to his garden and unearthed, besides his passport, a full bottle of Scotch whiskey. He said he had been saving it for three years to give to the first American officer to enter MORANO." At 1230 Lt Col WALKER issued Field Order to the Battalion (minus Co B) to attack GUIGLIANO, crossing the LD at 1400. Co A was designated the assault company with Co C in close support. The attack proceeded according to schedule, virtually rooting enemy machine gun nests out of

well prepared positions and blasting snipers from the walnut trees. Co A advanced to within 300 yards of objective before it was pinned down by well organized defense positions of the enemy. Co C made a flanking attack around the right flank and penetrated the enemy lines to the MELITO - GUIGLIANO highway. At 1757 Lt Col WALKER reported his position to Brig Gen ARKWRIGHT of the 23rd Armored Brigade and was ordered to hold his present position at all costs, and continue the advance at 0700, 4 October 1943. The positions were consolidated and the battalion held during the night. It was during the engagement of this afternoon that Lt KLINGER of Co A, while in an effort to locate enemy positions to bring them under fire, was severely wounded by an enemy machine gun burst. Co A suffered several casualties during this engagement.

At 0700 on 4 October 1943 the battalion continued its advance into GUIGLIANO. Only scattered resistance was met and the city was occupied and fortified by 0900. At 0805, while the battalion was moving into the city it was subjected to heavy mortar and artillery fire. Direct hits on the column killed twelve officers and enlisted men, and fourteen officers and enlisted men were wounded. Major LAND, Bn Ex O, Capt PEDERSON, Bn Adj, Capt PETERMAN, CO Co A, one enlisted man Hq Co, seven enlisted men Co A, and one enlisted man Co D were killed. Lt EVANS, Bn Comd O, and five enlisted men from Co A and three from Hq Co were severely wounded. Lt GUMMEL, Bn Med O, and the Bn Medical section by quick thinking and meritorious conduct to duty gave all possible aid to the injured and no doubt saved the lives of several men. The 22nd and 23rd Armored Brigades continued their advance through the city towards QUELIVENO, supported by the 505th Parachute Regiment. The battalion was attached to the 82d AB Division at 1300 and continued to occupy GUIGLIANO and MORANO. Upon the release from the 23rd Armored Brigade the battalion was ordered by the 82d AB Division to withdraw to a bivouac area Northwest of NAPLES.

On 9 October 1943 at 1000 at the Military Cemetery in NAPLES, ITALY, a Memorial Service for the deceased members of the First Battalion was conducted. Chaplain QUINN officiated and was assisted by buglers from the 82d AB Division Band. A firing squad was composed of the following personnel: 1st Sgt GRAY, Hq Co; Sgt Maj JESFLEY, HqCo; 1st Sgt VOSS, and S/Sgt CREEKMORE, Co A; 1st Sgt PARKER, Co B; 1st Sgt PELLERIN, Co C; and 1st Sgt NOBLES, Co D. Each of the graves was decorated. Ten officers and 120 enlisted men from the Battalion attended the service.

OPERATIONS

IN

ITALY

143D INFANTRY

November, 1943

Warning order for the movement of the Regiment into the front line was received by Colonel MARTIN on the night of 12 November. It became known then that our Regiment was to relieve the 30th Infantry of the 3d Infantry Division which had completed almost two months in the line. In preparation for the anticipated committal of the 36th Division, all officers and men of the Regiment had been fully equipped, oriented, and had received much valuable training.

Since the 21 of September, when the 36th Division, after establishing the beachhead in the vicinity of SALERNO, was placed in 5th Army reserve to reorganize and rebuild, training had been strenuous but well planned and well executed. The training had included "Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Battle Drill", small unit problems, Battalion attack and defense problems, both night and day. Patrolling was particularly stressed with emphasis on organization of patrols and operational technique. Concurrent with this training, the Regiment received, oriented and trained sixty (60) officers and nine hundred eighty (980) enlisted replacements. These enlisted replacements were mostly men with four to six months previous training, young, and required conditioning. At SALERNO the Regiment had lost eight (8) officers and one hundred twenty-four (124) enlisted men killed, ten (10) officers and two hundred and five (205) enlisted men wounded, thirty-five (35) officers and one hundred fifty-three (153) enlisted men captured, and four (4) officers and four hundred eighty-eight (488) enlisted men are missing. Of the casualties during the landing and establishment of the beachhead the 143d Infantry suffered over sixty-five (65) percent of the Division casualties.

In the vicinity of ALTAVILLA where the 3d Battalion had distinguished itself on the 13 and 14 of September, training was conducted and reorganization proceeded, and on the 15 of October the Regiment moved to PIANURA, eight (8) miles Northwest of NAPLES to continue training. While at PIANURA the 36th Division passed from VI Corps to II Corps commanded by Major General GEOFFREY KEYES who, upon visiting the Regiment, stated that the state of training, efficiency, and physical fitness of the Regiment had reached a high standard.

No doubt it was anticipated that the Regiment would be used on a special river crossing mission for on the 3 of November orders were received for the Regiment to move, separate of the Division, to an area just South of the

VOLTURNO River near LIIATOIA and there to execute a river crossing exercise. For the exercise the Regiment had attached the 19th Engineer Regiment (actually one Battalion), 443rd C.A. Battalion, 133d Field Artillery Battalion, and Company "C", 111th Engineer Battalion. The crossing, a night exercise, was conducted and executed in a highly satisfactory manner. After the exercise on 7 November, orders were received which moved the Regiment from LIIATOIA further North across the VOLTURNO to PIGNATARA, about twelve (12) miles North of CAPUA. While at PIGNATARA, from 8 November to 15 November, maps were received and a study made of the VENAFRO, CASSINO MIGNANO, S. PIETRO area including the important Highway 6, approach to ROME, the rugged CAMINO, LA DEFENSA, MAGGIORE, LUNGO, mountain mass Southwest of Highway 6, and precipitous mountain cluster between Highway 6 and Highway 85 extending North and Northwest to the CASSINO heights. This area was part of the well prepared German "winter line" which the Germans had vowed to hold until 8 February 1944.

It was known that the Germans were well dug in in this area. Machine gun and mortar emplacements were dug four or five feet into solid rocks. The enemy had selected excellent artillery positions and had prepared concentrations on all approaches and areas over which we were to operate. Cold, rainy weather favored the Huns. From observation posts on MT DEFENSA, MT MAGGIORE, MT LUNGO, and MT SAMMUERE, well dug in and well camouflaged, the Hun had good observation; however, his observation was often obstructed by low hanging clouds and fog, and at night observation was practically nil. Advantage was taken of darkness and fog to move our troops.

On the morning of 14 November, Colonel MARTIN, accompanied by his S-3, S-2, Communications Officer, Battalion Commanders, and all Company Commanders, left PIGNATARA to make a reconnaissance of the front line positions which we were to occupy, relieving the 30th Infantry of the 3d Infantry Division. The 30th Infantry occupied MT ROTONDO, bounded on the left by Highway 6, with one Battalion, and MT CANNAVINELLE on the right with one Battalion, a third reserve Battalion occupied the high ground twelve to fourteen hundred yards in rear of MT ROTONDO. Arrangements were made and guides organized to lead our Third Battalion into the MT CANNAVINELLE position, the Second Battalion into the MT ROTONDO position, and the First Battalion into reserve position, thereby effecting the relief. Our Cannon and Anti-Tank Company relieved the Cannon and Anti-Tank Company of the 30th Infantry in the vicinity of SANPOZILLONE, South of MT DEFENSA. A train bivouac was established at SANPIETRO.

Although the relief started on the night of 15 November, it was not completed until the afternoon of 17 November due to the long, steep, slippery trail over which the Third Battalion had to move in order to make the relief.

on MT CANNAVINELLE. There were no roads to this position, thus making the supply problem most difficult. A supply point was established near Highway 85, the nearest point to which vehicular traffic could move. From this point two hundred seventy (270) men were used to carry supplies in pack trains over the hazardous mountain trail. A good pair of shoes could stand up to only three trips over the rough trail. Water, rations, clothing replacement, ammunition, and communication wire and supplies, all of these had to be hand carried daily and are still being carried to the position; however, in the second week the pack train was supplemented by thirty (30) mules, but many of these mules soon became disabled and were not able to make the steep grades.

On the Regiment's right the Third Battalion made contact with the 180th Infantry of the 45th Division, often referred to as our "sister Division", which held MT S. NAZARIO, their lines extending Northeast toward VENAFRO. The Second Battalion made contact with the 141st Infantry on the left of the Regiment's sector.

But little information of the enemy situation, of any immediate value to us, was known at the time the relief was made. The Boche, cold, rainy weather, and fatigue had inflicted considerable casualties on the Regiment which the 143d Infantry relieved. Numerous counter-attacks, reported as counter-attacks in force, had been waged without success against the 30th Infantry after their occupation of the MT ROTONDO-MT CANNAVINELLE positions. It was known that elements of the German 8th Panzer Grenadier Regiment occupied positions in the vicinity of S. PIETRO to our front, but their strength, specific location, and status of replacements and reinforcements were unknown. During the period from the 15 to the 30 of November by constant, vigorous patrolling, much valuable information was obtained. It was discovered that the Third Battalion of the 8th PGR was relieved by the 1st Battalion of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and occupied positions to our front in the S. PIETRO area. Contact was maintained with the enemy outpost line which ran South of the S. PIETRO-VENAFRO road. Frequently our patrols clashed with the enemy, inflicting a few casualties and on one occasion a patrol commanded by Second Lieutenant RICHARD A. STEWART, Company "E", attacked and captured a machine gun crew which was operating within a stone house near S. PIETRO. Information obtained from these prisoners partially confirmed much of the information already obtained. Generally speaking, intelligence operations during the period disclosed locations of wire, mines, observation posts, artillery positions, and specific locations of various enemy installations such as command posts and supply points. With good observation and with some replacements arriving it was concluded that the enemy could defend in his present position, counter-attacking probably from vicinity of S. VITTORE, supported

from MT SAMMUERE and MT LUNGO, ^{or} he could delay, withdrawing from MT SAM-
MUERE ridge in the vicinity of S. VITTORE.

The 133d Field Artillery Battalion in direct support of the Regiment prepared over 150 concentrations and fired from 6 to 8 concentrations a day on targets of opportunity, gun positions, and armored vehicles. Enemy artillery was directed primarily toward Highway 6 and our gun positions on both sides of the highway. Almost daily the enemy shelled our Regimental CP, which was located near Highway 6, two and one-half (2½) miles Southeast of MIGNANO.

The Second Battalion, commanded by Lt Col CHARLES H. DENHOLM, in contact with the enemy at MT ROTONDO, was relieved on the night of 20 November by the Second Battalion of the 141st Infantry. Previous to this the 141st Infantry had had only one battalion on the line and now with two of their battalions occupying front line positions, our Regimental sector was shortened to include the high ground in the vicinity of MT CANNAVINELLE which was occupied by the Third Battalion, commanded by Lt Col HOWARD K. DODGEN. Prior to daylight on the 21 of November, the First Battalion, commanded by Lt Col WILLIAM W. BURGESS, JR., began the relief of the Third Battalion. This relief was completed on the afternoon of 22 November, and on the 26 of November the Second Battalion relieved the First Battalion on this same position. All of these movements to and from the positions were accomplished without incident which was due to the manner in which the troops were moved, under cover of darkness, and demonstrated unusual leadership and control on the part of the commanders.

Considering the heavy concentrations of enemy artillery which fell on our positions, and the constant patrolling carried on by the Regiment to harass and maintain contact with the enemy, casualties for the period were not excessive. Valuable officers and men were lost. Five (5) officers, one (1) Warrant officer, and thirty-six (36) enlisted men were killed or died of wounds received in action. (See attached casualty list). Warrant Officer DON F. GOODWIN, Assistant Regimental Communications Officer, of Waco, Texas, was instantly killed on the afternoon of 17 November while heroically performing his duties. His gallant actions prompted Colonel MARTIN to make a recommendation to the Division Commander for a posthumous award of the Silver Star which read as follows:

"On the afternoon of 17 November 1943, elements of the 143d Infantry were in contact with the enemy on MT ROTONDO and MT CANNAVINELLE, ITALY. Maintaining communications to these units required great skill. Warrant Officer GOODWIN demonstrated remarkable courage and unusual stamina, working continuously without rest for a period of forty-eight hours under enemy artillery

and mortar fire, and in checking and maintaining his telephone lines he covered hazardous routes over steep, slippery trails in cold ceaseless rain. To insure the efficiency of communications he established a switching central near the front line units, since the approach to the front line units and the distance from the Regimental Command Post was too great and difficult to allow direct communication. After establishing the forward switching central Warrant Officer GOODWIN found that his switch board and wire party were cold, wet, and exhausted from long hours of line patrolling. Without regard to his own safety and comfort, he immediately dispersed his crew to a place of safety from enemy artillery fire, to enable them to get much needed rest and to get warm. He took over the switchboard himself and remained at the board keeping it in operation as an enemy artillery concentration fell in the vicinity. One shell scored a direct hit on the position and Warrant Officer GOODWIN was instantly killed. Through his untiring, selfless devotion to duty, his efficient and gallant performance under most hazardous circumstances, Warrant Officer GOODWIN maintained communications at all times, thereby contributing immeasurably to the success of the operation."

Another officer who distinguished himself by gallantry in action and who met an untimely death was First Lieutenant WILLIAM G. BUSTER, of Dallas, Texas, Commanding Officer, Company "F". The report on his actions read:

"First Lieutenant BUSTER was in command of Company "F", 143d Infantry, which occupied a defensive position on MT ROTONDO, ITALY, on the morning of 16 November 1943. Although heavily concentrated enemy artillery fire was falling within his position First Lieutenant BUSTER, without regard to his own life and in a manner which inspired the confidence and courage of his men, boldly exposed himself to the enemy fire in exercising constant and direct supervision over the preparation and improving of his defensive position. Having occupied the position the previous night he worked continuously without rest. Learning that artillery fire had interrupted communications with the Company Observation Post, and realizing the importance and the responsibility of his position, without waiting for the artillery concentration to lift, he personally went forward to the observation post. Shortly after his arrival at the observation post an artillery shell struck nearby fatally wounding him. Serious and energetic in the performance of his duties, First Lieutenant BUSTER had succeeded in organizing his position effectively and efficiently."

The officers and men of the 143d Infantry will not forget Major WILLIAM REEMTSMA, Regimental Surgeon, from Stephenville, Texas, who on the afternoon of 29 November was fatally wounded by a shell which struck just outside the window in which the Regimental Command Post was located. On that same after-

noon just prior to this regrettable occurrence, a communication from Major General FRED L. WALKER, 36th Division Commander, addressed to Major REEMTSMA was received which reads, in part:

"It has been officially reported to me that you have demonstrated a sympathetic mental approach to ailing soldiers, that you have been patient and constant in your assuagement of pain and misery, never failing to be attentive and competent and gentle in administering to the needs of deserving men. You have exacted the highest discipline from the men under your command; earned their confidence and respect and have been a tremendous factor in maintaining an especially high morale in your organization. The extraordinary fidelity and efficiency displayed by you reflect great credit upon yourself and your profession." Colonel MARTIN'S 1st Indorsement to this communication reads as follows: "I am exceedingly happy and proud to pass on to you this commendation of the Commanding General. Knowing the high type of service you have rendered, your unselfish devotion to duty and appreciating the value of your sincerity, perhaps better and more fully than any one, because of my close association with you over a long period of time, it is my desire that you know that I feel you have more than earned the honor and praise bestowed upon you by your Division Commander. The value of officers in this Regiment is not measured in decorations and commendations by your Commanding Officer. If it were so your award would be considered by far inadequate. I hope it may be pleasing to you to know that I sincerely appreciate your efforts, and recognize your true value to this command."

The period was not one of great activity. It was rather a period of preparation, feeling out the enemy's defense, softening his strong points, and developing plans for offensive operations. In a sense, the period was offensive in nature by virtue of the noticeable dwindling of the enemy's artillery and patrol activity. He was constantly on the defensive against our increased activity even though we did not attack or attempt to hold new ground. This period set the stage for large scale, destructive attack against the enemy contemplated for the near future.

DOUGLAS BOYD
Captain, Infantry

OPERATIONS
IN
ITALY
December 1943
143D INFANTRY REGIMENT

WILLIAM H. MARTIN
Col. 143d Infantry
Commanding

December 1943

On the first day of December the 143d Infantry continued to occupy the sector on MT CANNAVINELLE, with the 180th Infantry on the right and the 141st Infantry on the left. This sector was held by the 2nd Battalion, and the 1st and 3rd Battalions were in reserve positions near PRESENZANO. Our patrols continued to gather valuable information including location of enemy machine gun positions behind a confused band of booby trapped barbed wire East and Southeast of SAN PIETRO. S-2 was able to determine that these strong positions were occupied by the 1st, 3rd and 4th Companies of the German 15th Panz-ier Grenadier Regiment. Approximately 800 to 1,000 yards Northwest of SAN PIETRO another Battalion of the 15th Panz-ier Grenadier Regiment was organized to defend the high ground in the vicinity of C. MORELLO - SAN VITTORE. The road running East from SAN PIETRO toward VENAFRO was mined and bridges along this road to within 800 yards of the hair-pin turn (see sketch) were prepared for demolition.

SAN PIETRO is situated on the South slope of MT SAMMUCRO. South of the town the terrain from the creek shown on the sketch, rising in high terraced, orchard covered steps North of the town into the steep, rocky slopes of MT SAMMUCRO the Germans had organized with skill a formidable chain of mutually supporting pill boxes in depth. Their main line of resistance in front of our position extended and included the area from a point just South of SAN PIETRO road, running Northeast of the town and including Hill 1205. Constant pounding of these positions and of SAN PIETRO by A-36 dive bombers and heavy artillery did not weaken the Germans to the extent expected. Their emplace-ments and dugouts were so well constructed that the effectiveness of artillery and bombing was limited to direct hits.

Generally speaking, the morale and physical condition of our troops was very satisfactory in spite of bitter, cold rain and sleet. Supplies to the 2nd Battalion still had to be carried by mule trains and by hand over precipitous mountain trails, but there was no breakdown. Many men developed "trench foot" from wet, cold feet. Prior to the attack on SAN PIETRO the fighting strength of the Regiment was fairly good. There were 115 officers and 2,450 enlisted men which could be counted on to make the attack.

In preparation for the attack on SAN PIETRO the Regimental Command Post was moved from Highway 6 to a point about 5 miles Southwest of VENAFRO, near Highway 85. Colonel MARTIN felt that by moving the Command Post to that position he would be in better position to move forward from there with his front line and directly control the attack, moving forward with communications as the attack progressed. Having received the general plan for attack, Colonel MARTIN moved the 3rd Battalion on the afternoon and night of 5 December from

PRESENZANO to assembly area on MT CANNAVINELLE, East of the 2nd Battalion as shown on the sketch. The 1st Battalion was moved to an assembly area near CEP-PAGNA on the afternoon of 6 December.

Briefly, the Division plan of attack contemplated an attack which would result in the occupation of MT MAGGIORE and MT CAMINO on D-day, both located South and Southwest of MT LUNGO; occupation of MT LUNGO on D plus 1 and an attack by the 143d Infantry from MT CANNAVINELLE on D plus 2, crossing North-South line of departure astride the SAN PIETRO highway and attacking Southwest, taking the high ground North of SAN PIETRO and cutting off the Germans who occupied positions to the South, in and around the town. At the same time other elements of the 143d Infantry were to attack up MT SAMMUCRO from CEP-PAGNA and capture Hill 1205, then move West along the MT SAMMUCRO ridge toward SAN VITTORE and capture the high ground overlooking SAN VITTORE. It will be noted that with MT LUNGO and MT SAMMUCRO in American hands the Germans in SAN PIETRO would have been in a rather uncomfortable position and an attack from the North on the town could succeed. Both the MT MAGGIORE and the MT CAMINO objectives were taken prior to the attack on SAN PIETRO; however, the attack on MT LUNGO by a Brigade of Italians was unsuccessful.

Missions were assigned to the Battalions in a field order issued by Colonel MARTIN on 6 December. "The 1st Battalion will move from its present area by the most practical route under cover of darkness and occupy objective "G" by daylight of *D-day. It will push West on the MT SAMMUCRO ridge and capture objective "D". It will establish observation on the MT SAMMUCRO ridge overlooking SAN VITTORE and objective "E". It will make contact with the 3rd Battalion on its left at points shown on overlay and will also establish contact with the Ranger Battalion on its right."

"The 2nd Battalion moving from its present position over route indicated on overlay, will cross the line of departure at H-hour, advance rapidly to objective "A" and capture objective "B"; then it will capture SAN PIETRO from the North. It will protect the left flank of the Regiment. It will secure SAN PIETRO with one company on the high ground West of town, refusing its flank to the North. The remainder of the Battalion will quickly mop up the town and establish all-around security to the Southwest and to the East."

"The 3rd Battalion will follow the 2nd Battalion at 700 yards and will occupy objective "A", in Regimental reserve, prepared to reinforce the attack of the 2nd Battalion on either flank. It will protect the 2nd Battalion from the Northeast by mopping up hostile elements on South slopes of MT SAMMUCRO. After the capture of SAN PIETRO by the 2nd Battalion, the 3rd Battalion, using not to exceed one reinforced rifle company, will capture objective "C" and patrol to objective "F" on my order. The Battalion (less detachments) will be prepared to assist in the capture of objective "D" and to capture objective

*NOTE: Indicates D-day for 143d Infantry; not for Division.

"E". It will establish contact with the 1st Battalion on its right at point designated on overlay."

The Cannon Company was ordered to establish an observation post on MT CANNAVINELLE and support the attack from positions in the vicinity of Highway 6, Southwest of MT ROTONDO, and the Antitank Company was ordered to positions along the VENAFRO-SAN PIETRO highway to repel mechanized attack from the West and Northwest. Two battalions of artillery, the 131st and 133rd Field Artillery Battalions, in direct support, were ordered to place prearranged fires on call and deliver supporting fires as called for by the Battalion Commanders. Signal communications including signal flares for artillery concentrations and lifting of artillery concentrations were planned. D-day and H-hour was communicated to the Battalion Commanders on the afternoon of 7 December. D-day, 8 December; H-hour, 0620. Supply points were established near CEPPAGNA and VALLECUPA.

At 1700 on the afternoon of 7 December, Company "A", leading assault company of the 1st Battalion, commanded by First Lieutenant RUFUS J. CLEGHORN, O-411677, of Waco, Texas, began the climb from CEPPAGNA up the rugged West slope of MT SANIUCRO toward Hill 1205. The officers and men of the 1st Battalion began the attack full of confidence and in excellent spirits even though they were attacking a well defended mountain which normally would have to be taken by specially trained mountain troops.

Colonel MARTIN left the Regimental Command Post which was located near the hair-pin turn South of CEPPAGNA at 0430 on the morning of 8 December to go to observation post #3, on the Northwest slope of MT CANNAVINELLE. From there he observed the progress of the attack. Word was received from Lieutenant Colonel CHARLES J. DENHOLM, O-21293, of Poughkeepsie, New York, Second Battalion Commander, that the 2nd Battalion crossed the line of departure promptly at 0620 and was stopped by heavy small arms, mortar, and artillery fire about 400 yards past the line of departure. In order to overcome the resistance and to insure protection of the left flank of the Regiment against enemy counterattack, Colonel MARTIN committed Company "L" of the 3rd Battalion around the left flank of the 2nd Battalion. Company "L", commanded by First Lieutenant JOHN C. MORRISEY, JR., O-1288097, of St Louis, Missouri, led his company Southwest across the VENAFRO-SAN PIETRO road, then West toward SAN PIETRO; however, after advancing 400 to 600 yards his company was completely stopped by the German cleverly organized, defensive positions. The 2nd Battalion, with "E" and "F" Companies on line, was pushing everything they had into the fight to break up the defenses, and not wanting to lose the momentum of the drive, Colonel MARTIN committed the two remaining rifle companies, Companies "I" and "K", around the right flank of the 2nd Battalion. Casualties were increasing rapidly. It will be remembered that the attack on MT LUNGO by the Italian Brigade had failed and the Germans still hold this important terrain feature which overlooked our position. German mortar and artillery fire, because of excellent observation, was deadly accurate. Captain THEODORE H.

ANDREWS, O-365318, of Caldwell, Texas, Adjutant of the 2nd Battalion, gives the following eye witness account of the attack:

"The 2nd Battalion occupied a position on MT CANNAVINELLE. The Battalion was ordered to attack and take the high ground East of SAN PIETRO. Time of attack was to be 0620 on the morning of 8 December 1943. To be able to cross the line of departure in the valley at 0620 it was necessary to leave our positions at 2400 hours, 7 December. It was one big slide from the top of the mountain to the line of departure because of the muddy condition, and the route was almost straight down. A white tape had been laid the preceding day to aid in following the route, but due to the rain wetting the tape and inky blackness of the night, it was quite difficult to discern the tape. Second Lieutenant JOHN J. KLINE, O-1311401, of Nicktown, Pennsylvania, Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon leader, went forward at 2200 with ammunition and established an ammunition dump in a draw on the line of departure. To do this he had to cover terrain that the Germans had been actively patrolling. The dump was established but Lieutenant KLINE gave his life in establishing it. A platoon of Company "E" was guarding a bridge near the line of departure. The Battalion reached the line of departure just prior to 0620 and crossed on time. We advanced to a point about 200 yards past the line of departure when we hit barbed wire and a wall of pill boxes. Some pill boxes were as close as 25 yards to each other, each containing automatic weapons. The barbed wire was mined and booby trapped. We lost quite a number of men both by automatic fire and mines, but most casualties were due to mortar and artillery fire because when we got near the wire they really gave it to us. First Lieutenant EBEN C. BERGMAN, O-420426, (now Captain) of Clifton, Texas, Commanding Company "E", suggested that we move back 100 yards and let our artillery paste them. The Germans were well dug in and the pill boxes were completely closed with the exception of small slits that they fired from. Many brave men, including Second Lieutenant RICHARD A. STEWART, O-1312108, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, gave their lives jumping the barbed wire and attempting to throw hand grenades through the slits."

While the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were pounding the enemy along the South slopes of MT SAMMUCRO, Company "A" of the 1st Battalion closed with the enemy on Hill 1205. This attack was a marvelous success. Firmly entrenched Germans of the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment were beaten off of the hill after severe fighting. Capture of the strategic 4,000 foot Hill 1205 by the 1st Battalion was a blow to the enemy and seriously threatened their positions all the way to SAN VITTORE. Counterattacks could be expected, and they came. Seven or eight times the first and second days the position was attacked by the determined Germans. Prisoners captured by the 1st Battalion said they had been instructed to retake 1205 at all cost. They paid the price but gained nothing. Lieutenant Colonel WILLIAM W. BURGESS, O-225928, of Santa Monica, Calif., gallant commander of the 1st Battalion who had with great success maneuvered his Battalion, was wounded on the morning of 9 December, and command of the Battalion was assumed by Major DAVID M. FRAZIOR, O-222230, of Houston, Texas.

The 3rd Ranger Battalion, on the right of the 1st Battalion, had the mission of taking Hill 950, which is adjacent to and Northeast of Hill 1205. After some difficulty and successive attacks the hill was taken, but before it was taken an exposed right flank placed the 1st Battalion in a rather precarious position. Had it not been for the effective fire layed down by the supporting artillery the 1st Battalion would have suffered much more. The 133d Field Artillery Battalion, commanded by Major ROSCOE D. GAYLOR, O-232859, (now Lieutenant Colonel), of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was officially commended by Colonel MARTIN for the excellent cooperation and effective supporting power of the artillery battalion in disrupting numerous counterattacks while they were in the process of being formed. Artillery fire was available upon call at all times due to excellent coordination and cooperation of the artillery commander who maintained close command liaison with the Regimental Commander.

At times during the battle for SAN PIETRO the weather cleared up, partly drying the ground and giving our troops an opportunity to maneuver, and also giving enemy aircraft an opportunity to strafe and bomb our positions. Air bombing and strafing was, however, of minor importance when compared with the heavy machine gun and mortar fire with which our attacking troops were being met. Prisoners of war confirmed the belief that our troops were inflicting heavy casualties on the Germans. They also confirmed the previously received reports that the 143d Infantry was attacking four battalions of the enemy, comprised of elements of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment on the left and the 71st Panzer Grenadier Regiment on the right (MT SAMMUCRO area).

Many of the accounts of the action of the 1st Battalion can be related only by actual eye witness statements.

Sergeant WILLIE B. SLAUGHTER, 20807575, of Mexia, Texas, Company "B":

"One time on Hill 1205 one of the men in our company, Private TWANDA W. NOBLES, 32238068, of New York City, and a German sniper were having a private shooting duel. They were crawling around in the rocks and everytime one would stick his head out, the other would start shooting. They looked like a couple of lizards crawling in those rocks. To me, having a ringside seat, it was rather humorous to hear NOBLES shouting "where is the son-of-a-----".

Corporal HENRY C. KRANZ, 13091118 (now Sergeant), of Lancaster, Pa, Company "B":

"While we were up on 1205 I received a package from home and when I opened it, what do you think I found? A necktie, of all things! But don't tell the folks at home, they just wouldn't understand."

Second Lieutenant JOHN W. UPCHURCH, O-1308026, of Chicago, Ill, Company A:

"On 11 December the company was warned that an enemy counterattack was developing. The mortar section of the company was ordered to commence firing. At that time the section consisted solely of Corporal FRANK GRANIERI, 38026543, of San Antonio, Texas, Private First Class ALBERT LAZZARO, 32238853, of Palisades Park, New Jersey, and Private First Class MICHAEL J. STEFANO, 33271202, of New Castle, Pennsylvania. With the assistance of a parachute trooper who volunteered to help them, these men fired three mortars with such efficiency that the counterattack was stopped, due almost solely to their efforts."

An extract from an article in the Associated Press written by the famous war correspondent DON WHITEHEAD who was present during the action is quoted:

"The slopes of the mountain (MT SAMMUCRO) were strewn with German dead, mowed down as they attempted to retake the heights."

As directed in the field order for the attack by the 1st Battalion on MT SAMMUCRO, the Battalion was to take objective "G" (Hill 1205), then attack West along the ridge and take objective "D" overlooking SAN VITTORE. Reconnaissance revealed that there were actually four distinct terrain features between Hill 1205 and objective "D". In addition to defending Hill 1205 against repeated and determined counterattacks the 1st Battalion aggressively probed the defenses which were organized along the ridge West of their position toward SAN VITTORE. Captain LEWIS S. HORTON, O-390552, of Pageland, S. C., Commanding Company "C" of the 1st Battalion, while planning an attack against one of these positions was killed by sniper fire. His gallant actions while personally leading his platoon leaders under severe enemy fire to vantage points from which they could observe the positions they were to attack, was an outstanding example of leadership marked by courage and determination. The plan which he devised and the exact thoroughness with which he oriented his leaders was an inspiration which enabled his company to accomplish successfully its mission using the plan which he had ordered prior to his death. Four days later on 13 December, another gallant officer, Captain HENRY T. WASKOW, O-407112, of Belton, Texas, Commanding Company "B", was killed while leading elements of his company in an attack against a German strong point. On 12 December the 1st Battalion was reinforced by the 2nd Battalion of the 50th Parachute Regiment.

Committal of the 3rd Battalion, Company "I" on the right and Company "K" on the left, on the right of the 2nd Battalion in mid-morning of 8 December had been ordered by Colonel MARTIN in order to give punch to the drive on objective "B". The resistance which they met was the same as that which the 2nd Battalion met. Company "L", on the left of the 2nd Battalion, was placed in a reserve position and prepared to defend the left of the Regiment against counterattack. After another attack by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions on the 9 December the lines remained materially the same.

Orders were received for a Division coordinated attack to begin at 1200 on 15 December. Our 1st Battalion was ordered to attack down the MT SARRUCRO ridge and capture objective "D" prior to daylight on the 15 December. This was ordered to be accomplished in preparation for the attack beginning at noon. In direct support of the Regiment was the 69th Field Artillery Battalion, the 133d Field Artillery Battalion, and Companies "C" and "D" of the 2nd Chemical Battalion. The attack was to be made in conjunction with Company "A", 753rd Tank Battalion which was ordered to attack SAN PIETRO from the East along the SAN PIETRO-VENAFRO road, and assist the infantry by fire on German positions and personnel. Our 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 3rd Battalion on the right and 2nd Battalion on the left, from positions just West of the original line of departure, were ordered to attack with each Battalion initially sending out one platoon to their respective fronts to develop the enemy resistance. An attack on MT LUNGO to take place on the night of 15-16 December was ordered by the Division Commander. The 142d Infantry was given this mission. One Battalion of the 141st Infantry on the left of the 143d Infantry was to attack SAN PIETRO from the South.

Reports received from the 1st Battalion during the night of the 14-15 December indicated that the attack toward objective "D" was being met by most bitter resistance. While the 1st Battalion was attacking, the 2nd Battalion of the 50th Parachute Battalion was holding Hill 1205 and Hill 980 to the North~~east~~. It appeared that objective "D" would have to be taken by a stronger force or by converging forces from the West and Southwest.

At 1200 on 15 December the tanks jumped off, attacking East on the road toward SAN PIETRO. Simultaneously the 2nd and 3rd Battalions attacked and were met by a wall of automatic weapons fire, mortar fire, and artillery fire. Brigadier General WILBUR, Assistant Division Commander, arrived at the Regimental Command Post and upon learning the situation ordered Company "E" to cross to the South side of the road and attack West toward SAN PIETRO with the mission of assisting the tanks in any way possible. Observers reported that two of the tanks reached SAN PIETRO but were destroyed near the town by German antitank guns concealed in buildings. Three more tanks hit mines on the road and were stopped. Captain EBEN C. BERGMAN, Commanding Company "E", attempted repeatedly to make contact with the tanks but those which were present had already been knocked out and were being abandoned by the crews. Nevertheless, his orders were to attack, and that he did. The mass of barbed wire, mines, and heavy fire, which he met reduced his company to an almost ineffective force. Late in the afternoon he was ordered to attack again. This time Company "L", in Regimental reserve, was ordered to attack West toward SAN PIETRO on the left of Company "E", and upon reaching a point between the creek and the town to attack North in conjunction with the 141st Infantry. After dark, both Companies "E" and "L" attacked. Company "L" was successful, after much heavy fighting, in reaching the point where the company was to turn North toward SAN PIETRO. First Lieutenant MORRISSEY, although unable to make contact with the 141st Infantry, turned toward the town. As his company attacked to

the North they were fired on from the left by Germans who still held positions in that area. The Company "E" attack, meeting the same strong resistance, was reduced in strength to seven or eight riflemen. Company "L" was also reduced to a handful of men. To continue the attack with these few men was hopeless, and both companies were ordered by Colonel MARTIN to reorganize on their original positions. The following day, 16 December, word was received that MT LUNGO had fallen that morning. Our patrols continued very active that day in order to determine whether or not the enemy was withdrawing.

As we had previously learned, we could expect a counterattack by the Germans to cover a withdrawal, and it came at 1853 hours on 16 December. Second Lieutenant THEODORE N. KENNEDY, O-1308828, of Huntington, Long Island, N. Y., 3rd Battalion Headquarters, wrote an interesting eye witness account of the attack which began on the night of 16 December:

"A culvert beneath the road leading into German occupied SAN PIETRO afforded the protection for our Battalion Commander and his Staff and the enlisted personnel. An occasional artillery shell found its way to our area. Rumor circulated about the area that the Germans were pulling away from SAN PIETRO and probably we would walk in a column of fours and at right shoulder arms into the town. At about 1900 on the night of 16 December, all hell broke loose. The telephone wire connecting the fighting elements with the Command Post were burning as requests for artillery, advice and other aids were excitingly called for. To the man who operated the switchboard, may I say, deserves all the credit in the world. Had he gotten excited or in any way fell down on his job many of these all-important requests may not have been fulfilled and perhaps our mission not completed, but since Private WILLIAM V. AMOROSO, 39126249, of San Francisco, California, is typical of the American soldier he did not fail."

The German main thrust was on our right flank, a difficult sector since the ground sloped sharply and the rock ledges built by the Italians to irrigate their olive orchards limited the observation and fields of fire for our troops and afforded the German troops concealment and that which goes with concealment. Company "I", now commanded by First Lieutenant DAVID R. FIELDS, O-1296505, of Brooklyn, New York, nevertheless doggedly held under a terrific artillery and mortar bombardment. Company "I" had lost their gallant commander First Lieutenant WILLIAM J. LANGSTON, O-383862, of Douglas, Georgia, who was mortally wounded in an attack of 10 December. When First Lieutenant FIELDS was wounded and another officer, Second Lieutenant JOSEPH A. MADEO, O-1292726, of Brooklyn, New York, killed, Private First Class CHARLES F. DENNIS, 20806991, of Taylor, Texas, came forward as an inspirational leader and assisted materially in rallying his battered company in repulsing the German attack. Private First Class DENNIS received a Silver Star for his heroic actions and is now Sergeant DENNIS. Although the main thrust and the primary fighting broke out in First Lieutenant FIELDS' sector, it quickly spread like a hot and aroused flame across the whole Battalion front.

Captain HENRY C. BRAGAW, O-366581, then First Lieutenant BRAGAW of South-Port, N. C., the fighting Commander of Company "K", turned out to be the main spark plug of our resisting force. Although his communications with the Battalion Command Post had been lost, he nevertheless kindled the spirit of the men to such a degree that the German attacks had no chance of being successful.

In the darkness of the narrow culvert which was the Battalion Command Post sat a cool, efficient officer directing the artillery of our many guns barking noisily from behind a hill a mile or so to our rear. "Bring it in close", he would say. "Of course, I know its close, but bring it in 50 yards closer", again he repeated. When the attack was at its closing stages the front line elements reported that artillery was falling within 100 yards of their position, but was proving to be a wall of fire which no one could hope to come through. Captain MARION P. BOWDEN, O-407022, of Belton, Texas, Battalion S-3, an excellent officer who was directing the fire was proving himself this night.

It was 0100 when the German counterattack was history in the SAN PIETRO sector. It was also 0100 when the Germans began their withdrawal from SAN PIETRO, leaving a small covering force to occupy the attention of our troops while the main body slipped quietly out to move into another already prepared position five kilometers to the rear. Guessing that this was happening, the Regimental Commander ordered heavy artillery fire on the German rear areas which undoubtedly caused heavy casualties.

Patrols of Company "I" and Company "K" moved forward immediately and found that the much bombed village of SAN PIETRO was ours for the occupying, and the battle weary 2nd and 3rd Battalions were ordered forward at once. They now moved quickly to occupy objective "B" North of SAN PIETRO, and patrols from the 2nd Battalion clearing the town of SAN PIETRO took ten German prisoners who had not yet made their escape.

Arrangements were being made on the night of 16 December to effect the relief of the heroic 1st Battalion on MT SAMIUCRO by the 1st Battalion of the 141st Infantry. It was a tired, unshaven, battle worn Battalion which on the 17 December descended the rocky West slopes of MT SAMIUCRO. There was no doubt in anyones minds that the 1st Battalion had accomplished a tremendous task requiring the maximum strength and energy of every officer and man.

To better describe the final occupation of SAN PIETRO, an Associated Press report by war correspondent DON WHITEHEAD is quoted:

"Although the town fell yesterday when advance guards entered on the heels of the retreating enemy, its capture was recorded as of today. The name of SAN PIETRO will be remembered in American military history along with such

names as FONDOUK, BIZERTE, TUNIS, GELA, TROINA, SALERNO and NAPLES. The name of this little village will never be forgotten by the American soldiers who took part in the battle for it. We picked our way with a patrol and first aid men through fields ripped by mortars and shells and the still bodies of dough-boys who fell in the bloody, savage fighting. The fierceness of the fighting was written in those fields and in jagged piles of masonry in the town. Neither TOBRUK nor BIZERTE nor BATTIPAGLIA nor TROINA were as ripped and torn and pulverized by explosives as this gray, little town overlooking the valley approaches to CASSINO. The Americans call it "Death Valley" because death was on the rampage for 48 hours as they stormed this enemy fortress ringed by fortifications, dug into the terraced slopes commanding the LIRI Valley.

Before the U. S. Fifth Army could advance along the road to ROME this fortress had to be reduced. The battle began three days ago when the Americans attacked at mid-day behind a heavy artillery barrage. (Actually it had begun 10 days prior on 8 December). Casualties were heavy and some companies lost all their officers, either killed or wounded. While one group worked its way slowly along the slopes of the mountain from the East in the face of heavy fire, another attacked from the South out of the valley. Both ran into murderous fire from enemy machine guns and mortars hidden in the caves."

Positions North and Northwest of SAN PIETRO were occupied and organized, and preparations were made to continue the attack to take C. MORELLO and the town of SAN VITTORE to the Northwest. The 3rd Battalion now occupied objective "B", and the 2nd Battalion held positions extending to the left, making contact with the 141st Infantry at RJ69. Aggressive reconnaissance and combat patrols of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were active constantly, harassing and inflicting casualties on the enemy.

The 143d Infantry in conjunction with the 141st Infantry was ordered to attack on the night of 20-21 December to capture C. MORELLO and SAN VITTORE. Our Regiment was ordered to capture C. MORELLO prior to dawn on 21 December. On MT SAMMUCRO, the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, was to attack West along the ridge making contact with our 3rd Battalion on the West slope of the mountain above C. MORELLO. Beginning at 1800 on 20 December the 3rd Battalion, followed by the 2nd Battalion, began moving up the slope of MT SAMMUCRO to a position above C. MORELLO to improve their positions for the attack on C. MORELLO. After advancing only a few hundred yards the 3rd Battalion was hit by machine gun fire and heavy concentrations of mortar fire. Average fighting strength of the companies in the 2nd and 3rd Battalions was only about 35 and they were unable to penetrate the heavily fortified positions; however, prior to this attack, reconnaissance patrols from the Regiment actually entered the town of SAN VITTORE and established observation in the town for a short while, securing valuable information. Three successive attacks by our Battalions failed to break through the German positions, and being unable to break through, our men dug in and held until relieved by the 3rd Battalion, 141st Infantry, on the night of 22-23 December. Leaving a covering shell to remain in position

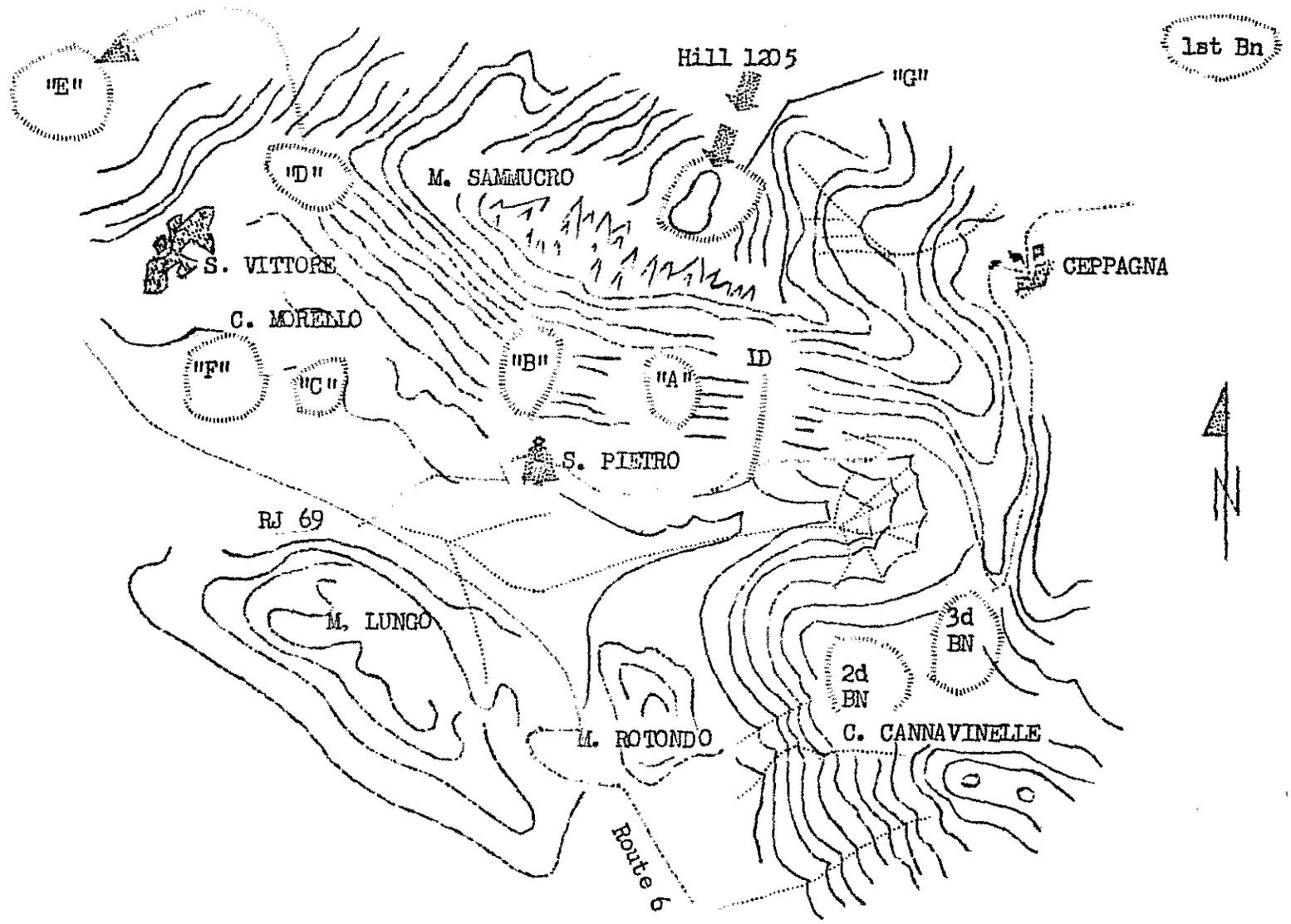
while the relief was being effected the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were returned to an area in the vicinity of CEPPAGNA where they remained until orders were received for the Regiment to move to an area at SAN ANGELO D' ALIFE.

Our 1st Battalion was ordered back into the lines on the night of 25 December to relieve the 2nd Battalion, 141st Infantry. Strong patrols from 1st Battalion probed C. MORELLO and a platoon from Company "A" soon occupied this position. Company "B" was moved forward and into the South edge of SAN VITTORE, occupying two blocks of the town before the Battalion was relieved by elements of the 34th Division on the night of 29 December. The Regiment, less the 1st Battalion, entrucked and the movement to SAN ANGELO D' ALIFE began on the afternoon of 27 December, and closed in before daylight of 28 December. Advance detachments had previously arrived in SAN ANGELO D' ALIFE and had arranged for our Regiment to take over the area which was being evacuated by the 168th Infantry. Following the Regiment by one day, after their relief on the night of 29 December by elements of the 135th Infantry, the 1st Battalion moved into their bivouac area at SAN ANGELO D' ALIFE.

During the operation our losses were 14 Officers, 125 enlisted men killed; 2 Officers, 25 enlisted men died of wounds received; 4 Officers, 94 enlisted men seriously wounded; 32 Officers and 609 enlisted men lightly wounded; replacements received, 1,100. Fifty-six Germans were captured and the casualties inflicted on the enemy, although only an estimate can be made as to the number, was extremely heavy.

The "Battle of SAN PIETRO" had been a very costly one. The men lost there were men of sterling character, strong and courageous, and who, by nature of their gallant accomplishments, have left with us the inspiration and the desire to fulfill the aims for which they so bravely fought and died. Recommendations for decorations for heroes of this operation will go beyond a hundred, and countless deeds of valor and gallantry deserving of highest praise are yet to be recorded and many may never become a matter of record. Such are the fortunes of war, but the American spirit lives on forever, which is incontrovertible proof that the highest reward for a soldier is to know himself that he has given everything that God has given him to give in the performance of his duty. So may it ever be.


DOUGLAS N. BOYD
Captain, 143d Infantry
Adjutant



SAN PIETRO BATTLE AREA

OPERATIONS

IN

ITALY

JANUARY 1944

143D INFANTRY REGIMENT

WILLIAM H MARTIN

Colonel, 143d Infantry

Commanding

1 January 1944 to 28 January 1944

PAUL D. ADAMS

Colonel 143d Infantry

Commanding

29 January 1944 to 31 January 1944

OPERATIONS
January 1944

At the beginning of the New Year the 143d Infantry Regiment, in bivouac at SAN ANGELO D' ALIFE, ITALY, was undergoing another series of training programs designed to maintain the regiment in a constant state of readiness to return on short notice to the front lines. The most difficult problem involved receiving, assigning, and orienting replacements, and reorganizing the companies in order to make use of the experienced officers and non-commissioned officers where needed. During the engagement at SAN PIETRO and on MT SANLUCCO in the month of December the regiment suffered casualties amounting to 906 men and 53 officers. These vacancies were filled during the period from 1 January 1944 to 14 January 1944 by 416 enlisted replacements and 90 officer replacements. As compared with previous replacements, received after the SALERNO beach landing, the new men appeared to be more suited to combat physically but their training of from four to six months was insufficient for the strenuous combat which we were experiencing. Especially unfortunate was the fact that many of these men, having just arrived in a strange land and assigned to a new organization, were so quickly going to be carried into one of the most bitter operations to be experienced by the regiment, that of attacking across the RAPIDO RIVER against the German Gustav Line.

The Gustav Line ran from the southwest along the CARIGLIANO to the junction of the RAPIDO RIVER then running northwest on the west bank of the RAPIDO to CASSINO. After being driven off of MT CAMINO, MT MAGGIORE, and out of SAN PIETRO and SAN VITTORE the boche had fallen back on this line with the intention of holding at all cost what was believed to be the last major defensive line before ROME. Before taking a crack at this line the regiment went through another "dry run" crossing on the VOLTURNO near SAN ANGELO D' ALIFE which turned out to be very successful and gave confidence to unit commanders even though there were so many new men who had received but little training since leaving the States. It may even be said that the morale of the troops and confidence of the commanders exceeded expectations.

The regiment left SAN ANGELO D' ALIFE on 15 January 1944 and closed into bivouac in the vicinity of MT LUNGO one mile north of MIGNANO by midnight, a motor march of approximately 35 miles. Under cover of darkness on the night of 17 January the 1st and 3rd Battalions moved forward from MT LUNGO to occupy front line positions on the east bank of the RAPIDO between the 142d Infantry, on the right, and the British Durham Light Infantry, on the left. The 2d Battalion moved on the night of 18 January from MT LUNGO to a reserve position in rear of the 1st and 3rd Battalions. West of the 1st Battalion's right flank on the west bank of the RAPIDO the town of SAN ANGELO appeared to be a formidable fortress. From our previous experiences we had learned that the boche used

buildings in towns to an excellent advantage by running self-propelled mounts through a knocked out wall, the mount resting inside the building and firing from small openings or the muzzle protruding slightly over a low wall. Antitank guns, machine guns, and mortars were employed similarly. Our artillery was not too effective against these positions.

Orders were received for the attack across the river on the 20 January. For an accurate account of the attack as described by Colonel WILLIAM H. MARTIN, O-335128, Regimental Commander, from Houston, Texas, who was an actual eyewitness to the attack, the complete, official report is quoted:

"The 143d Infantry Regiment was ordered to cross the RAPIDO RIVER, at two (2) points, night 20-21 January, time of initial crossing 2000 hours. The crossing was preceded by heavy artillery preparation starting at river line and falling West of river as far as 500 yards. This fire was placed on areas known to be organized as strong points, and was lifted from East to West on prearranged time schedule. It included fire from 133d Field Artillery Battalion, 132d Field Artillery Battalion, and 68th Field Artillery Battalion, giving close support to this Regiment and twelve (12) other battalions from Division Artillery and Corps firing in the areas on time schedule, but in general support of the Division operation. Close in fires started at H minus 30 and lifted at H minus 5, and moved west in 100 yard shifts on a prearranged time schedule designed to keep artillery fire falling within 150 to 200 yards of advancing troops at all times. Companies "B" and "C", 2d Chemical Battalion were used to thicken the fire of the artillery.

"At 2000, 20 January, the leading elements of First Battalion reached its crossing point on the RAPIDO RIVER, carrying pneumatic reconnaissance boats from the 19th Engineers to forward boat assembly areas. Engineers assisted in guiding the initial elements to the river crossing site. A heavy fog hung over the river and visibility was nil. Intermittent artillery and mortar fire was falling in the vicinity, but no small arms fire at this time. The 3d Platoon of Company "C", led by Second Lieutenant RAYMOND NUNEZ, O-17030001, of Beaumont, Texas, was the first to cross and immediately came under small arms and mortar fire. Some of the rubber boats were destroyed by mortar fragments and small arms fire, but enough boats were brought down to get the other two rifle platoons across under fire. By this time all the rubber boats had been destroyed and the Engineer details were badly disorganized and dispersed. German artillery and mortar fire was falling on and near the crossing site, and there had been rather heavy losses in Companies "C" and "B". No report from Company "C" on the west side of the river, but heavy small arms fire was heard from that side. At 2255, I personally went to the river to find out the situation and was accompanied by Brigadier General KENDALL of the 88th Division, and by Captain MILTON H. STEFFEN, O-405938, Battalion Executive Officer, of Huntsville, Texas. We found Major DAVID W. FRAZIOR, O-222230, Battalion Commander, of Houston, Texas, at the head of his battalion on the east bank of the river and attempting to secure additional boats for the crossing of his next company. No Engineers were around, so we

organized a carrying party from Company "B" and took them to the boat assembly area where we found an Engineer Lieutenant and 28 men of the 19th Engineers dug in and in their fox holes. These men were used to assist the Company "B" men carry the five M-2 boats from this point to the crossing site. Upon arrival of the boats Major FRAZIOR started his company "B" crossing the river. All during this time German mortar and artillery fire was sweeping the crossing area, and casualties were mounting. By 0500, 21 January, 1st Battalion was placing two foot bridges over the river and completed the crossing of the entire Battalion by 0600. The foot bridges were destroyed in part by enemy fire, but one of them still had sufficient floatage for crossing.

"At the southern crossing site, over which the 3rd Battalion was ordered to cross, considerable difficulty was encountered before the initial waves reached the river. Engineers leading the boat groups to the river lost their direction in the dense fog and got into a mine field. The rubber boats were destroyed, and casualties occurred among both the Engineers and the Infantry, badly dispersing and disorganizing both. Much time was lost in reorganization, after which the Battalion Commander moved his foot bridges forward with the view of using them early to effect the crossing. Artillery and mortar fire held up the movement to the river, and disorganization and confusion resulted in the dark and fog. Casualties were heavy, and at daylight the battalion had not succeeded in getting anyone across, and were ordered back to their original positions, under cover.

"By 0716, the 1st Battalion, on the west side of the river, had been unable to make any progress against the German prepared positions, and were under heavy machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. They had been forced into a pocket, with the river to their backs, and were receiving fire from German tanks or self-propelled guns in hull-down positions west of the road. Major FRAZIOR requested orders to pull back across to the east side of the river, which was denied by the Commanding General. Before these instructions reached Major FRAZIOR, fire had become so intense as to make his position untenable, and his battalion was threatened with being wiped out completely. He brought his men back across the river to his initial positions, using the partially destroyed foot bridge, clearing in his area about 1000, 21 January.

"Orders were received by this headquarters, from G-3, that attack would be launched against German positions on west side of RAPIDO RIVER at 1600 hours, 21 January, to seize, occupy, and defend against any attack, the objectives assigned by the Commanding General in his previous order for the attack. Warning orders had been received at 0820 to continue the attack 21 January at 2100 hours. Plans for carrying out the order were made and battalion and attached unit commanders were given oral orders at 1030 hours, 21 January, to expect renewal of attack as early as 1400 hours, 21 January. The time was later set at 1600 hours and the attack jumped off at that time. Heavy smoke from smoke pots, chemical mortars, and artillery was placed along the far and near side of the river, and

3rd Battalion troops reached the river bank, under mortar and artillery fire, at 1430 hours. Rubber boats were used to carry Companies "K", "I", and "L" across, after which the first foot bridge was put in the water. The entire Battalion was across the river at 1830 hours, and had been under heavy machine gun fire from the time the first wave hit the water. Casualties were heavy, but evacuation continued across the foot bridge to near side of river.

"The 1st Battalion crossed north of Blue, starting at 1000 hours. The river had been smoked heavily and boats were taken to the crossing site, under cover of the smoke. Enemy artillery and mortar fire began falling as the first troops reached the river, and when Company "A" sent the first wave across, it met heavy machine gun fire. The company completed its crossing under heavy fire and Company "B" followed, both companies being over by 1835. The Battalion Commander crossed with Company "B" and reported no progress against heavy resistance. Company "C" had not been able to cross at 1935. At 2033 hours, the Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, 19th Engineers, reported all of 1st Battalion across river, and that one foot bridge was completed and another being built. He also reported one foot bridge under construction at the 3rd Battalion crossing. At 2317 hours, information was received from 1st Battalion that Company "C" had not yet crossed the river, and Battalion Commander was directed to speed the crossing of his Company "C". Heavy machine gun fire and mortar fire was holding up the progress of both 1st and 3rd Battalions. Little information was received from either, after the crossing, but the 3rd Battalion was making their way through the wire and was taking out some of the machine guns in their zone of action. In the 3rd Battalion, Company "I" was on the right, Company "K" on the left, and Company "L" to left rear. They were advancing with extreme difficulty and receiving heavy casualties. Reports from men who returned next day, indicate that the German machine gun positions were wired in and the bands of fire were interlocking. Many men were wounded in the lower extremities, or in the buttocks, by the low grazing fire as they moved or crawled forward.

"The 2nd Battalion was ordered to cross at the 3rd Battalion site, at 2340 hours. As the battalion approached the river, they were met by Engineer guides, but they were unable to find the foot bridge, over which this battalion was to cross. Captain HERMAN H. VOLHEIM, O-249593, of 3rd Battalion, from Venice, California, guided them to the bridge and across into the enemy position on the right of the 3rd Battalion. Companies "E" and "F" crossed and Company "G" was held back in position near the foot bridge to protect the rear. At 0800, 22 January, these two companies were held up about 200 yards west of the river and receiving heavy fire of all kinds. They were pushing forward slowly, using all the fire power they had and reached the approximate flank of the 3rd Battalion, that had made very slow progress. Hand grenades were used, as well as the rifle grenade, on the enemy machine gun positions. Movements forward were by small groups, employing fire and movement. Intense artillery and mortar fire caught both Battalions and caused many casualties. At 0900, the 3rd Battalion reported running out of ammunition and was resupplied from forward dumps established on

the river during the night. This ammunition had to be hand carried through terrific small arms and artillery fire. Nebelwerfer fire came down on positions, lasting from about 0900 to 1000 hours and at 1117 the foot bridge had been almost completely destroyed. Men were being driven back toward the river from both battalions, and the position became untenable.

"At 0135, 22 January, Major FRAZIOR, Commanding Officer 1st Battalion, reported that he was wounded by mortar fire and was evacuated to the near side of the river. His battalion was making no progress and Company "C" had not yet completely crossed to the west side. Lieutenant Colonel MICHAEL A. MEATH, O-265895, was ordered to the 1st Battalion to take over the command, and Captain JOEL W. WESTBROOK, O-410474, of Waco, Texas, was sent to guide him. It was 0500 before they were able to reach the 1st Battalion Command Post, where Major FRAZIOR still awaited them, having refused to leave his post until he could acquaint the relieving officer with the situation. Lieutenant Colonel MEATH found the battalion badly disorganized, and for the most part had been driven back to the east side of the river, and the bridge and all boats destroyed. The big job was to reorganize, as Companies "A", "B", and "C" had lost their commanders and the battalion was in the open flat ground with little or no protection from artillery fire. He was ordered to improve his positions by moving to the high ground further back, reorganize, and await instructions.

"At 1240 hours, the situation found the 1st Battalion reorganizing east of the river, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions being savagely driven back to the east side of the river, having only a few isolated groups remaining on the west side, still fighting it out with the Germans. All three battalions were ordered to organize defensive positions on the high ground east of the RAPIDO RIVER in the vicinity of their previously occupied assembly areas.

"In conclusion, I desire to invite attention to the fact that the RAPIDO RIVER was strongly defended by a force equal in number, or superior to the attacking force. The first attack was made, under cover of darkness, but was unsuccessful. The British attack on the south, the previous night, had likewise been unsuccessful. An attack by the 34th Division to the north, on a subsequent night, was likewise unsuccessful. The last attack by this regiment was made in daylight, which was furthermore, and more decisively, unsuccessful. Losses from attacks of this kind are tremendous in man power and materiel, and in addition have a devastating demoralizing effect upon those few troops who survive them. Officers and men lost in the RAPIDO RIVER crossing cannot be replaced, and the combat efficiency of a regiment is destroyed. If we continue to gamble against odds with the German Army, it is my opinion we will greatly assist him in his efforts to defeat us. It has been said that success in battle depends upon the leadership of commanders; it can be truthfully said that as long as leaders who have the guts to plunge into hopeless odds such as this operation, are sacrificed like cannon fodder, our success in battle will suffer in proportion and disaster will eventually come."

Casualties suffered during both attacks were enormously high. Including all killed, wounded, and missing, the total amounted to 969 officers and enlisted men, and these losses occurred within a two day period. (See attached appendix for complete casualty list). During the battle three of the regiment's outstanding leaders were lost. Captain CARL R. BAYNE, O-351495, Commanding Company "F", of Yoakum, Texas, was killed while leading his company in the attack after crossing the river. Captain MILTON H. STEFFEN, O-405938, Executive Officer of the 1st Battalion, of Huntsville, Texas, and Captain HENRY C. BRAGAW, O-366581, Commanding Company "K", of Winnabow, North Carolina, were missing after the engagement. Major DAVID H. FRAZIOR, O-222230, Commanding the 1st Battalion, of Houston, Texas, was wounded during the engagement and evacuated, and it was felt that he would not return to the regiment. The loss of these courageous leaders, as well as the loss of many others, seriously weakened the regiment. The defensive line held by the regiment, after the two unsuccessful attacks, was held by a thinly spread line of weary troops.

As a matter of fact, the effectiveness of the regiment had been reduced to such an extent that Captain THOMAS H. LUNDAY, O-387366, Regimental S-2, of Mexia, Texas, made a rather humorous, unofficial statement concerning the enemy capabilities: "The Germans can hold and occupy their present positions, or they can withdraw, or they can occupy our positions." Although no prisoners were captured during the period, the regiment obtained, by patrolling prior to the attack, information of immediate value such as the location of gun emplacements, barbed wire, and mines. Three different patrols had crossed the river before the night of the first attack and were fired on, but their mission of locating the enemy defenses was accomplished. Also, from the intelligence reports received from higher headquarters it was learned that elements of the German 104 Panzer Grenadier Regiment occupied the positions which we were to attack. Intelligence reports received after the attack disclosed that we had inflicted heavy casualties on the Germans.

Characteristic of his aggressive and determined spirit Colonel MARTIN had personally directed both attacks across the river. For his courageous actions on the afternoon and night of 21-22 January 1944, he was awarded the Silver Star by Major General FRED L. WALKER, Division Commander. His actions are described in the citation which accompanied the decoration:

"WILLIAM H. MARTIN, O-335128, Colonel, 143d Infantry Regiment, for gallantry in action on the night of 21-22 January 1944, in the vicinity of SAN ANGELO in TEODICE, ITALY. After issuing orders for a renewed attack against strongly fortified enemy positions on the west bank of the RAPIDO RIVER on the afternoon of 21 January 1944, Colonel MARTIN proceeded from his command post to the river crossing site in order to direct personally the course of the attack. At the crossing site, under direct fire from enemy machine gun, rifle fire, and heavily concentrated mortar and artillery fire, Colonel MARTIN, displaying outstanding vigor and magnificent courage, without regard for his own life but thinking only

of the effectiveness of his command, moved gallantly along the river banks issuing instructions and directing the attack. Inspired by his heroic actions and display of calm but forceful leadership the men of his regiment crossed the treacherous river successfully. During this period he was shaken by the concussion of mortar and artillery shells bursting about him, yet he continued to speak words of encouragement to the troops and guide groups of men who had become disorganized by the artillery fire. His presence on the front lines inspired confidence and encouraged his troops to the greatest effort. His gallant action reflects great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered the service from Houston, Texas."

The officers and men who crossed the RAPIDO carried with them the heritage and tradition of a distinguished, battle scarred regiment. Great in victory, unconquerable in spirit, and admirable in defeat, the record of her accomplishments and of the men who made her great will live as a shining example of honor to the military service.

Douglas N. Boyd
DOUGLAS N. BOYD
Captain, 143d Infantry
Adjutant

HEADQUARTERS 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

APO 36, U. S. Army

OPERATIONS IN ITALY

FEBRUARY 1944

143D INFANTRY REGIMENT

OPERATIONS
February 1944

In order to present a clear picture of the February operations of the Regiment it is necessary that a day-by-day account be presented in diary form, and it is hoped that the form used will not seriously detract from what is expected of a bona fide narrative. This is necessary; first, because of the almost daily change in troop disposition, and secondly, after a review of the month's activities it appears that an attempt to divide the operations into definite phases or to condense it into one phase would result in confusion or misunderstanding. Further, during the month of February, the regiment did not actually participate in offensive action. The foregoing is intended as an explanation, and is not intended to lessen the importance of the operation nor the many difficult circumstances which required the closest coordination, cooperation and individual endeavor to achieve the degree of success that was attained. Of noticeable interest was the excellent manner in which a high state of efficiency was maintained through cordial relationship with Allied English, Indian, New Zealand, and French troops, and Goums from French Morocco.

It should be remembered that throughout the month of February the regiment remained in combat with an effective fighting strength averaging about 1561 officers and men. Men were not available to replace the casualties which occurred on the 20-21 January during the crossing of the RAPIDO RIVER. These men who during the month of February, experienced the bitter cold on MT CASTELLONE, the snow, sleet and cold rain, lying in muddy fox holes, ever watchful and alert, were men who previously had experienced two of the hardest fought battles of the Italian campaign - SALERNO from 9 September to 21 September 1943, and SAN PIETRO from 8 December to 17 December 1943. Some of them were new men who had joined the regiment as replacements just prior to 15 January 1944, but they quickly profited from the experience of the older men. The period from 15 January to 25 February 1944 will be remembered by all who were there as "the forty days and forty nights".

1-2 February 1944:

All three battalions remained in position on the East bank of the RAPIDO. Enemy artillery as well as our own was active. During the two nights four of our patrols crossed the river and received both machine gun and mortar fire. The enemy remained in his defensive position West of the RAPIDO and made no attempt to cross patrols into our sector, but maintained alertness against our attempts to patrol his position. According to S-2, the enemy, with his reserve and support, was capable of attacking.

3 February 1944:

In preparation for an attack which was expected to be executed across the RAPIDO 2 miles North of SAN ANGELO in TEODICE, all three battalions pulled

their outpost lines back from the river in front of SAN ANGELO sufficient distance to permit movement East from the defensive position during daylight. This move to be routed to an assembly area in preparation for the expected attack. Enemy artillery continued very active.

4 February 1944:

Our Second Battalion was attached to Combat Command "B", and moved from the defensive position East of SAN ANGELO in TEODICE to an assembly area on the East slope of MT TROCCHIO. The First and Third Battalions expanded their frontage to cover the gap left by the Second Battalion, and in order to patrol actively the West bank of the RAPIDO, Troop "A" of the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron occupied the outpost line in front of the First and Third Battalions with the purpose of supplementing our patrolling.

5 February 1944:

Prior to daylight, the 21st Battalion of the 2nd New Zealand Division relieved the First and Third Battalions. Lieutenant Colonel MICHAEL A. LEATH, O-265895, of Macon, Georgia, in command of the First Battalion, and Major JAMES F. SKELLS, O-19830, of West Hartford, Conn, in command of the Third Battalion, moved their battalions back in rear of the New Zealand battalion and prepared to move to new positions in the vicinity of CAIRO. CAIRO is a small village at the base of MT CAIRO (1669 meters high), flanked to the Southwest by MT CASTELLONE (771 meters high), and MT MAIOLA (481 meters high), and to the Northeast by MT MARINO (369 meters high) and MT ABATE (915 meters high). Running Northeast out of the village of CAIRO a graveled road winds its way along the mountain sides to the town of TERELLE. CASSINO and the famous ABBE Di CASSINO lay a short distance West and slightly South of MT MAIOLA. The enemy held a line, roughly running from South to North, including MONTE Di CASSINO (ABBE), CASSINO, MT CAIRO, and TERELLE. Extending to the Southeast of CAIRO, a valley under direct observation from MT CAIRO, approximately five miles wide and four miles long was our only entrance and exit to the CAIRO sector. All roads, and even trails, were fired upon consistently by enemy artillery.

6 February 1944:

The First and Third Battalions left assembly areas in rear of the 21st New Zealand Battalion and moved after dark to an assembly area North of CAIRO, arriving there prior to daylight. Colonel ADAMS contacted the 168th Infantry and made plans to relieve elements of the 168th Infantry of the 34th Division which was in position West of the CAIRO-TERELLE road, on the South slope of MT ABATE. Plans were also made to relieve the Second Battalion of the 142nd Infantry which was attached to and occupied a position left of the 168th Infantry.

7 February 1944:

Our First Battalion relieved the Second Battalion, 142nd Infantry. Concurrently, our Third Battalion completed the relief of the Third Battalion,

168th Infantry. Contact was established with the French on our right and arrangements made for mutual support in the event of an attack in either sector. Daylight movement in this area drew enemy fire quickly. Although strength of the enemy was unknown, it was believed that he occupied his position in sufficient strength to hold it.

8 February 1944:

Both battalions continued to improve their positions and to actively patrol to the front. The enemy made no effort to advance against our positions, but was alert to fire upon our position. Enemy harassing artillery fire was a hinderance to our supply trains.

9 February 1944:

Major SKELLS withdrew his battalion from the defensive position and moved to a bivouac area in the vicinity of CAIRO and was attached to the 142nd Infantry upon arrival. During the night of the 9th an enemy attack against the French on our right was repelled successfully. When Colonel ADAMS received information of the attack he took quick action to assist by ordering the attached 133d Field Artillery and our Cannon Company to place fire in front of the French positions.

10 February 1944:

Lieutenant Colonel HEATH'S First Battalion was relieved by the French and moved to a bivouac area in the vicinity of CAIRO.

11 February 1944:

Third Battalion reverted to Colonel ADAMS' control. Second Battalion, 141st Infantry, and First Battalion, 142nd Infantry, were attached. The 143d Infantry with attached troops from the 141 and 142 Infantry defended the MT CASTELLONE Hill 706 mass with First Battalion, 142nd Infantry, on MT CASTELLONE peak, Third Battalion, 143d Infantry, defending Hill 706, and Second Battalion, 141st Infantry, defending the Southern slopes of Hill 706 to Hill 465, with the First and Second Battalions, 143d Infantry, in reserve to the South. In this position German patrolling was noticeable. On two occasions our patrols were engaged by German patrols and casualties were inflicted by both patrols. Our First Battalion was held in reserve position. Second Battalion, 143d Infantry, reverted to Colonel ADAMS' control.

12 February 1944:

Beginning at 0400 and lasting until 0610 the enemy laid down an artillery concentration on the MT CASTELLONE and Hill 706 area which exceeded any concentration that the regiment had ever experienced. Immediately following the concentration the enemy attacked our position with at least two battalions. From

0700 to 1200 the situation appeared to be rather critical. About 0900 the First Battalion, 143d Infantry, in reserve, counterattacked and assisted in complete restoration of the position, leaving Company "B", 143d Infantry, to reinforce the First Battalion, 142nd Infantry, and to replace battle casualties, First Battalion, 143d Infantry, less Company "B", returning to regimental reserve.

Major SKELLS, displaying unusual gallantry and heroism, remained with his front line troops and personally conducted the fight. His actions and the actions of his battalion are described in the recommendation for award of the Distinguished Service Cross which was submitted to Army Headquarters:

"JAMES F. SKELLS, Major, O-19830, 143d Infantry Regiment, for extraordinary heroism in action on 12 February 1944, on MT CASTELLONE, ITALY, near CAIRO, ITALY. The Third Battalion was in a defensive position on the south slope of MT CASTELLONE when just before dawn the Germans laid down an intense mortar and artillery barrage lasting two hours. Following the barrage the Germans launched a fierce counterattack penetrating our lines, necessitating reorganization of the front line elements. With complete disregard for his own life under intense artillery, mortar, machine gun and rifle fire he went forward to the forward elements of the battalion, reorganized the companies, placed the machine guns in position and directed fire against the enemy. He then took command of the remaining elements of Companies I and K and personally led his Battalion in a quick, vicious counterattack against the Germans forcing them to withdraw. Accomplishing his mission he placed his reserve unit on the flank securing the Battalion's position. His magnificent courage, outstanding devotion to duty and superb leadership is a perpetual inspiration to the troops under his command, and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered the United States Military Academy from New York. Residence: West Hartford, Conn."

The attack was repelled successfully due to the fighting spirit and resolved determination of all the men who participated in the fight. Had MT CASTELLONE fallen, the entire allied defensive line from CASSINO to LENELLE would have been seriously threatened.

The Second Battalion (325 total strength), was attached to the Third Battalion under command of Major SKELLS and occupied front line positions.

The 36th Reconnaissance Troop was attached to the 143d Infantry and placed in regimental reserve.

Late in the afternoon reorganization was completed. No ground had been lost.

Company "B" which had been committed into the lines was attached to the First Battalion, 142nd Infantry, and held a position on the left of the First Battalion, 142nd Infantry.

13-14 February 1944:

The enemy reverted to a passive defense of his positions; no attacks being made after his great losses against MT CASTELLONE on the 12th. His only aggressive action was attempting to infiltrate patrols and observation groups through our lines. Prisoners captured stated that the First Battalion, 200th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, had suffered 50% casualties in the attack, most of which were killed.

A truce was requested by the Germans in order to clear the field of their dead. The request was granted to last from 0900 to 1200, 13 February, and 165 of the enemy dead were evacuated.

15 February 1944:

First Battalion relieved the Second and Third Battalions on the line, and these two battalions reverted to regimental reserve.

Shelling continued heavy on supply routes and around CAIRO.

16-19 February 1944:

During this period there was no change in troop disposition. The enemy continued defense of his previous position and gave no indication of aggressive attitude; however, he increased somewhat his shelling of front lines. Prisoners stated that they had all been instructed to hold to the last man. Snow and rain fell in the vicinity of MT MAIOLA and MT CASTELLONE.

20 February 1944:

First Battalion was relieved by the Second Battalion, 142nd Infantry, and was reverted to regimental reserve. Combined Second and Third Battalions relieved Companies "A" and "C" of the 142nd Infantry on MT CASTELLONE. Company "C", 143d Infantry, from the reserve battalion, outposted the regimental sector North of MT CASTELLONE and made contact with the Germans on our right.

German combat patrols were active in the Goum sector.

21-24 February 1944:

No change was made in troop dispositions from the 21st through the 24th of February. There was no evidence of aggressive intention on the part of the Germans. Major SKELLS sent out several patrols to Hill 720 which was approximately 800 yards Northwest of MT CASTELLONE. These patrols were able to supply information of great value because of the skillful manner with which they were handled. They were well organized, given detailed instructions, and were able to accomplish reconnaissance missions without loss. One of these patrols located, near the South slopes of Hill 720, pill boxes and emplacements which apparently were used by the Germans as alternate positions.

Constant, harassing artillery and mortar fire fell on our positions, but otherwise there was but little activity.

25 February 1944:

Relief of the regiment by the Second Battalion, 8th Moroccan Regiment began and was completed by 0426 hours.

The regiment, less Companies "G", "H", and one platoon of Company "I", which was not relieved in time to permit them to cross the valley during the hours of darkness, moved to a bivouac area in the vicinity of RAVISCANINI. At nightfall the companies pulled out of their concealed positions near CAIRO, crossed the valley, and were brought to join the regiment. The Cannon Company, commanded by Captain WILEY W. STEEL, O-406991, of Waco, Texas, was ordered to remain in position for 24 hours after departure of the regiment in order to insure uninterrupted support of the Moroccan Battalion.

February 1944 was a month that will not soon be forgotten by the men of the 143d Infantry. For a period of 25 days they "stuck it out" in the rain, and took all that the Germans had to offer in the way of artillery and mortar fire. Twenty-five (25) enlisted men were killed during the month; eleven (11) officers and two hundred sixteen (216) men were wounded; five (5) officers and thirty-four (34) men were reported missing. (See attached Appendix). Four (4) prisoners were captured.

Again we pay tribute to the gallant men of the 143d Infantry Regiment who by virtue of their courage, endurance, and determination proved themselves to be unconquerable. When attacked by a superior force on the morning of 12 February, they fought and won. If before the enemy did not know what he was up against, there is no doubt that he learned then what to expect.

Douglas R. Boyd
DOUGLAS R. BOYD
Capt, 143d Infantry
Adjutant

LIST OF COMMANDERS

PAUL D. ADAMS
Colonel, 143rd Infantry
Commanding

MICHAEL A. MEATH
Lieutenant Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding 1st Battalion

CHARLES J. DENHOLM
Lieutenant Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding 2nd Battalion from 1 February to 10 February

THEODORE H. ANDREWS
Captain, 143d Infantry
Commanding 2nd Battalion from 11 February to 25 February

JAMES F. SKELLS
Lieutenant Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding 3rd Battalion

HEADQUARTERS 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

APO #36, U. S. Army

OPERATIONS IN ITALY

May 1944

OPERATIONS IN ITALY - MAY 1944

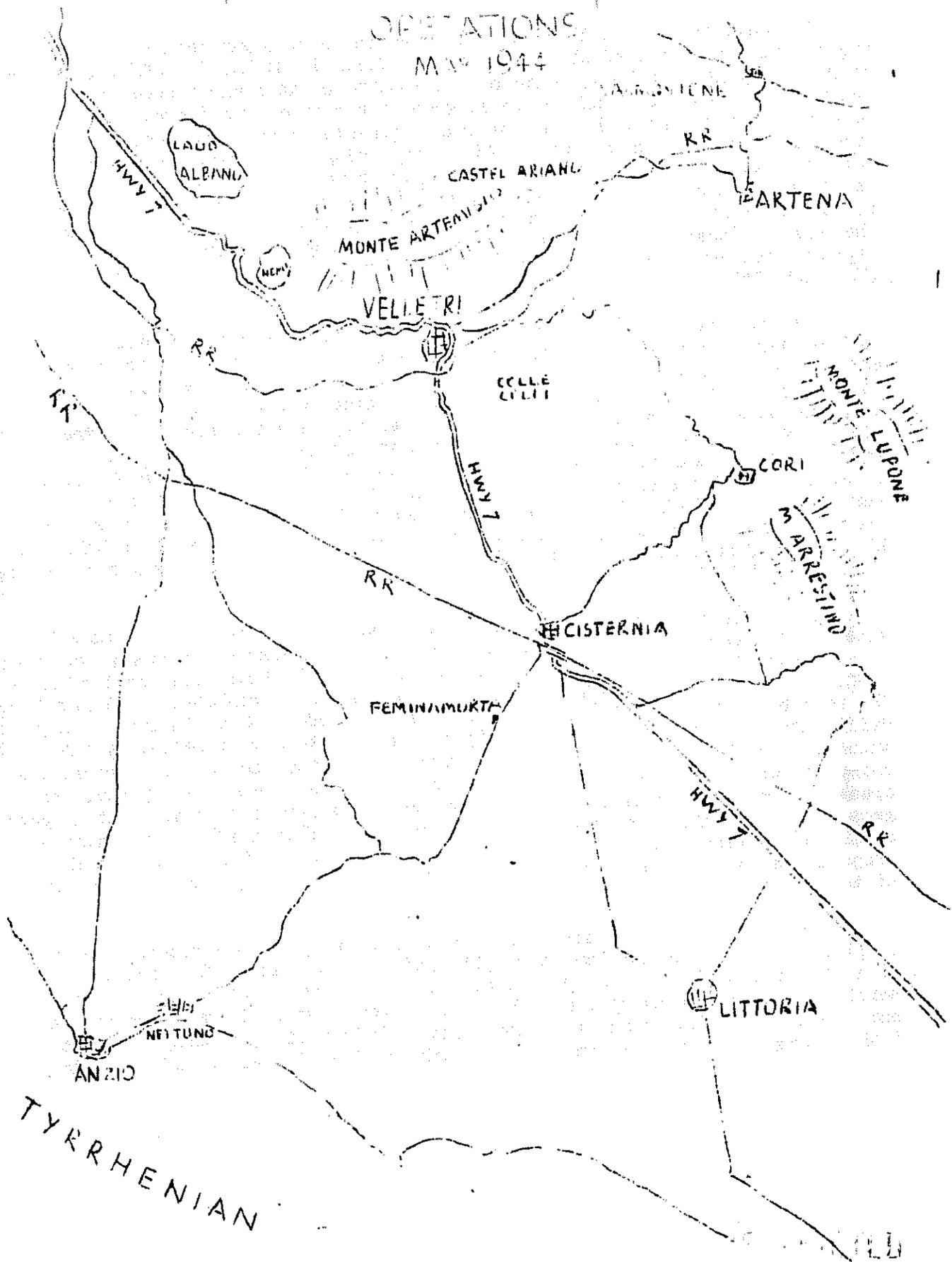
Since SALERNO our eyes had been toward ROE, a mind-set objective worth working for, and even though ROE was not our expressed objective, it was a prize; the city which so many times had fallen before mighty forces. Our true objective, in a general sense, was the destruction of the German 14th Army in ITALY. To do this, advancing to ROE and past ROE was necessary. This chapter takes us another step nearer to the "Eternal City", and along its way our regiment marked a path but now with renewed energy and determination as a result of two and one-half months of training and intensive planning during which time officer and enlisted replacements were received. As these replacements were received into the regiment they were oriented and given the benefit of the knowledge which had been obtained by previous experiences and the training given them was commensurate with the task which lay before us.

When the regiment was withdrawn from the CASSINO sector on the 25 February 1944, it was placed in a bivouac area in the vicinity of RAVISCINNA. Our troops, which had for forty days experienced the toughest opposition that the German Army had to afford, for the first time were able to relax and began replanning and reorganizing to again take to the field against the enemy. The regiment remained in RAVISCINNA for a period of two weeks and was moved to a bivouac area at MADDALONI near CASERTA.

Colonel ADAMS devoted much of his time toward building within the individual soldier a strong feeling of resourcefulness, responsibility of a soldier, and responsibility of the soldier to the group as a fighting team. In the MADDALONI area he assembled the regiment and outlined his plan to develop the individual soldier and to bring about within the regiment a feeling of comradeship, which in combat would serve to weld the regiment together to fight furiously, effectively, to rout the enemy and to achieve the ultimate aim of combat. His motto, "Thought and Sweat Save Blood", was the theme of the training during this period and for the training period to come. As part of the training patrolling, individual fighting, firing of weapons, preparation of positions and camouflage, security, mechanics of tactics, and methods employed by the Germans, were stressed.

From MADDALONI the regiment was moved to a bivouac area near FORINO on 11 April 1944, to train in mountain warfare. The elements of mountain warfare, which required development were stamina and endurance of the individual soldier, supply and communications. All of these were carefully studied, planned and executed in the hills surrounding FORINO. During this period the regiment received twelve (12) officer and two hundred sixty-nine (269) enlisted replacements to bring the regiment up to the new Table of Organization strength. This new Table of Organization went into effect 1 April 1944, and had reduced the strength from 3223 men to 3100 men.

OPERATIONS
MAY 1944



In addition to Adjusting under the new Table of Organization and conducting training as outlined above, Lieutenant Colonel CHARLES J. DENHOLM, O-21293, of Poughkeepsie, New York, Regimental Executive Officer who succeeded Lieutenant Colonel HENRY H. CARDEN, devoted much of his time toward organizing and developing team work within the various regimental departments and at the same time directing the experimental work of improving mine detectors, which would warn of booby traps and trip wires. He also devoted his efforts toward developing an attachment to a 81mm mortar shell, linked with prima cord, which when fired across mine fields and the prima cord exploded, cleared paths through the mines. Experiments in the use of these developments were made when the regiment had moved from FORINO on 7 May 1944, to an area in the vicinity of QUALIANO, ITALY.

Warning orders were received at QUALIANO, which were to the effect that the regiment might be used along the west sector of the 5th Army front or it may be used to exploit and attack originating on the ANZIO beachhead. The beachhead plan was in turn sub-divided into three separate plans, any one of which we were to be prepared to execute as an exploitation force: Of the three plans, "Plan Buffalo" appeared to be the most likely. This plan anticipated that the 36th Infantry Division would pass through the 3rd Infantry Division after the 3rd Division had made an initial attack to envelope the strongly fortified town of CISTERNA. After capturing CISTERNA the 36th Division was then to pass through the 3rd Division and attack up the slopes of MT LUPONE and MT ARISTINO capturing the town of CORI, thence in a northeasterly direction to ARTINA and VALAMONTONE.

Secret orders were received on 17 May 1944, for the regiment to move by water to the beachhead. Upon arriving at the ANZIO docks the regiment was then to move east to a division assembly area approximately four miles east of NETTUNO. Movement to ANZIO began on 20 May 1944, and was completed on 21 May 1944. The trip by water and into the assembly area was made without incident. Any difficulty which may have been anticipated was completely dispelled by the quietness in ANZIO upon arrival of our troops. At the time of our arrival the enemy was able to and had shelled the harbor and was intermittently shelling areas within the beachhead. For this reason camouflage and counter-intelligence measures were strictly enforced. On the nights of 22nd and 23rd the enemy did shell the division area with a few rounds of what appeared to be 170 caliber projectiles; however, no casualties occurred within the regiment as a result of the shelling.

"Plan Buffalo" as mentioned in a preceding paragraph was ordered executed in Field Order No. 49, Headquarters 36th Infantry Division. The division plan of attack called for the 142nd Infantry to attack toward CORI on our right, seizing the high ground to the right of the town. Our regiment, supported by one company of medium tanks from the 751st Tank Battalion; Company "A", 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company "C", 84th Chemical Battalion; 133rd Field

Artillery Battalion; 1st Field Artillery Battalion; Company "C", 111th Engineer Battalion; and Company "C", 111th Medical Battalion, was ordered to attack through the 3rd Division in its zone of action just east of CISTERNA after the town had been taken, making the main division effort on the left of the division sector, seizing MT LUPONE and MT STINO then taking CORI from the north and being prepared to resume the attack in the direction of VALMONTONE. Formation for the attack as prescribed directed the 2nd Battalion with the 3rd Battalion echeloned to the right and the 1st Battalion in reserve, following the 2nd Battalion at a distance of approximately 1000 yards. The 1st Armored Division was to attack on our left. From a terrain study and considering the direction of attack of the 1st Armored Division, Colonel ADAMS concluded that our left flank was most likely to be vulnerable to enemy armored attack because of favorable tank terrain and a gap which obviously would occur. For this reason Antitank Company was ordered to take up positions along our left boundary prepared to resist armored attack from the west or northwest. Cannon Company was ordered to operate as a mobile antitank unit to protect our front from attack from the direction of CORI, by advancing its guns to successive positions in close support of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions.

The attack against CISTERNA was begun by the 3rd Division early on the morning of 25 May 1944. By late afternoon the Special Service Force on the right of the 3rd Division had cut Highway 7, southeast of CISTERNA and was continuing the advance against tough opposition. The railroad and highway running northwest from CISTERNA was cut by the 1st Armored Division. On the 26th the 3rd Division mopped up CISTERNA which had been enveloped. While mopping up was in process, Colonel ADAMS moved the regiment forward from the assembly area near FEMINAMORTA around the northwest side of CISTERNA and prepared to commence the attack on CORI. As the 143rd Infantry moved forward the impetus of the 1st Armored and Special Service Force drive was carrying them very near the north side and south side of CORI with the prospect of encircling and capturing the town, therefore a change of orders was received at midnight which directed our regiment to move northwest on Highway 7 toward VELIETRI on the right of the 168th Infantry and relieve elements of the 6th Infantry and the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Armored Regiment.

Between midnight and dawn of 27 May the regiment moved from positions east of CISTERNA, up Highway 7 to effect the relief. The relief was to be completed after dark and in preparation for the relief all three battalion commanders went forward on reconnaissance. Lieutenant Colonel JAMES F. SKELLS, O-19830, of West Hartford, Conn, commanding the 3rd Battalion, accompanied by Captain JOHN C. MORRISSEY, JR., O-1288097, of St Louis, Missouri, Battalion S-3, apparently ventured too far in front of our lines and were both captured by the enemy. Major JAMES D. SUMNER, JR., O-411107, of Spartanburg, S. C., 3rd Battalion Executive Officer, was ordered to assume command of the battalion. Lieutenant Colonel GAULDEN H. WATKINS, O-17292, of San Francisco, Calif., was now commanding the 2nd Battalion and Major DAVID H. FRAZIOR, O-222230, of

Houston, Texas, who had lost the index finger of his left hand during the Rapido River crossing in January, was again commanding the 1st Battalion.

At 2200 hours the regiment moved forward, 3rd Battalion on the left of Highway 7, 2nd Battalion on the right of the highway, followed by the 1st Battalion which was in regimental reserve. Completing the relief, the regiment advanced toward VELLETRI by strong patrol action for a distance of approximately 1500 yards beyond the relief line on either side of Highway 7 to a line extending from west to east approximately 800 to 1000 yards south of the railroad which ran past the south edge of town. Enemy resistance amounted to delaying patrol action and harassing artillery and mortar fire. Intelligence reports estimated the presence of three German infantry regiments in the VELLETRI area. Prisoners captured directly in front of the town were from the 12th Paratroop Regiment, 362nd Infantry Division, and they confirmed the presence of large numbers of the 362nd Infantry Division in the town itself.

Our 2nd Battalion was able to establish and maintain contact with the 141st Infantry on our right; however, there existed on our left flank an 800 yard gap between our 3rd Battalion and the 168th Infantry which if exploited by the enemy would result in seriously endangering our positions. Then came into being the much praised "Charlie Task Force", commanded by Lieutenant Colonel WILLIAM A. BYRD, O-280648, of Darbarton, Ohio, with the mission of filling the gap securing our left flank and establishing contact. This task force comprised Company "C", 143d Infantry, commanded by 1st Lt ALLEN E. SIMONS, O-1293664, of Belfast, Maine, one platoon from Company "A", 143d Infantry, a machine gun section and mortar squad from Company "D", 143d Infantry, and Company "D", 751st Tank Battalion. Reports received from officers on duty with the task force indicated that the force was having difficulty in maintaining adequate defense of the gap in order to accomplish their mission. On several occasions it was necessary to place all platoons into the line, leaving no reserves. Security of the detachment was accomplished by continuous patrolling to the front and flanks. The terrain was not particularly suited to the employment of tanks within the sector and three of them which did venture out were destroyed by German antitank guns.

Though primarily a contact unit, "Task Force Charlie" showed great aggressiveness. Its first advance was about 500 yards, whereupon the Germans launched a night counterattack which was repulsed by a curtain of machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. Not to be outdone by the enemy, the task force launched an attack the following morning and although no territorial gains were made, many casualties were inflicted against the enemy. German gun positions were well entrenched with excellent fields of fire. They had constructed a network of communications trenches deep enough for a man to walk through without being seen. Despite heavy losses, "Task Force Charlie" had attacked so fiercely and effectively that the Germans withdrew the following day from their positions in front of the force and left an opening for the force to

pass through in the final stages of the assault against the town. Lieutenant Colonel BYRD, commander of the force, made the following statement concerning members of the force, "Though their lines were stretched thinner than any of the adjoining units, they pushed further ahead into German held territory than any of the adjoining units."

For the attack against VELLETRI the 2nd Battalion was assigned the mission of advancing to the railroad, southeast of the town, taking the town under fire while the 3rd Battalion cut Highway 7, running west from the town, seizing the high ground northwest of VELLETRI. The 1st Battalion, less those elements of "Task Force Charlie", remained in regimental reserve prepared to exploit success or to prevent a successful enemy attack.

At 2400 hours, 28 May 1944, the enemy launched a terrific counterattack against our two leading battalions. The attack began from the railroad and drove toward our lines with a determined ferociousness heretofore unencountered in this sector. Major FRAZIOR's battalion which had earlier in the day shifted to positions in rear of the 3rd Battalion, was ordered to move to the assistance of the 2nd Battalion as it appeared that the enemy attack might succeed in that sector. It did not become necessary to commit his battalion as the attack was broken up after an hour and a half by the intensity of our small arms, heavy machine gun, mortar, and artillery concentrations. By reason of a minimum of casualties suffered by the regiment and the heavy casualties inflicted on the enemy, this part of the VELLETRI operation resulted in a satisfactory gain. For the remainder of the night and throughout the following day patrols from both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were actively reducing enemy machine gun positions and isolated enemy groups.

Plans for capturing VELLETRI and breaking the last German stronghold before ROE were changed on the morning of the 30 May 1944. The new division plan as executed proved to be one of the most brilliant and successful operations of the entire Italian campaign and was directly responsible for the tremendous gains made in the early part of June. As the plan affected the 143d Infantry, we were to be relieved by a battalion of the 36th Engineer regiment, then move east from Highway 7 in rear of the 141st Infantry to an assembly area in the vicinity of COLLE CELLI, prepared to advance in rear of the 142nd Infantry up the steep MONTE ARTISANIO ridge which overlooked the town of VELLETRI and which was a barrier to our advance toward ROE.

"Task Force Charlie" remained under division control and remained in position between the 36th Engineer Battalion and the 168th Infantry.

Late in the afternoon of the 30th the relief by the 36th Engineer Battalion was completed, and during the night of the 30-31st, the regiment marched to the forward assembly area in the vicinity of COLLE CELLI. There was only a short delay at COLLE CELLI during which time extra ammunition, water, and rations were issued. Mortarmen loaded themselves with mortar ammunition to be

carried by hand to the top of the mountain. Machine gunners, without benefit of weapons carriers or any mechanical assistance, bridged up the mountain with their back-breaking loads. Credit is also due the battalions and company wire teams who uncomplainingly hoisted reels of telephone wire and communication equipment up the mountain. The enemy, apparently taken by complete surprise, was able only to delay slightly our advance by harassing mortar and sniper fire. His harassment was not sufficient to prevent Major FRAZIER's battalion from occupying Castle Hill late in the afternoon, nor was it sufficient to prevent Lieutenant Colonel WATKINS' battalion from occupying the east end of MONTE ARTISIMO. According to plan, the 142nd Infantry, which led the attack up the mountain, moved west on the MONTE ARTISIMO ridge leaving Castle Hill and north-east nose of MONTE ARTISIMO to be organized by the 143d Infantry, our initial objective in the execution of the new plan which completely disorganized the German defenses.

By comparison with previous operations and taking into consideration the success of the May operations, losses suffered were not excessive. During the eight day period of action three (3) officers and eleven (11) enlisted men were killed, nineteen (19) officers and two hundred and three (203) enlisted men were wounded, three (3) officers and thirty (30) enlisted men were captured or missing. There is no way to determine accurately enemy casualties inflicted; however, a conservative estimate would place the number killed, wounded and captured at four hundred (400). Of this number, fifty-eight (58) were captured. Our new men guided by the older combat soldiers proved the value of the training which they had received at MEDDALONI and FORINO. Countless deeds of valor and the courageous gallantry displayed in this new drive to exterminate the despised Hun were everyday, common occurrences. In May, over 70 percent of the officers and men of the regiment were awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge. In this new undertaking the regiment proved its full worth as a 100 percent Combat Infantry Regiment.

James H. Boyd
JAMES H. BOYD
Captain, 143rd Infantry
Adjutant

LIST OF COMMANDERS

143D INFANTRY REGIMENT

MAY 1944

PAUL D. ADAMS
Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding

DAVID M. FRAZIOR
Major, 143d Infantry
Commanding 1st Battalion

GAULDEN M. WATKINS
Lieutenant Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding Second Battalion

JAMES F. SKELLS
Lieutenant Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding 3d Battalion from 23 May to 26 May 1944

JAMES D. SUMNER JR
Major, 143d Infantry
Commanding 3d Battalion from 27 May to 31 May 1944

HEADQUARTERS 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

APO # 36, U.S. ARMY

OPERATIONS IN ITALY

JUNE 1944

OPERATIONS IN ITALY - JUNE 1944

Never in the entire Italian campaign was there so brilliant a division operation as that employed by the 36th Infantry Division in flanking the enemy bastion at VELLETRI and in rendering untenable that defensive stronghold with its supporting heights of MONTE ARTEMISIO guarding the approaches to ROME. Never before in history had the "Eternal City" been captured from the south, and as was evidenced by the swiftness with which the enemy was forced to reel back, he was surprised and outwitted by the brilliant maneuver. Leading elements of the 143d Infantry were among the first infantry troops to enter the outskirts of the city of ROME. Colonel ADAMS accompanied the assault battalion in the "March on ROME", and his own report on the 143d Regimental participation in the action from 30 May through 4 June 1944, is here quoted in full:

"30 May - The 143d Infantry was disposed astride Highway 7 about 1500 yards south of the town of VELLETRI, ITALY, with the 2nd Battalion on the right of Highway 7 and extending eastward; the 3rd Battalion was on the left of Highway 7 extending westward, and the 1st Battalion, less detachments, was in regimental reserve on the left of Highway 7 in displayed formations northwest of ULIEA, 980388. To the left of the regiment and covering the gap caused by the northwesterly direction of attack of the 34th Division was Task Force Charlie, consisting of Company "C", one platoon heavy machine guns, one section 81mm mortars, and one platoon of light tanks.

"The regiment had completed an attack from the south with a mission of driving toward VELLETRI, destroying the outlying defenses and establishing the location of the main German defenses around the town. This action was successful and the main German positions were found to lie along the general line of the railroad track from beyond our right flank to the west of Task Force Charlie.

"The German defense was very active with considerable patrolling, one counterattack of major proportions and several minor ones, small in strength but very intense as to fire support and determination of the enemy troops.

"The German troops consisted of parachutists, and first class infantry. Their positions were skillfully located and carefully prepared, with strong supporting fires of artillery being available to them, and it is believed that the defenses surrounding VELLETRI compare in strength to those found at SAN ANGELO and CASSINO. During the late afternoon and evening of 30 May 1944, the 36th Engineers took over the positions held by the 143d Infantry, less Task Force Charlie, which remained in position, fighting day and night to repel various German attacks.

CASUALTIES

KIA - 12

WIA - 67

MIA - 12

ENEMY CASUALTIES

KIA - 20 estimated

WIA - Unknown

Captured - 5

"31 May - Upon relief of the 143rd from positions the regiment (-) began a lateral march across the rear of the 141st Infantry, climbed the heights of MONTE ARTEMISIO, to cover the right of the Division and be prepared for further action in a northwesterly direction. In the vicinity of FROZIONE a pause was made to hand-carry weapons and ammunition because trails in the mountains were uncertain. The regiment carried extra ammunition as follows:

Every man in the rifle companies carried an extra load as follows:

1st Platoon - - - - - 1 Belt Cal. .30 ME per man
2nd Platoon - - - - - 3 Rds 60mm mortar per man
3rd Platoon - - - - - 1 Rd 81mm mortar per man

"In addition each rifleman carried one extra bandoleer of ammunition, one 'K' and one 'D' ration. Rolls were stacked before the march and the parka, without liner, was used throughout the operations as a raincoat and blanket, and served admirably for the purpose considering the mild climate prevailing at that season of the year.

"At daybreak the unit moved out on its march up the mountain.

"The plan in this case was for the 1st Battalion to seize and hold MT MASCHIO d' ARIANO, 995492, and cover our right flank; the 2nd Battalion was to turn left and clean off the slopes of MT ARTEMISIO down to and including peak 911 (975472) which was approximately 3000 feet high.

"Radio communications were relied on initially and the SCR 300 met the requirements placed on it with remarkable satisfaction. However, the wire crews displaying outstanding initiative and courage kept wire communications continuously with the leading battalion.

"By 1000 hours the leading elements of the 1st Battalion encountered many snipers and by 1100 hours found that they would have to fight for MT MASCHIO d' ARIANO, which was found to be a remarkable observation point, giving the Germans observation, limited only by their instruments, over the country north of an East-West line through the mountain. MASCHIO d' ARIANO was captured and effectively in our hands at approximately 1300 hours, although throughout the remainder of the afternoon the 1st Battalion was constantly beating off local counterattacks and mopping up snipers who were scattered throughout the area, especially along the trails.

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"The observation from MT MASCHIO d' ARIANO was even better for us because it gave observation to us over about 220° to the east and southwest. The weather was clear and we found that our problem was not one of finding targets but one of getting observers to handle targets as fast as they appeared and batteries to fire them.

"We procured every possible forward observer from division and artillery and as one officer expressed his thought on the situation, were sitting around on ARIANO like crows on a telephone line, having a field day".

"As the 1st Battalion commenced action against MT MASCHIO d' ARIANO, the 2nd Battalion swung left and began working its way down the peaks of MASCHIO di ARTEMISIO, encountering numerous snipers and one small organized troops - about forty men - which it dispersed with artillery fire, having the Germans between the observer and guns.

"The remainder of the afternoon was spent by the 2nd Battalion in completely occupying the positions from Peak 931 (988483) to Peak 911 (975472), and mopping up snipers who were continuously producing casualties amongst small groups of our soldiers but rarely firing on larger formations.

"Light artillery fire and mortar fire was experienced during the day but caused very few casualties.

"The 3rd Battalion was placed in regimental reserve in the area 985483.

"The Cannon Company, equipped with self-propelled 75mm guns, worked its way up the trails and eventually took up firing positions and fired on numerous targets.

"The Antitank Company remained in the low ground, providing antitank protection to the right rear of the regiment.

CASUALTIES

KIA - 0

WIA - 38

MIA - 0

ENEMY CASUALTIES

KIA - Unknown

WIA - Unknown

Captured - 27

"1 June - Supply trails were improved, routes were searched out and improved with the view of bringing tanks and armor through the pass between MT ARTEMISIO and MT MASCHIO d' ARIANO. Reconnaissance, conducted by Division Engineers and a piece of self-propelled artillery, enabled Company "B",

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ENEMY CASUALTIES

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WIA - Unknown

Captured - 27

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"3 June - The attack was continued at daybreak with the 1st Battalion, which had been relieved on MT MASCHIO d' ARIANO and had rejoined, in the lead to complete capture of MT SARAPELLO and then continue the attack and take COLLE TANO. The 2nd Battalion was in column behind the 1st and with the mission of swinging to the left and cleaning the ridge running southwest from COLLE TANO toward ROCCA di PAPA.

"The 1st Battalion Combat Platoon, by skillful reconnaissance ahead of the battalion, located a large body of Germans in a draw at 950512, returned the information to the battalion commander who immediately brought a field artillery battalion concentration on the area. Many German casualties were produced and 110 prisoners were taken. This German force was completely shattered and subsequently COLLE TANO was occupied without resistance except for an occasional straggler and by noon our positions were consolidated.

"From COLLE TANO we should have seen ROME but haze prevented this.

"We again had superior observation over the Germans but fewer targets.

"Our observation on this occasion was limited only by the haze to the southeast, east, north, west and southwest. During the night of 3 June the regiment was ordered to move on GROTTAFERRATA (893547), surround and take the town and continue the advance to ROME.

CASUALTIES

KIA - 1

WIA - 7

MIA - 1

ENEMY CASUALTIES

KIA - 30 estimated (9 evacuated by GRO)
Captured - 130

WIA - Unknown

"4 June - On 4 June the plan was to move down the north slopes of MT ARA (940525), with the 2nd Battalion in the lead, which had the mission of cutting the GROTTAFERRATA - ROCCA di PAPA highway moving to the left of the town and proceeding in a direction parallel to the highway; the 1st Battalion followed the 2nd Battalion but proceeded along the right of the highway; the 3rd Battalion was in reserve.

"Task Force Stem was organized to cover the right flank. This force consisted of the Cannon Company, the Antitank Company, a platoon from the 751st Tank Battalion, and a platoon from the 636th TD Battalion. This force operated to "line" our right flank by moving around COLLE TANO and MT ARA and rejoining the main body at GROTTAFERRATA. This mission was carried out with conspicuous success, destroying several small German positions at road junctions and capturing between sixty and seventy prisoners.

"After the 2nd Battalion completed crossing the road at 002527, advanced elements of the 142nd Infantry reached this point coming from ROCCA di PAPA and followed in column behind the 143d Infantry.

"At this time the 143d Infantry had two battalions astride the highway and the 3rd Battalion was immediately brought forward on jeeps, and the march on ROME was in full swing.

"From that time until we reached the outskirts of ROME, only an occasional burst of machine gun fire was observed, which did not in any way interrupt our march.

"The Regimental Commander, 142d Infantry, came forward and joined the Regimental Commander, 143d Infantry, in GROTTAFERRATA.

"On the outskirts of GROTTAFERRATA the regiment was put in column on the road with flank security and marched without interruption to the outskirts of ROME.

"As the regiment left GROTTAFERRATA an armored task force entered the highway from the north and used the same route of advance on ROME.

"At 1300 hours the head of the regiment was at 828605 and received some harassing artillery fire. The march continued until the head of the column was at ELECTRA, 802628, where considerable mortar, self-propelled artillery and sniper fire was received.

"The Assistant Division Commander directed the regiment into assembly positions on the left of the road and the remainder of the afternoon was spent in cleaning out snipers by patrol action.

"The regiment remained in this position until 0430 hours, when we moved through ROME in Division Reserve.

"The march from COLLE TANO to ROME was notable because of the following features:

a. Wire communication with Division was maintained by hand-carry to the point where the 2nd Battalion crossed the highway northwest of GROTTAFERRATA.

b. Heavy weapons and extra ammunition were carried by hand until the weapons carriers joined the column about two miles northwest of GROTTAFERRATA, the loads being as previously described for our entry into the mountains.

c. The success of our Task Force Stem in covering our flank.

d. After reaching the highway northwest of ROCCA di PAPA there were many evidences that the Germans were taking flight. Some of these were:

- (1) 88mm guns in position and an occasional one on the road in march order. We took the tires from one and put them on one of our 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton trucks. Caches of serviceable ammunition, scattered equipment and many dead Germans.
- (2) The remarkable cross-country speed the men were able to make which was caused by two things - excellent physical condition and the high morale produced by being on the winning team."

CASUALTIES

KIA - 1

WIA - 12

MIA - 2

ENEMY CASUALTIES

KIA - 2 evacuated by GRO

WIA - Unknown

Captured - 88

On the morning of 5 June 1944, the 143d Infantry Regiment, now in Division reserve, moved through the city in all available transportation, past the Colosseum, the Ancient Forum, Vatican City and splendid St Peter's Cathedral, through the Arch of Triumph of the Caesars amid cheering throngs of Romans throwing garlands of flowers - greeted as true liberators in a grandiose but sincere reception. No infantryman will forget this experience and he may well be proud to remember it. Following this triumphal turn through ROME, all troops of the 143d Infantry Regiment terminated their grueling advance, and took a well deserved rest, bivouacing on the outskirts of the city.

On 7 June 1944, the pursuit of the retreating Germans was doggedly continued. Remnants of their retreating van were everywhere, as strafing and bombing by the Air Force had flung them, disorganized, into near rout. So littered was the road of German equipment of all types, burned trucks and busses, abandoned self-propelled mounts, carcasses of dead and bloated horses and mules, unused crates of ammunition, that a bulldozer was necessary at the head of the column to clear passage for our troops and motor vehicles. The intense heat and the dust of the marching column gave water first priority and supply trucks were instructed to get water to the troops immediately even if they had to dump ammunition and bring it forward later. The report that FRANCE had been invaded by American and British troops was confirmed and the news, a tonic to the tired, spread like wildfire through the dusty column of troops.

The Regiment, led by the 2nd Battalion, moved to within 2½ miles of BRACCIANO (on the road to BRACCIANO and south of LAKE BRACCIANO), and here resistance was encountered with machine gun and pistol fire and several enemy tanks were encountered. Artillery and antitank fire was brought to bear upon them. A German aid station, including 28 wounded and 4 orderlies (left by the Germans), were captured and evacuated by Major EMMETT L. ALLAMON, O-355626, of Port Arthur, Texas. At 0500 hours, Company "B" of the 1st Battalion had a brisk fire fight, resulting in the disorganization of one enemy company and the capturing of four machine guns, the action ending at 0630 hours.

The regiment had followed secondary roads running parallel to Highway 2 on our right where rumbled tanks of the 1st Armored Division, which we passed through and relieved after a brief but warm engagement near LAKE BRACCIANO.

Advance patrols sent into BRACCIANO reported that six German tanks had recently left but there yet remained snipers and intermittent shelling. Prisoners captured gave information that the enemy intended to continue fighting a delaying action and to withdraw to a line in the vicinity of FLORENCE.

Our troops were moved by motor from BRACCIANO to the vicinity of ALLUMIERE where the regiment remained the night of 8 June in bivouac.

To pursue the enemy closely it again became necessary to use motor transportation along Highway 1 to TARQUINIA and the 3rd Battalion was followed by the 2nd and 1st in a motor shuttle. Northeast of TARQUINIA a roadblock was established by an augmented rifle company plus support from tanks and Cannon Company. Advance patrols found only occasional snipers and hastily placed mines. At one road fork First Lieutenant ROBERT N. WITTAN, O-1310193, of Portage, Pa., Commanding Company "K", was killed by a Teller mine while two enlisted men were seriously wounded and two slightly wounded. No bridges were out on this road to TUSCANIA; however, one was under German shell fire.

When the report came through that the road to TUSCANIA was clear of mines, the report also came through that the 3rd French Division had taken that town. A motorized movement, called "Saturday Force", including one platoon of Cannon Company, a rifle platoon of Company "A", a section of heavy machine guns of Company "D", and a mine sweeping detail from 1st Battalion A & P Platoon, left for CANINO under Lieutenant Colonel WILLIAM A. BIRD, O-280648, of Darbarton, Ohio.

At this time the 143d Infantry Replacement Detachment was organized, to be commanded by Major ROBERT L. O'BRIEN, JR., O-308359, of New York City, New York, with a training schedule stressing orientation, scouting, patrolling, marksmanship, and personal sanitation.

Through 11 June 1944, the regiment continued to follow the strategically sound practice of occupying the high ground to the north and west of CANINO. Lieutenant Colonel WATKINS' 2nd Battalion moved on to M. CAPITA, M. CARDELLI and M. MAGGIORE to protect the right of the Division as the advance continued. On the night of 11 June 1944, the regiment moved by motor and marching to 8 miles northwest of MONTALTA di CASTRO. Italians here reported that about 60 Germans had been begging food and had been confiscating horses (25 or 30), probably to assist them in rapid retreat. It was then reported that the 117th Recon had two platoons in MANCIANO and were sending a section to PETIGLIANO, having broken through a road block with the aid of infantry, tanks, and tank destroyers.

The 143d Infantry Regiment assembled and continued the advance along Highway 1. Information was received that the Germans were supplied with gas grenades and all personnel of this regiment were ordered to wear a gas mask on his person at all times.

The highway north of ORBETELLO is flanked by a maze of canals, making a difficult potential battlefield for advancing troops. To avoid this situation, the regiment moved east on the left of a small hill mass to the south side of the ALBEGNA RIVER. Information gained here indicated that the enemy consisted of a battalion of the 303rd Infantry (of which 50% were Russians), with 24 machine guns, but with a limited supply of food and ammunition.

On 13 June 1944, the 111th Engineers completed two foot bridges across the ALBEGNA RIVER. Across that stream were two German strong points on Hill 124 and Hill 48. These positions were softened up by our artillery during the night and early morning, discontinuing the enemy mortar and SP fire. At this point our field observers noticed considerable enemy movement.

The night of 13 June 1944, witnessed the beginning of one of the hottest actions in this operation. At dusk the 2nd Battalion moved forward into rolling hills, spearheaded by Company "E" which moved up along a creek confronted by Hill 124. Here leading elements ran into enemy machine gun cross-fire, heavy mortar and artillery fire. Under the skillful direction of First Lieutenant JOSEPH A. KULIK, O-1312388, of Shamokin, Pa., then Commanding Company "E", the fire was returned by small arms and mortars, but after sustaining losses that company's position became untenable and it was forced to withdraw to its former position. At the same time, Company "G" on the right flank of Company "E", had been hard hit by a concentration of enemy long range machine gun and artillery fire, but held fast to its position. A few friendly, and many enemy flares were observed. At 2400 hours two enemy planes strafed troops and along the road, and dropped anti-personnel bombs.

The following morning, 14 June 1944, the 3rd Battalion ran into heavy machine gun fire while attempting to cross the north branch of the Osa Canal

which had been flooded by the enemy." Artillery and Cannon Company fire forced back the enemy with heavy losses. When the 3rd Battalion made the assault, they found 50 German dead, took 50 prisoners, and captured 5 field pieces and quantities of materiel. Company "I" advanced to the crest of the ridge but was forced back by the heavy fire of three Mark VI tanks which did not even permit our observation. After a concentration of our artillery, one tank was observed trying to escape the devastating fire. Following an unsuccessful enemy counterattack against Company "F", the 2nd Battalion took C. MELOSELIA. Altogether some 200 prisoners were taken in this action.

Prisoners taken in this sector were about 70% non-Germans who fought only because forced to and would desert as soon as possible. Besides captured Poles and Alsations, there were Russians, mostly Mongols comprising the entire 162nd Infantry Division, which was called the "Turkestan Legion" officered by Germans. These troops with small arms and infantry howitzers were relegated to defend the town of FALLONICA. Secondary positions were to be held by wire, mines, and road demolitions while any beaches suitable for amphibious landings were covered by both "S" and Teller mines in heavy barbed wire.

Here "Plan Mike" was incorporated by which the 143d Infantry Regiment with "Highway 1 Task Force" (Company "A" and attached tanks and TDs), attacking northward to destroy any enemy forces encountered. The 1st Battalion less Company "A" attacked and took their objective, Hill 100, blocking the road to Northeast with AT guns, machine guns, and local rifle protection. The 2nd Battalion followed the 1st Battalion without interval, passed through it and took Hill 203, establishing a road block. The 3rd Battalion followed the 2nd Battalion and when the 2nd Battalion took its objective, the 3rd Battalion passed through it and took Hill 236. Antitank Company leapfrogged its guns forward, two platoons along the foothills of the west slope of the ridge with one platoon held available for a similar use along the east slope. Cannon Company displaced and gave supporting fire to the attack. "Task Force Highway 1", consisting of 3 TDs, 3 tanks, reconnaissance elements, and Company "A", was supplemented by engineers who improved crossings for all types of vehicles.

Air reconnaissance reported the 50 enemy motor transports were moving north from GROSSETO and our patrols sent out to north, east, and west made no enemy contact but found enemy mines. The 143d Infantry crossed the OMBRONE RIVER and MOLINI CANAL, its steel and concrete bridge having been left intact, and occupied the town of GROSSETO at 0430 hours, being again joyously welcomed even at that early hour by all the inhabitants. Road blocks were established on all arteries. The bridge northeast of GROSSETO had been blown and an A & P Platoon moved forward and removed 17 Teller mines which had been dug in on the road. Sporadic SP fire from behind the POIO di MOSCONA hill mass fell on portions of Company "F" but soon the SP withdrew.

On 16 June 1944, our troops remained in resting vicinity GROSSETO and our patrols made no contact with the enemy after taking a few Russian prisoners, some of whom wore civilian clothes.

On 18 June 1944, troops of the 143d Infantry Regiment moved north out of GROSSETO with Highway #1 on their left, into the hills where the German force had been strengthened by elements of the German 19th Division. Our forward troop movement was harassed by artillery fire coming from the hills across the plain to the west and firing perpendicular to our line of advance. Mortar and self-propelled fire from the hills directly to our front only held up the advance temporarily and the regiment pushed forward into the foothills northeast of GROSSETO. Information gathered from the 199 Prisoners of War captured that day was to the effect that the Germans had a large gas dump located at PONSACCO (on Highway 67 out of FLORENCE), and that elements of the 356th Division were part of a force supposed to stop the Americans in vicinity of GROSSETO to give the 162nd (Turkestan Legion), and 336th Division a chance to reassemble north of FLORENCE. Prisoners of War also reported the presence of elements of the 16th SS Division in regimental strength and that the German officers were ready to quit.

Regimental Operations Instructions for 18 June 1944, were for the 1st Battalion with one platoon of Company "L" attached, to attack and seize a series of three heights, and to establish contact with the 361st Regiment on the right and the 2nd Battalion, 143d Infantry on the left. The 2nd Battalion meanwhile was to capture Hills 89, 102, and 70 and cover its left flank with tanks, tank destroyers, Combat Platoon from Reconnaissance elements, and establish and maintain contact with the 1st Battalion on the right and to be prepared to resume attack to capture Hills 182 and 217.

The 3rd Battalion was ordered to assemble and move forward, passing the 1st Battalion and seize and hold the high ground, Hill 325.

The 3rd Battalion occupied PGIO MOSCONCINO (Hill 96), and PGIO di MOSCONA (Hills 317 and 265). The 1st Battalion moved along highway northeast to vicinity of PGIO MOSCONCINO (Hill 96), and attacked at daylight to seize Hills PIACCIALONE and BELLO. At 0945 hours, Company "C" had advanced to BELLO and Company "A" was advancing to PIACCIALONE against little opposition.

The 2nd Battalion moved on a broad front with the left flank on Highway 1. At 1000 hours forward elements had reached PIEN DELLA MOLLA meeting heavy machine gun, small arms, mortar and artillery fire.

The 361st Infantry Regiment was moving north on the right flank but the 143d Infantry Regiment had only visual contact with them. Three hundred Germans were seen to be milling around after our artillery had been brought to bear. As one officer put it, "It looks like they were told to stay there but didn't want to". This was substantiated by 97 prisoners captured who

admitted they had orders to hold the lines under all circumstances as the next defensive line was incomplete.

Leading elements of the 2nd Battalion ran into heavy small arms, self-propelled, mortar and machine gun fire, but immediate counter-artillery knocked out two enemy tanks. German cavalry units were also observed to be a threat and our artillery was trained on them. BATICIANO was reported to be full of Germans.

At midnight the 3rd Battalion beat off repeated enemy infiltration attempts.

On 19 June 1944, several enemy trucks with infantry were observed and were fired on by our artillery. Tank destroyers were attached to our infantry to be used as mobile artillery firing from the heights. The 2nd Battalion advanced with Company "F" on the left, Company "G" on the right and Company "E" behind Company "F". Meanwhile the engineers were building a bridge over the MOLLA RIVER. German troops were reported to be between the 1st and 2nd Battalions as were 15 deserted artillery pieces and 100-150 horses. Our artillery dispersed them before they could take any action and several enemy maps of value were captured. Snipers opened a harassing fire and enemy HE shells of undetermined origin knocked out two antitank trucks. First Lieutenant HARMON W. WILLIAMS, O-1293690, of Flint, Mich., 1st Battalion Antitank Platoon Leader, and 5 men were killed. Italians reported earlier that the enemy had brought in infantry and artillery which had been knocked out and dispersed by our artillery.

Twenty-eight Germans and one German officer were taken prisoners by the tanks attached to the 1st Battalion and the prisoners reported the deadly effect of our artillery on their guns. Only a slight advance was made by the 2nd Battalion because of the enemy's position in several buildings. In all, 42 prisoners were taken this day by the regiment. The enemy strength was about 80-100 men in each company. His regimental strength ran around 1000 men. His morale showed signs of breaking and everywhere material was being abandoned. The enemy supply was handled mostly at night and was constantly harassed by our artillery.

The following day the 2nd Battalion advanced along the ridge paralleling Highway 1, meeting short and active resistance on Hill 217 which was reduced by artillery fire. The battalion continued without resistance into MONTE PESCALLI. The 3rd Battalion seized Hill 325 without resistance and contacted the 361st Infantry Regiment on the right, and pushed out to Hill 157, patrolling to Highway 1. The 1st Battalion assembled with 2 platoons each of tank destroyers and tanks, and prepared to continue the advance west. In all, 85 PWs were taken. The weather was wet, the trails muddy and steep, and the underbrush dense.

A big explosion that evening indicated the hitting of an enemy ammunition dump at 2030 hours and later an enemy armored car was knocked out by one of our bazookas.

On 23 June 1944, Italians reported a German withdrawal two days before in the direction of MASSA. From the 41 prisoners taken that day, the fact was revealed that 14 75mm enemy howitzers had been destroyed by our artillery. These prisoners also reported that 100 Germans in small groups, each group with 2 mortars and from 8 to 12 machine guns, were in the forward area. "Easy Task Force" consisting of Company "E" plus tanks and tank destroyers was to push up Highway 1 and keep all communications open. From the vicinity of GAVORRANO came 20 enemy rounds of 75mm plus smoke shells which pinned down the leading elements. The report now came in that ahead were 7 Tiger tanks and a vehicle park.

The objective of the 2nd Battalion became the occupation of Hill 469, the 1st Battalion to occupy the high ground east of GAVORRANO (273). The tanks were rushed across the repaired bridge and were ordered to move to cover while the reconnaissance elements were pushed ahead. Our 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion was warned of the immediate presence of three Mark IVs and one Tiger tank.

Twenty more hostile rounds of 75mm fell into our area. Our artillery was brought to bear on these tanks but was unable to put them out of action. One of our tank destroyers moved to the high ground to knock out his adversary, came into point blank range, but was unable to depress his naval gun sufficiently to hit the Tiger tank who in turn scored several direct hits and set our tank destroyer aflame. The Germans employed their tanks using enfilade fire through the passes in the hills. Enemy resistance, strength, and morale was better than at any time since VELLETRI. Our anti-tank fire at point blank range made no impression on the huge Mark VI's, the AP ammunition bouncing off harmlessly. After the Tiger tank had knocked out a friendly antitank gun, our bazooka and 81mm mortar fire put two tanks out of commission and by morning four tanks were burning. In a group of farm buildings was located personnel, bicycles, German jeeps, and personnel carriers and a heavy concentration of fire was placed on this area. At 1635 hours the 1st Battalion was ordered by regiment to dig in, was informed that the 142nd Infantry would take over our mission and that the 143d Infantry was now in division reserve. At 2332 hours, four successive green flares were sent up by the enemy which meant "all troops retreat".

A battalion of 517th Paratroopers passed by on our right and the 142nd Infantry jumped off to our front. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 143d Infantry pulled back, entrucked and moved to a bivouac area further up Highway 1. The 3rd Battalion forged ahead on foot and secured a road block to the northwest.

On 25 June 1944, the 1st and 2nd Battalions jumped off, the 3rd Battalion to follow the 1st Battalion, all units to the right of route one. After encountering no opposition, Colonel ADAIS gave the order that all available transportation would be used to speed the advance up Highway 1 on which the enemy had generously scattered tank traps, mines, with an occasional blown out bridge. The motor column crossed the broad plain of the CORNIA RIVER and approached the high mass beyond to the west of the town of CAMPIC-LIA MARITTIMA. As the troops, still riding the vehicles, approached the highland, the Germans opened up with machine gun and heavy mortar fire followed by a crescendo of artillery fire from a northeastern direction. Our tanks, tank destroyers and antitank guns opened with all they had firing at any house that might serve as an OP, especially a castlelike stone building on the crest of the hill, and putting a curtain of fire on the side of the hill. The 2nd Battalion immediately assaulted the hill and secured it, followed by the 1st and 3rd Battalions. Enemy patrols were active during the night and attempted infiltration but were driven off in a fire fight. Patrols were periodically sent out, without making enemy contact. A task force from the 3rd Battalion consisting of patrols, supported by a platoon from the Cannon Company and tank destroyers was sent out to mop up enemy resistance on the PIOMBINO PENINSULA. The force secured the peninsula, picked up a few prisoners and secured the position.

At 0600 hours, 26 June 1944, the 133rd Infantry Regiment by-passed our position and continued the pursuit of the enemy, and the 143rd Infantry Regiment had officially been relieved.

From the beginning of the operation on 23 May 1944, the regiment had fought, pursued, and annihilated the enemy over a route the length of which was 240 miles. Historical records have yet to produce a military pursuit so completely successful as this operation in which the 143rd Infantry had demonstrated the maximum military efficiency and determination, and had displayed the smooth teamwork of a powerful military organization.

During the period from 1 June to 27 June 1944, 3 officers and 65 men were killed; 28 officers and 308 men were wounded; and 11 enlisted men were missing. 1033 of the enemy were captured during the period from 27 May to 27 June 1944, and an unknown but definitely large number of the enemy were killed and wounded.

There is no praise too great for the officers and men of the regiment who uncomplainingly, with true soldierly spirit and without regard to self, fought their way those 240 miles in hot pursuit of the enemy.

* * * * *

This account of the Operations in Italy for the month of June 1944, was

prepared in collaboration with Private RICHARD S. WICKENDEN, 31371425, of Marion, Mass., who studied diligently the official records of the regiment in order to present in narrative form a coherent continuity of the operation.


DOUGLAS N. BOYD
Captain, 143d Infantry
Adjutant

LIST OF COMMANDERS

143D INFANTRY REGIMENT

JUNE 1944

PAUL D. ADAMS
Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding

DAVID M. FRAZIOR
Major, 143d Infantry
Commanding 1st Battalion

GAULDEN M. WATKINS
Lieutenant Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding 2d Battalion

JAMES D. SUMNER JR
Major, 143d Infantry
Commanding 3d Battalion from 1 June to 24 June 1944

CHARLES J. DENHOLM
Lieutenant Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding 3d Battalion from 25 June to 27 June 1944

HEADQUARTERS 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

APO #36, U.S. ARMY

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE

AUGUST 1944

The 143d Infantry Regiment of the 36th Infantry Division was relieved from its position in the Fifth Army Italian front at CALPIGLIA-MARITIMA, ITALY on 28 June 1944, and returned to a bivouac area twelve (12) miles north of ROMA, ITALY, where the troops were re-equipped and reclothed. Following this processing, the regiment moved by truck to the port of CIVITA VECCHIA, ITALY, north of ROMA where they boarded LCIs to sail to SALERNO, ITALY, returning to the site of the first invasion of the European continent by American troops on 9 September 1943.

The 36th Division, having been released from the Fifth Army, was now under Seventh Army command while Division Commander Major General FRED L. WALKER, returned to the United States to assume command of Fort Benning, Georgia, and Major General JOHN E. DAHLQUIST, O-7120, of St Paul, Minnesota, became the new Division Commander.

In this gulf of SALERNO area, the process of issuing amphibious equipment and training for intensive amphibious operations was begun. After spending approximately two weeks in this area, the assembled units of the 143d RCT moved north of NAPLES, ITALY to the QUALIANO, ITALY staging area. Baggage and equipment over the absolute minimum for each man was crated and stored in warehouses prior to shipment from the Italian theater of operations. Waterproofing of all transportation was completed and the amphibious training operations were concluded.

On 10 August 1944, the troops of the 143d Infantry Regiment left the QUALIANO, ITALY bivouac area and loaded aboard LSTs and LCIs at POUZZOLI, ITALY. The following day at 0800 hours, the convoy put to sea, moving southward and dropped anchor at the convoy collecting point off SALERNO, ITALY. In clear bright weather, at 0800 hours, 12 August 1944, the convoy for Operations BIGOT-ANVIL weighed anchor at SALERNO, ITALY and put to sea. That afternoon on all ships the briefing for this operation began for all troops.

After heading west-northwest, and passing between the islands of SARDINIA and CORSICA, the convoy moved up the west coast of CORSICA to enter and drop anchor in the port of AJACCIO. At 1600 hours, 14 August 1944, the convoy left AJACCIO and again put out to sea.

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assault by the VI Corps was preceded by about three (3) hours with a parachute and airborne attack on vital enemy communication centers lying ten to thirty miles inland from the coast and opposite the beaches on which the landings were to take place.

On the early morning of 15 August 1944, D-day, heavy shelling of shore installations by battleships escorting the Seventh Army naval convoy began. After the troops landed, shelling continued on call. Spearheading the first wave of assault craft carrying troops to the beaches of southern FRANCE were LCVTs, naval craft which launched rockets into the barbed wire entanglements protecting the beach.

The 36th Infantry Division (reinforced) plan of attack in Operations BIGOT-ANVIL prescribed assaults on beaches Green and Blue at H-hour; to seize AGAY, SAN RAPHAEL, FREJUS, and LE NUY, and to push inland to Force Beachhead line, prepared for further advance to the northwest.

The 141st RCT at H-hour landed at beaches Blue and Green, moved directly inland north and northeast to secure its portion of Force Beachhead line, established road blocks, and protected the 36th Division's right flank.

At "H" plus 105, 15 August 1944, the 143d Infantry began its landings in a column of battalions on beach Green; 1st Bn at 0945 hours, 2d Bn at 1000 hours, and 3d Bn at 1035 hours. Beach Green is situated 700 yards southwest of DRAINONT, FRANCE and about 4,000 yards east of SAN RAPHAEL, FRANCE. The edge of the beach is coarse crushed stone sloping upward to brush covered hill sides cut out at some points by stone quarries. While the early morning clouds had cleared by the time of the initial landings, battle field haze arising from fires and shelling limited observation to some extent. The 133d Field Artillery's 105mm howitzers, which were prepared to fire from their CUKWs while moving in toward shore, landed and were ready at 1055 hours to fire in support of the combat teams.

The 1st Bn reinforced by Company C, 636th Tank Destroyer Bn, less 2d Platoon; Cannon Company, 143d Infantry, less 2d Platoon; and Antitank Company, 143d Infantry, less 2d Platoon, landed at beach Green at 0945 hours, and moved inland about 2,000 yards northwest to its first objective, the high land mass called Grand Defend. From there it proceeded to the second high land mass approximately 2,000 yards further to the northwest, where OPs obtained dominating observation over the enemy. The 3d Bn, in regimental reserve, following closely in the rear of the 1st Bn, took over these positions and prepared to repel enemy counterattacks while the 1st Bn continued without delay to assault SAN RAPHAEL from the northeast in its zone of action.

The 2d Bn reinforced and directly supported by Company C, 753d Tank Bn; 2d Platoon, Cannon Company, 143d Infantry; 2d Platoon, Company C, 636th Tank Destroyer Bn; and 2d Platoon, Antitank Company, 143d Infantry, landed at 1000 hours driving north behind shore installations knocking out strong points from the rear by previously designated and schooled teams, and proceeded to attack SAN RAPHAEL in its zone of action.

The CP, 143d RCT was established at 1130 hours in a large hotel one-half mile inland and one and one-half miles west of beach Green, near the settlement of ECHEOURIS. Occasional enemy heavy mortar and heavy artillery shells came into this vicinity. By 1247 hours, four (4) tank destroyers of Company C, 636th Tank Destroyer Bn, and four (4) tanks of Company C, 753d Tank Bn were ashore and moved north along the shore road, Highway "95", directly in support of the 2d Bn.

The leading elements of the 2d Bn, namely Company E, ran into a heavily fortified road block consisting of road barriers flanked by high stone walls and reinforced by strong points in houses on either side of the road. In the ensuing effort to smash this strong point, the 2d Bn suffered casualties including the Commanding Officer, Lt Col GAULDEN M. WATKINS, O-13292, of San Francisco, California, who was seriously wounded by machine gun fire. Four (4) prisoners of war captured here revealed that enemy units in contact were the 627th Section Marine Coast Artillery, 5th Battery; and elements of the 63 GAF Training Regiment. Because of preliminary bombings by our planes of the coastal area, it was clearly apparent to the enemy that our intentions were to establish a beachhead. A captured German civilian acting as a meteorologist at TOULON stated that the Allied invasion of southern FRANCE had been common knowledge, both among civilian and military personnel, although the time and date was not known; that the bulk of the military personnel, which had been stationed at TOULON had moved eleven (11) days before toward MARSEILLES.

While the plan had been for the 142d RCT to land on beach Red at "2" hour (1400 hours), on D-day to capture FREJUS and to move to the northwest, its troops were unable to land as planned because of heavy underwater obstacles, mined installations, enemy machine gun and artillery fire. They subsequently landed at beach Green following the 143d RCT, and moved northward between the 141st RCT and the 143d RCT, then swung westward to a point north of FREJUS.

At 1720 hours, 15 August 1944, Colonel PAUL D. ADAMS, O-17306, of Columbia, South Carolina, Commanding Officer, 143d RCT issued instructions for the attack at 2000 hours to clean out FREJUS and beach Red with the 1st and 3d Bns in assault, 2d Bn in reserve. While enemy road blocks had been reduced, enemy personnel yet remained with machine gun and sniper fire to retard our advance.

At approximately 2100 hours, two (2) enemy bombers came over the beach-head, dropped a bomb and scored a hit on an LST loaded with artillery ammunition off beach Green, causing a series of violent explosions and a two hour conflagration.

Soundness of plans and methods was evidenced by low casualty rates - five (5) officers and eighteen (18) enlisted men - and the rapidity of the advance, in spite of many doggedly defended strong points and road blocks.

Prior to landing, we knew that pillboxes and machine guns and mortar positions were located south of the railroad running parallel to the beach. From PIs we learned that the 5th Company, 765th Infantry Regiment of approximately 200 men was located around a cemetery north of SAN RAPHAEL, and that there were about eight (8) pieces of artillery, 75mm to 105mm, and eighty (80) enemy in the vicinity with the headquarters of 765th Infantry Regiment at the Gols Hotel area in SAN RAPHAEL. Five (5) mine fields were identified on both sides of the railroad tracks from SAN RAPHAEL south and west. S-mines and Teller mines were abundant around the town, the airport, and FREJUS. Also enemy tanks, possibly a maximum of six (6) Mark IVs were in the vicinity of SAN RAPHAEL.

Lt Col CHARLES J. DENHOLL, O-21293, of Poughkeepsie, New York assumed command of the 2d Bn when Lt Col GAULDEN M. WATKINS was wounded. He reported that he was drawing his Bn back to the east side of the GARONNE RIVER and that he would, with the aid of tanks, clean up Hill "76". He also reported that the bridges over the river were in good condition. At 0910 hours, the 2d Bn was in SAN RAPHAEL mopping up, while the 1st Bn was midway between SAN RAPHAEL and FREJUS. Fourteen (14) prisoners of war captured here reported the location of gun installations and underground ammunition dumps.

At 0345 hours, Company G had reached its objective - called by them "The Pinsoneault Line" - and there ran into heavy machine gun fire flanked by enemy riflemen. Company F moved up within 150 yards of that line. Patrols were sent out to the rear to contact Company L. Patrols to the front reported barbed wire and a road block on the road running through SAN RAPHAEL. Germans were heard talking and coughing but their strength could not be estimated. At 0400 hours, enemy white flares went up in SAN RAPHAEL with Company E still on Hill "32". At 0600 hours, the 2d Bn moved out with tanks, tank destroyers and with artillery support to mop up this general area which contained numerous mines and booby traps, taking thirty (30) prisoners of war out of SAN RAPHAEL. The 1st and 3d Bns then moved out to clean up Red beach, capturing several high ranking enemy officials as well as twenty (20) hutments (hitherto not shown on the map) containing radios and maps. Leading elements of the 143d Infantry moved on to CAMP DE CAIS, a former barracks of French Colonial troops.

Three Task Forces were organized in the 3d Bn and sent out to establish road blocks astride the axes of approach from the north, with the following compositions and results:

Task Force ABBOT consisting of Company I reinforced by one platoon of Cannon Company, one platoon of Antitank Company with mine squad attached, one section heavy machine guns, one section of 81mm mortars and communications detachment moved to the road junction approximately eighteen (18) miles north of BIGNOIRVILLE through enemy 150mm interdiction artillery fire and established road blocks. Concentrations of friendly artillery fire knocked out some of the enemy guns and forced the remainder to pull out to the north.

Task Force BISHOP consisting of Company K reinforced by one platoon of Antitank Company with mine squad attached, one platoon of Cannon Company, one section heavy machine guns, one section of 81mm mortars and communications detachment moved out the middle road and established their road blocks, took thirty (30) prisoners of war and contacted both Task Force ABBOT and Task Force CARDINAL by patrols.

Task Force CARDINAL consisting of Company L reinforced by one platoon Company G, 2d Chemical Bn; one platoon heavy machine guns; one platoon Company G, 753d Tank Bn; one platoon Antitank Company with mine squad attached, plus a communications detachment moved to its objective in vicinity of BAGNOLS EN FORET and established road blocks, contacting Task Force BISHOP by patrols.

That same night (16 August), a Company C patrol ambushed and captured nine (9) Germans who were identified as being from the 4th Company, Reserve Infantry Engineer Battalion, 148th Reserve Division and from the 252 Reserve Infantry Signal Company, attached to 148 Regiment, 143th Reserve Division. Our accelerated advance against stiffening enemy resistance was all the more remarkable in the light of the relatively few casualties (112) for "D" plus one.

On 17 August 1944, Major General DAHLQUIST sent a message to our forward units to watch for and receive agents of French, British, or American nationality coming from the direction of the enemy. These agents were in possession of vital information and were to be taken immediately to Division Headquarters. Some of these agents, British and American paratroopers, reported that the Germans were bunching around FAYANCE and that our Air Force should be so informed. These paratroopers had been working south toward our lines, cutting enemy communications, fighting guerilla warfare, and cooperating with the French Forces of the Interior (FFI), commonly referred to as "Maquis".

Company L reported that it was organized in BAGNOLS and tanks were sent

to hold street positions. 1st Lt JAMES S. BALL, O-467837, of Hardings, Virginia, 2d Bn Hqs, with two enlisted men got into a fire fight with the enemy and took three hundred (300) prisoners of war. These prisoners of war reported that many of the enemy were anxious to surrender but had not been permitted to do so by their officers. As the pressure of our forces on the enemy increased, the German officers told their men that they were going back to find defensive positions whereas, they actually deserted their men and left them to be taken prisoner.

Artillery fire by the 133d Field Artillery had been especially effective, knocking out four (4) artillery pieces, one antitank gun, and scattering horses and horse drawn vehicles everywhere. Our artillery fire accentuated the number of prisoners of war taken and each company was swamped by surrendering enemy. Company A took one hundred and fifty (150) enlisted men and fourteen (14) officers, capturing intact the 765th Infantry Regimental Staff, including the Commanding Officer, Lt Col SCHOENADEL. For the day (17 August) nine hundred and two (902) prisoners of war were taken by the regiment.

Units of 141st Infantry moved to relieve our road blocks at ABBOT, BISHOP, and CARDINAL while the 2d Bn, 143d Infantry was attached to Task Force BUTLER under VI Corps command to assemble in the vicinity of LE MUY and to initiate advance north on axis route Napoleon, (Highway "555"). The 143d Infantry (less 2d Bn), left CAMP DE CAIS at 1300 hours, pulling south on Highway "4" and then moving west by Highway "7" through LE MUY and then northwest on Highway "555" to vicinity DRAGUIGNAN where the CP was established at 1500 hours, southeast of the town proper, in a large barracks area, formerly occupied by German troops. There was evidence everywhere of the enemy's hasty departure since quantities of material, especially foodstuffs, were left behind. At this point the 143d Infantry Regiment went into Division reserve with the 142d Infantry to our front, 141st Infantry on our right flank, and the 45th Division on our left flank.

Reconnaissance was made by units of the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron on continuous patrol to CHATEAU DOUBLE and FIGAMERES and road blocks were established on all approaches to DRAGUIGNAN.

On the morning of 18 August 1944, Task Force CHARLIE consisting of Company C reinforced by one section heavy machine guns, one section of 81mm mortars and a platoon of Cannon Company, moved up north of Highway "555" where there had been reported two strong enemy road blocks. This force found nothing, the enemy having evacuated to the north. Friendly paratroopers had taken the towns of CALIAS, CLAVIERS, and BARGEMON.

The same morning at 0530 hours, Task Force BUTLER (named for and led by

Brigadier General FREDERIC B. BUTLER, O-12047, of San Francisco, California, Deputy Commander, VI Corps) consisting of the 2d Bn, 143d Infantry; Company C, 636 Tank Destroyer Bn; Company C, 753d Tank Bn; Company C, 111th Medical Bn, moved out to probe for enemy to the northwest. They moved swiftly, encountering slight opposition, and by 1845 hours were at MONTMEYANS, approximately thirty (30) road miles northwest of DRAGUIGNAN.

At 0730 hours, the report was received that two (2) 2½-ton ammunition trucks supplying Task Force BUTLER had taken a wrong turn in the road and ran into an enemy road block east of BARJOLS. The trucks were hit by incendiary fire, probably machine gun. At 0300 hours, 1st Lt LEO (NMI) FIRETAG, O-1291794, of Los Angeles, California, suffered a broken back and was later taken to the hospital, while one driver was picked up by units of the 45th Infantry Division. Prisoners of war later taken reported that this road block was defended by machine guns, 88s, and about 300 men awaiting reinforcements.

At 0030 hours, 19 August 1944, Task Force BUTLER CP was reported at RIEZ with the mission of moving north the following day to SENEZ, MEZEL, and DIGNE, meeting there a platoon of the 36th Reconnaissance Troop.

While the 143d Infantry (-) was in an assembly area one mile northwest of DRAGUIGNAN, units of the 3d Bn set up a road block northeast of DRAGUIGNAN as prisoners of war reported enemy activity there. Documents and supply dumps were found as well as heavily booby trapped areas.

VI Corps Headquarters issued the following orders: 143d RCT to continue to advance north and west to isolate MARSEILLE and to block the RHONE and DURANCE RIVER valleys. The 36th Infantry Division (reinforced) was to block all roads leading south from VALENCE and GRENOBLE.

Accordingly, on 20 August 1944, the 143d RCT (-) had a 0430 hour breakfast and moved northward in convoy column from the vicinity of DRAGUIGNAN on Route Napoleon (Highway "555") through mountainous and rocky terrain via the gorge of the JABRON RIVER and the Grand Canyon of the VERDON RIVER, 110 road miles to SISTERON, and four road blocks (including mines) were put out around the town.

In this area, FFI forces were strong; their increased size and force was encouraged by the mountainous terrain making their guerilla warfare methods against the Germans most effective. Passage through the mountain river gorges would have been impossible for our motor convoys without the flank protection of the FFI since the Germans, had they not been harassed by these French patriots, could have set demolitions to block the road northward under tons of rock to hold up our motor columns for an indefinite period. Active in this

area was the German 157th Infantry Regiment trained and equipped especially for counter-guerrilla warfare (pack howitzers, etc). Following American entrance into each town, the FFI often took over the administration immediately, making arrangements for the trial and punishment of those of French nationality who had collaborated with the Germans. At the sight of German prisoners, violent demonstrations were made by the French against their former overlords.

In the early morning of 21 August 1944, Maquis patrols reported that Germans were looting in AIT and had skirmished there with the French; that a column of seventeen (17) armored vehicles was moving east from AVIGNON to be joined at AIT by German Infantry, these two columns moving together to the northeast to attack the extended American column.

Reports from Task Force BUTLER dated 19 August 1944, were that six hundred (600) prisoners were taken at DIGNE by Company G and attachments (one company tanks, one platoon 636th Tank Destroyer Bn). At the same time this message was received at the 143d CP, Company G was at GAP confronting 1,000 Germans (250 of them were crack troops sent from GRENOBLE). Brigadier General BUTLER reported that 370 of the 1,000 enemy had agreed to surrender to the American forces but not to the Maquis. Accordingly they were taken prisoner, including a General.

From SISTERON, the 143d Infantry (-) moved in motor convoy twenty-six (26) road miles to ASPRES the evening of 21 August 1944.

That night Force de Combat FRAZIOR consisting of Company A; Company B; 1st Platoon Antitank Company; Antitank Platoon, 1st Bn; one-half 1st Bn Aid Station; one-half 1st Bn Combat Platoon; one-half Intelligence Section 1st Bn; one-half A & P Platoon; 36th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop (less one platoon); Battery A, 93d Armored Field Artillery Bn, moved by motor from ASPRES over the previously reconnoitered route to the vicinity of GAP with the mission of relieving elements of the Task Force BUTLER, at the time holding a road block. Force de Combat FRAZIOR continued to move that night via motor convoy toward GRENOBLE by the right road, Highway "85", while the 3d Bn moved toward that city by Highway "75", the left road through CORPS. These two distinct forces, plus Task Force BUTLER, meant that 143d RCT was now remaining a three pronged northward thrust toward the regimental objective - the RHONE valley and the city of LYONS. Meanwhile a volunteer platoon out of the 3d Bn went north to aid the Maquis fighting a German force at VIF, just south of GRENOBLE. Joined by one platoon of tank destroyers, the 3d Bn with weapons and ammunition was sent to aid the Maquis and 300 French paratroopers who had landed during the night at CLELIES and were moving to PONT DE CLAIK. In a coordinated attack, the 3d Bn and the 1st Bn moving from LA MURE trapped an enemy garrison at VIZILLE, and with 93d Armored Field Artillery, Cannon Company 143d Infantry, and 133d Field Artillery firing direct fire on 500 to 600

enemy troops, 150 casualties were inflicted on the enemy and 150 prisoners of war taken. Our reconnaissance elements withdraw from SAULT when attacked by 50-60 Infantry supported by self-propelled mounts and seven (7) enemy planes, Messerschmitt 109s, bombed vicinity GUILLESTRE inflicting no damage.

At 1230 hours, 22 August 1944, the CP 143d RCT was moved forward fifty (50) road miles to be established at Hotel Napoleon in GRENOBLE. Maquis reported that the German 221st Field Artillery had moved through GRENOBLE the night before with ten (10) to twelve (12) trucks loaded with personnel identified by the piping on shoulder straps and the numbers on their guidons. They had, however, no artillery pieces with them.

At 1700 hours, the GRENOBLE radio station powered by 12,000 volts was closed with a guard placed to insure neither transmission nor reception. The station had been able to receive but not transmit, when it was found, as the Germans had damaged the equipment before they departed the previous night. The chief radio operator asserted that the Germans used the station for no purpose.

Of the four hundred (400) prisoners of war taken during the day's operations, the following units were identified: 179th Reserve Bn, 217th Reserve Bn of 157th Regiment, 157th Reserve Division. The prisoner of war total for the period ending 2400 hours, 22 August 1944, five hundred and seventy-four (574); total prisoners of war taken to date by 143d Infantry in FRANCE, four thousand four hundred and nine (4,409).

Having established road blocks around GRENOBLE, the 143d Infantry pushed reconnaissance up Highway "75" northwest of GRENOBLE and awaited the arrival and subsequent relief of the 179th Infantry Regiment of the 45th Infantry Division, which arrived the afternoon of 23 August 1944.

Lt A. E. PARAY, a fully accredited representative of the Supreme Allied High Command, who had been fighting with the Free French, reported scattered groups of Germans in this general area. Six hundred (600) Germans, four (4) 88mm or 105mm artillery pieces, several tanks and self-propelled mounts were moving from south of VALENCE to the northeast, threatening positions held there in the vicinity of BOURGE DE PEAGE by the FFI. At 0700 hours, 23 August 1944, three hundred (300) to five hundred (500) FFI forces of Ardeche Department had attacked German garrison in TOURNON, but were stopped by German artillery. One thousand (1000) FFI guerillas were also around TAIN and the main road north of TAIN. The previous day, eight (8) French light Hotchkiss tanks under German control had been in TAIN while the German garrison in VALENCE was estimated to be around 2,500 men scattered in the town. Eighteen (18) Kms west of ROMANS, was a garrison of 1,000 enemy, the majority of whom

were Russians.

36th Division Headquarters also reported that on the evening of 23 August 1944, six hundred (600) German Infantry had arrived at CHATEAU NEUF-ISERE and were scattered in the hills but the main force was on an island formed by the canal of the electric power plant and the ISERE RIVER, near BEAUVINONT-MONTEUX with their weapons directed on CHATEAU NEUF and two antitank guns placed within eighty (80) yards of the bridge. The road was cleared of enemy from GRENOBLE to TULLENS and ST MARCELLIN and had been blocked by Maquis cluttering the road with debris, fallen trees, etc., denying possible passage to enemy vehicles. At other points, movable road blocks of large two wheeled wagons had been set up to halt momentarily enemy vehicles and allow automatic weapons to fire. As the 143d Infantry Regiment (-) moved into vicinity BOURG DE PEAGE, the Maquis reported that Germans in vicinity were dressing in civilian clothes, and in United States Army uniforms, using American arm brassards. These brassards had white stars in a blue background across their entire top instead of only in the upper left hand corner (the authentic American brassard). Especially close guard was kept in this position.

At this date (24 August), Task Force BUTLER assembled vicinity FUY ST MARTIN as Division reserve and from this point pushed reconnaissance. The 143d RCT plus present attachments was ordered to seize VALENCE and then move to CREST as Division reserve. Two forces, each not to exceed one company reinforced were to be left to hold BOURG and VALENCE. Accordingly, the 1st Bn (less Company B with the following attachments: Company B, 636 Tank Destroyer Bn; Antitank Company, 143d Infantry in direct support; one Battery 93d Armored Field Artillery; Cannon Company, 143d Infantry), was to attack VALENCE from the east while two forces of Maquis were to attack, one from the northeast, the other from the southeast.

Leading elements of the 1st Bn moved in the attack on VALENCE from CHABEUIL, 242100 August, with two tanks and one tank destroyer carrying one rifle platoon along Highway "92". One enemy road block was reduced, four (4) enemy killed, and seventeen (17) captured. This did not meet the force of Maquis at MARCEL as previously planned according to the Commandant LE GIAND of the French Maquis since their force could not reach MARCEL in time to launch their attack. At the eastern edge of VALENCE, the 1st Bn was met by small arms fire, cross fire of 20mm guns, and direct antitank fire of large caliber. The other force of Maquis attacking along Highway "538A", south-southeast of VALENCE met with the same situation as the 1st Bn. In this operation two (2) tanks and one (1) tank destroyer were knocked out by antitank and bazooka fire, and approximately fifty (50) casualties were sustained by our forces. Our forward elements withdrew and the bulk of the force of the 143d RCT was immediately ordered to vicinity CREST by daylight 25 August 1944. From CREST

the 143d PCT moved to vicinity PUY ST MARTIN, and established a CP at 250415 August 1944. Because of enemy shelling by heavy artillery in this area, re-adjustments of assembly areas were made.

At 250750 August 1944, 36th Division Headquarters reported an enemy Task Force consisting of the bulk of the 11th Panzer Regiment and self-propelled guns from the 119th Armored Artillery Regiment and miscellaneous units were attempting to break our block across the RHONE valley and then swing eastward to cut off the 143d PCT. 36th Division Headquarters further reported that the operations instructions and accompanying overlay had been captured between 241830 August and 241930 August 1944, when a 142d Infantry officer ran into an enemy road block.

Suitable precautions were taken to strengthen our lines and two (2) Cub planes were sent up for detailed air reconnaissance. Light enemy forces harassed our northern flank, while LORIOLE, only lightly occupied, was being approached from the north by a force of eight (8) Mark VI tanks and twenty (20) truck loads of personnel occupying GRANE and controlling the road north to LORIOLE. North of the DROME RIVER some tanks and armored cars, probably of the 11th Panzer Reconnaissance Bn, plus an OST (Russian labor Bn) had moved south to threaten CREST from the north. While a build up of enemy forces to our north was not expected, a major attack was anticipated from the south to clear a way for withdrawal of enemy forces from southern FRANCE. Capture of documents revealed the presence of the 15th Panzer Regiment in SAUZET and of the 802nd Infantry Bn in the vicinity of LIVRON as of 24 August 1944.

At 0805 hours, G-3 reported tank columns moving on LA COUCOURDE up Highway "7". CPs were placed to observe road running east from LORIOLE to CREST and also to observe Highway "7" from LORIOLE to the south.

The 143d Infantry Regiment was alerted at 1230 hours, to be prepared to move to plug a gap in the lines south of CREST and then to attack and destroy the enemy at GRANE, west of CREST, who was in a column of approximately fifty (50) vehicles. At 1610 hours, Brigadier General BUTLER instructed that Operations ABLE should be put into effect; the plan, to occupy and outpost the high ridge overlooking the RHONE RIVER south of GRANE and Highway "93" which runs east and west from ALEX to CREST; reconnaissance elements to be immediately dispatched. At 1722 hours, 36th Infantry Division Headquarters reported that twenty (20) enemy tanks followed by infantry had entered CREST. We immediately set out road blocks consisting of tanks and tank destroyers protected by rifleman (Company K), two and one-half (2½) miles north of CREST on Highway "93". At 1815 hours, Brigadier General BUTLER reported to Colonel AMES that the enemy had infiltrated through the positions held by Company C, 11th Engineers, and that the 141st Infantry had sent one Bn to block the gap. Company C, 54th

Engineers relieved the road block at the point five (5) miles from CREST and one-half of Company E of the 2d Bn was returned to 143d RCT. The attachments and supporting units of the 143d Infantry were now Hq & Hqs Company, Cannon Company, Service Company, Hqs Co 3d Bn, Company I, Company L, Company M, one-half Company E (one rifle and one weapons platoon), and five (5) medium tanks (support). This force was to move to the assembly area north of GRANIER and prepare to counterattack through MARSANNE. The 1st Bn, 143d Infantry and Antitank Company were now attached to the 142d Infantry by reason of the latter's losses the previous night. The 143d RCT CP was thereupon established in the forest of MARSANNE. Attacks were being initiated at this time by elements of the 36th Infantry Division other than 143d RCT, to cut Highway "7" and to establish road blocks in the section of Highway "7" between MONTELLIAR and LIVRON.

During this period, there was considerable enemy activity to the south and southwest. A heavy counterattack against the 141st Infantry Regiment by enemy foot troops and tanks was repulsed by artillery fire from four battalions. Maintenance of effective support during this instance involved a displacement to the rear of one battalion and a shift of ammunition from one battalion to another. After all battalions were brought into this vicinity fire was directed against areas to the south and southwest in expectation of a tank attack from those directions. However, a tank attack was encountered from the north and three (3) artillery battalions changed direction of fire. Artillery units continued to fire for at least three hours against enemy tanks, destroying three (3) and driving the remainder back to the north and northwest. At this time large numbers of horse drawn artillery and vehicles were observed to the south and southwest. While these were dispersed by our artillery, the numbers involved were large enough to warrant a call for air support.

The Germans meanwhile had been able to establish a road block on Highway "538" about one mile north of CREST. Supply units got to MARSANNE only by mountain roads guided by Maquis. The established supply route ran from ASPRES along Highway "93" northwest to DIE, to CREST, and then south on Highway "538" to PUY ST MARTIN.

Elements of 141st Infantry reinforced by elements of 143d RCT attacked from CONDILLAC and cut Highway "7" by 251900 August 1944. During the period 251200 August 1944-260200 August 1944, our forces received continuous counterattacks over the entire front. Our left flank in the vicinity of BONLIEU was penetrated for a distance of 500 to 1,000 yards toward MARSANNE. The 1st Bn, 143d RCT was ordered into the gap but by the time this reinforcement could be effected elements of 141st RCT (111th Engineer Bn and 131st Field Artillery) had organized and pushed the enemy back to BONLIEU. At 260100 August 1944, a strong German attack, vicinity LA COUCOURDE and IE LOGIS NEUF, supported

by tanks of the 11th Panzer Regiment and artillery forced the road block on Highway "7" to withdraw, and thereby created a danger point. Our artillery continued to pound Highway "7" and was partially effective in denying the use of Highway "7" to the enemy, especially in vicinity of MONTELIHAR and at the fork across the DROME RIVER south of LIVRON (the bridge there having been blown by Maquis).

During this period the 143d RCT forward CP was located in an eleventh century chateau, a huge heavy stone, castle-like building on a hill in the vicinity of CONDILLAC. The road to this point from MARSANNE where the rear CP was located was subjected to interdiction artillery fire while the village of MARSANNE itself was subjected to heavy shelling from self-propelled mounts the entire day of 26 August 1944. Also a very large gun estimated at 270mm (from shell fragments) and believed to be a railroad gun, fired sporadically on MARSANNE between 0630 and 0830 hours, 26 August 1944. One hole in the road measured ten (10) feet across. Even the front approach to the forward CP in the chateau on the hill near CONDILLAC was covered especially during the daylight hours by direct fire from enemy self-propelled mounts. Under cover of darkness a bulldozer built a rear approach to allow passage to and from the chateau.

It was learned at this period that the enemy opposing us in this sector was units of the 19th German Army with units made up of many and diversified elements. Besides obvious units of the 11th and 15th Panzer Divisions there was the 198th Infantry Division (formed early in 1940 from ERSATZ units) which had been in RUSSIA continuously since the outset. They had taken part in the operations in the CRIMEA and the CAUCASUS and had suffered very heavy casualties early in 1944, to be thereafter transferred to MARBONNE in FRANCE in July 1944, for reorganization and refitting.

The 3rd (American) Division was reported at 260800 August 1944, to have elements in ORANGE, still to have no opposition and to be pushing fast forward to the north. This threat from the south to the rear of the 198th Infantry Division and the 11th and 15th Panzer Divisions meant that these enemy units and their attachments would be forced to attack the 143d RCT seeking the only means of escape from the trap either by Highway "7" to the north or by escaping east of the RHONE RIVER itself and penetrating our lines. The RHONE RIVER itself and the activity of the Maquis on its west banks closed that as a possible avenue of escape. At any hour, a desperate enemy attack was therefore expected.

Upon receipt of a report that an enemy armored column was moving east from ALLEX, Company K moved to reinforce the road blocks west of CREST, and was further ordered to move in the vicinity of GRANIER to prepare to attack through MARSANNE should the need arise.

At 1330 hours, the 3d Bn (--), 143d Infantry jumped off and moved west of COGNILLAC. Tiger tanks and one large personnel carrier were reported moving north on the highway in the vicinity of LA COUCOURDE. Major THEODORE H. ANDREWS, O-365318, of Caldwell, Texas, 3d Bn Commanding Officer, reported that he had contacted the enemy and had met resistance at the Bn objective, the hill mass overlooking Highway "7", and at 1800 hours, this Bn was on the western slopes receiving heavy small arms, machine gun, and mortar fire. He ordered the artillery to fire and he sent Company I up on the right, while 31mm mortar fire was placed on the two Tiger tanks in the vicinity.

At 2130 hours, the 3d Bn, 157th Infantry of the 45th Infantry Division passed through MARSANNE to reinforce the 143d Infantry, and the next morning Companies K and L of the 3d Bn, 157th Infantry, assaulted LA COUCOURDE and engaged in a fierce fire fight, but were unable to take that town.

Our artillery pounded the large German mechanized convoy moving north bumper to bumper on Highway "7" as well as the parallel railroad line with the following observed knocked out the next morning: one (1) railroad train - one hundred (100) cars carrying gasoline or oil - halted on bridge, two (2) railroad trains - fifty (50) cars each - carrying munitions, eleven hundred (1100) vehicles (all types) and several horses attached to horse drawn artillery.

The German reaction to this artillery fire was one of complete confusion; shooting white flares, yelling, sounding horns, etc., while our artillery could not possibly handle all the obvious targets. Our artillery ammunition supply had become a very serious problem since trucks were making a round trip of over one hundred and fifty (150) road miles. Seven hundred (700) rounds per battery were necessarily kept in reserve in expectation of a German counterattack.

By 0940 hours, the 3d Bn reported that Company K had knocked out two (2) enemy tanks (with the loss of one of our tank destroyers) and that two (2) 57mm guns were in position to fire on the road into LA COURCOURDE with an enemy force still in that town.

Enemy tank activity was increasing east along Highway "7" in the vicinity of MAGERON hill, and had shot up both Company B, 141st Infantry (effective strength one and one-half rifle platoons and one weapons platoon), and Company G, 143d Infantry (effective strength one and one-half rifle platoons, and one weapons platoon). Pressure on the enemy from the south was increasing hourly since the 30th Cavalry Reconnaissance had established contact with the 3rd Division at LYON, moving rapidly north. At 1000 hours, the Air Force bombed Highway "7" from LORIOU to the DROLE RIVER.

Between 1100 and 1230 hours, the 3d Bn, 143d Infantry received a strong enemy counterattack of Bn strength which was repulsed with heavy losses, approximately 30 percent of the enemy force believed to have been killed and fifteen (15) prisoners of war taken, one of whom, a Captain, reported that the enemy would make no stand south of VALENCE. Information was also received that the 11th Panzer Division had been stationed in the south, but on 26 August 1944, had left MONTEILIMAR for LYON; twelve (12) 46 ton tanks, 18 armored cars, four (4) armed with 75mm cannon, six (6) with grenade launchers, and eight (8) with machine guns. Their mission was to establish a road block (O378) and hold to the last man to guarantee the safe retreat of German personnel across the German border.

The 3d Bn, 143d Infantry, now attached to Task Force BUTLER, attacked to the north from CONDILLAC and by 1730 hours, had reached their objective, the high ground overlooking Highway "7" along MAGRANON ridge with the express mission of cutting that traffic artery and establishing a road block. Mine fields were to be put in from the high ground in the east to the railroad tracks by a platoon of Company A, 111th Engineers.

The 2d Bn (less Company E) was assigned defense of the valley south of LA COUCOURDE with its Antitank platoon to fire down the valley. Company E, 143d Infantry, was in regimental reserve and took positions on the southern slope of Hill 300 prepared to counterattack down the valley toward the RHONE. Cannon Company was prepared to move to fire antitank fire down the valley in addition to regular artillery missions - especially anything attempting to penetrate our lines from the south. The road block on Highway "7" could not be effected because of enemy tank and infantry counterattacks on our elements, and enemy vehicle traffic continued to the north. Task Force BUTLER plus 141st Infantry (-B Company) withdrew under cover of darkness and moved to the north via MARSANNE to enter the corridor of Highway "7" along the 70 Northing grid to attack LORIOL from the south at daylight, 28 August 1944.

Intelligence report estimated enemy strength to consist of 8000 troops, two (2) batteries of 88mm or 105mm artillery, one battery of 155mm or 170mm artillery, and one or two large railroad guns and scattered self-propelled mounts. In order to smash enemy protection of Highway "7", i. e., infantry with machine guns, machine pistols, and Mark VI tanks, the 2nd Bn at 0700 hours, 28 August 1944, attacked MAGRANON, thence to the RHONE RIVER at the point MERCIER and the 3d Bn on the left, attacked to their front in the direction of the river; the 1st Bn in reserve, on the right, and following the 2d Bn in the direction of SAUZET. Company B, 141st Infantry, attached to the 3d Bn, 143d Infantry, did not continue its mission of taking the hill north of 611 Northing and, although unauthorized, pulled out creating a gap in our lines. The commanding officer of Company B, 141st Infantry, refused to take his men back up the hill under heavy enemy fire and was relieved of his command by

Major LOUIS H. RESSLIAC, O-23151, of Mobile, Alabama, Regimental S-2, 143d Infantry. Major RESSLIAC later led that company up to its objective. The Germans gave some evidence of making a desperate lunge to force their way over the high ground toward the east, and Major ANDREWS, 3d Bn commanding officer, had .50 caliber machine guns in position to fire, each rifleman instructed to fire at least one M-1 clip every hour, and each machine gunner to fire at least one belt every hour to deter any possible enemy break. Fire from Cannon Company, Antitank Company, .50 caliber machine guns, and small arms was all effective on Highway "7", wrecking vehicles, shooting troops off vehicles, and blasting crumpling out of houses. The 1st Bn, 143d Infantry was sent up to Task Force BUTLER on the LORIOLE road with the mission of mopping up down the valley. Meanwhile the 3d Bn sent bazooka teams to interrupt traffic on Highway "7" and units to mop up MAGRANGE ridge.

At 0630 hours, the 15th and 30th Infantry Regiments of the 3d Division followed by the 7th Infantry attacked MONTELIHAR and after its capture, advanced to 57 Northing. Sixteen (16) aircraft (friendly) bombed and strafed to hit enemy ammunition trucks and to destroy other vehicles. Cannon Company protected by Company E continued to fire artillery missions from its position enfilade, having destroyed the following: twenty (20) trucks, one (1) M4 tank, five (5) horse drawn wagons loaded with troops, two (2) horse drawn field pieces, twenty-five (25) bicycle troops and casualties of personnel.

For the same date, observation post No. 3 reported the following observed enemy casualties: fifty (50) vehicles, ten (10) horse drawn vehicles, fifty (50) horses, two (2) 105mm artillery pieces, two hundred (200) personnel casualties. Observation post No. 2 for the same period observed four (4) enemy tanks knocked out.

At BERSAIRES, five (5) prisoners of war were taken from an FFI vehicle attempting to escape to the northeast. Four were Military Police from the 330th Division who had been trailing the cars carrying the Division's staff of high ranking officers and Generals. These prisoners of war had previously been stationed at ARIES, FRANCE and on 12 August 1944, had been ordered to move north. They believed the 75th Division to be far ahead of them and they had been told to take defensive positions and were told the only way back to Germany was over the hills to the east. They reported some six (6) companies consisting of sixty to eighty men each, were now in the hills and the following day the 3d Bn successfully stopped scattered units composed of 116th Reserve Grenadier Battalion, 20th Reserve Grenadier Regiment, 138th Reserve Grenadier Division, 239th Grenadier Regiment, 140th Grenadier Division attempting to infiltrate our left flank positions in the vicinity of CLARBY and BERSAIRES. While preparing to attack to the southwest, the 143d RCT continued

While friendly tanks and tank destroyers were sent south around Hill 294 and up the valley, the 2d Bn forced its way back to its original position and fired down into the valley to knock out and leave exploding five (5) German trucks. With the enemy engaged on the northeast slope of Hill 294, Company G having reorganized moved up from the south and Company E came around the flank on a pocket of Germans caught in this pincer.

Lieutenant Colonel CHARLES J. DENHOLM at this point reported to Colonel ADAMS that one tank and one artillery piece (both enemy) were atop Hill 430 looking down on the 143d CP. Should our artillery attempt to fire on them in their present position, our own troops would be endangered. At this moment, the Germans began surrendering in large numbers. Observation post No. 3 reported that the counterattack was over (0714 hours), all was quiet and the road was jammed by traffic from the bridge into the town with several vehicles on fire.

One prisoner of war, a German First Sergeant, reported that the German counterattack had not been organized, that all enemy troops were attempting to escape our trap, and that all enemy troops in the adjacent valley were ready to surrender. German officers including Brigadier General OTTO RICHTER, Commanding General, 198th Division, were taken prisoner and the 3d Bn reported six hundred (600) prisoners of war plus one hundred (100) artillery pieces, the latter being promptly destroyed. During the latter part of the battle, Cannon Company knocked out nineteen (19) vehicles, one Mark IV tank, and killed approximately one hundred (100) of the enemy.

Almost no traffic was now moving on Highway "7". The enemy had effected a by-pass and our artillery units were laying fire on that route. The only resistance now was scattered sniper fire which was systematically neutralized.

At 1100 hours, the 3d Bn sighted twelve (12) American Infantrymen, deployed, moving up the valley. A patrol was sent out to meet them and to warn them of sniper fire. Those approaching were identified as a unit of the 7th Infantry, 3rd Infantry Division.

As the 143d Infantry disengaged and began peeling off and moving back by companies to join Task Force BUTLER, three (3) 57mm guns, three (3) 1½-ton trucks, four (4) jeeps and one (1) trailer lost to the enemy the night before were recovered in serviceable condition.

The 1st Bn awaiting orders vicinity LORIOL to attack south reported the capture of two hundred and three (203) prisoners of war. All elements of the 143d Infantry were now relieved by units of the 3d Infantry Division and proceeded in the vicinity of LORIOL, the CP established on the outskirts of

to fire on enemy movement, inflicting heavy and ever mounting casualties in equipment and personnel.

In the early morning of 29 August 1944, the 1st Bn (-Company B, one platoon Company A and one platoon Company D, which continued to fight in the original sector), moved to join Task Force BUTLER in its assembly area. The remainder of the 113d RCT moved to attack, the 2d Bn to seize Hill 294, and the 3d Bn to mop up MAGRAGON ridge and with bazooka teams raid Highway "7".

At first, the 3d Bn received no opposition on MAGRAGON ridge, and then all at once the enemy opened up with small arms fire as our troops moved up the slopes. The subsequent enemy action was as confused as it was violent. Enemy troops, tanks, vehicles, and horse drawn wagon artillery moved toward LA COUCOURDE between Hill 294 and the hill mass to its immediate left. This enemy column collided head on with the 2d Bn, 113d Infantry, creating a disorganized fire fight and then swung over toward the 3d Bn, 113d Infantry, to receive vicious fire from Bn and artillery weapons. As our units discovered the beginnings of enemy infiltration in large number in the valley, our artillery, Cannon Company, and all Bn weapons were brought to bear. The action was intense, vicious and too close for use of mortars. Enemy tanks penetrated within two hundred (200) yards of the 3d Bn CP making possible their capture of the 3d Bn Aid Station and part of the heavy weapons platoon. One room of the house containing the 3d Bn CP was entered by five (5) Germans, three (3) of whom were killed and the remainder captured.

Enemy tanks pushing down the valley plus enemy fire from 20mm antiaircraft guns shooting overhead and small arms forced the 2d Bn Hqs Company and Company II to move back and take up defensive positions while Company G was scattered by the tank attack.

Observation post No. 2 was forced to leave its position hurriedly as Germans were rapidly approaching that position. A burst of enemy machine gun fire was followed by four (4) enemy flares in the following order at one minute interval: green, red, white, another white. As ten (10) American tanks moved south on the dirt road in front of the 2nd Battalion's position, more enemy white and green flares went up in front of the advancing German troops. At this stage, some of Cannon Company's M-7 mounts were momentarily cut off from our troops but were able to regain contact after a fierce fire fight.

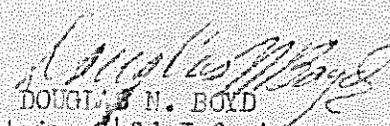
Antitank Company, 113d Infantry knocked out three (3) enemy tanks and one of our tank destroyers was quickly placed in position on the road to block enemy tank passage through CONDILLAC pass.

This day was the day of great victory for the troops of the 1143d Infantry; it marked the completion of the destruction of a considerable portion of the German Army in southern FRANCE, thousands of vehicles observed destroyed, thousands of prisoners taken, with only a few broken remnants of the enemy able to escape. The casualties for the day were: KIA - 3; WIA - 22; MIA - 3; and 1213 prisoners of war captured during the day's action. As the regiment moved into assembly area in the vicinity of CHABEUIL, road blocks were sent out and two (2) combat patrols, each in platoon strength were sent into VALENCE after dark, while the regiment again moved into division reserve.

On the last day of August, pursuit of the enemy continued with the 1143d RCT moving by motor shuttle toward VALENCIN to close at 2300 hours in the vicinity of LENTIOL. Two patrols were sent into the town of BEAUREPAIRE and though no enemy contact was made, enemy motor activity was heard moving north out of the town.

Intelligence reports stated that the 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions, with attached units numbering approximately 23,000 men were moving in the vicinity of LYON with an unknown number of tanks, at least one battery of 77mm, two batteries 105mm, and one battery of 150mm artillery.

The main difficulty facing the 1143d RCT was the problem of supply and transportation; since the enemy was moving toward Germany so rapidly it was difficult for our units to make contact. At the end of August the 1143d RCT was relentlessly pursuing the enemy to the northeast.


DOUGLAS M. BOYD
Captain, 1143d Infantry
Adjutant

LORIOLE in a farm house, while listening posts and local security were put out. The casualties of the 143d Infantry for this momentous day when the force of these enemy units was completely broken was: KIA - 8, WIA - 67, MIA - 11, with an unestimable number of enemy killed and equipment destroyed. The six hundred and seventy-eight (678) prisoners of war taken represented an unasserted amalgam from several organizations:

7th Company, 757th Grenadier Regiment, 338th Division
2nd Company, 308th Grenadier Regiment, 198th Division
235th Engineer Battalion
1st Bn, 933rd Grenadier Regiment, 244th Grenadier Division
14th AT Company, 917th Grenadier Regiment, 242d Grenadier Division
10th Company, 110th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 189th Grenadier Division
7th Company, 111th Field Engineer Bn, attached to the 11th Panzer Div

At 300545 August 1944, the 1st Bn, 143d Infantry attacked toward the junction of the RHONE and DROME RIVERS meeting only sporadic resistance as they neared the river and turning south about 1100 hours. The enemy scattered through the heavily battered town of LORIOLE was mopped up by a house-to-house search revealing large numbers of dead, wounded and hiding enemy. The destruction of enemy vehicles and equipment in LORIOLE had been devastating and extensive and the streets had to be cleared of debris. Useful equipment was taken including trailers of gasoline.

The 2d Bn, 143d Infantry having relieved the 3d Bn, 157th Infantry, 45th Division (the latter moving to regimental reserve), attacked south on the axis Highway "7" and by 0950 hours, was 1500 yards south of LORIOLE meeting little resistance. The 3d Bn, 143d Infantry blocked roads with two companies of tank destroyers and tanks following the attack south by the two forward Bns, and by 1000 hours had taken approximately two hundred (200) prisoners of war.

The Germans tried to effect a smoke screen before our 1st Bn, and gave considerable opposition, until our artillery laid in on them and immediately following our barrage, the 3d Bn captured intact an antiaircraft battery of 88mm guns. Enemy resistance now collapsed and juncture was later made with troops of the 7th Infantry moving up from the south.

After being released from Task Force BUTLER command, the 143d Infantry was ordered to move to LIVRON, to the road junction 1000 yards northwest of CREST, and to CHABEUIL with the mission of protecting the CREST-BOURG road by locking it from the west between MONTILLER and CREST. The FFI reported VALENCE clear of enemy, but reported that eighty (80) tanks had passed there within the last twenty-four hours.

CONCLUSIONS OF REGIMENTAL COMMANDER

1. The operations during the period 15-31 August 1944, were so varied and occurred with such tremendous speed that one who was actively engaged recalls them as separate events with difficulty.

The most impressive thoughts that have occurred to me are comparisons of methods to be employed in a pursuit designed to destroy an enemy.

Two general methods have been employed -

- a. Entrapment
- b. Direct pursuit (foot race)

The entrapment of enemy forces of size must be planned and executed on a grand scale with a division pushing while another encircles, the encircling unit being the one to deliver the most destructive blows. Large units are required because large areas must be covered to entrap large enemy formations, and large units must be used to provide the strength to absolutely stop the enemy's withdrawal which is the first step toward softening the enemy to the surrendering point. This type of operation was employed most effectively in the LORIOLE-MONTEILIMAR area with the exception that greater blocking strength could have been profitably used as the blocking force was stretched so thinly it could not prevent entirely the infiltration escape of numerous enemy.

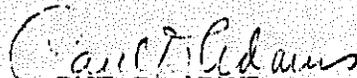
Direct pursuit by smaller units is more difficult of execution because it devolves to a foot race sort of operation. The undesirable aspects of this sort of pursuit lie in the fact that small units do not have room in which to apply entrapment tactics because of being restricted to limited routes of advance.

This results in local time consuming attacks on road blocks and delaying positions. Such positions are generally knocked out with no particular difficulty other than the time lost in getting started again as the obstacle is cleared. This time is lost because every organization requires a certain amount of readjustment prior to resuming the advance after being engaged.

2. Large scale plans should be made for destruction or protection of bridges. Frequently troops that could be more profitably used elsewhere were used to guard bridges of doubtful future value, whereas the destruction of the bridge would have freed troops for offensive action. Essential bridges

must be seized and protected and a certain number of secondary bridges should be left also but many minor bridges could be demolished and thereby release troops while at the same time make flanks more secure.

3. Equipment used during this operation is undergoing tremendous strain. Trucks have travelled as high as five thousand (5000) miles in two (2) weeks. This combined with battle losses and almost no replacement concerns one because we must prevent a large scale break down of transportation if we expect to continue at the present pace. Of course this is a calculated risk that must be taken but one that must not be overlooked, as the same thoughts apply to armor and to a lesser degree to other equipment.


PAUL D. ADAMS
Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding

LIST OF COMMANDERS

143D INFANTRY REGIMENT

AUGUST 1944

PAUL D. ADAMS
Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding

DAVID M. FIAZIOR
Lieutenant Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding 1st Battalion

GAULDEN M. WATKINS
Lt Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding 2d Battalion, 15 August 1944

CHARLES J. DENHOLM
Lieutenant Colonel, 143d Infantry
Commanding 2d Battalion, 16 August thru 31 August 1944

THEODORE H. ANDREWS
Major, 143d Infantry
Commanding 3d Battalion

HEADQUARTERS 36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

APO #36, U.S. Army

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE

SEPTEMBER 1944

CONSLUSIONS OF REGIMENTAL COMMANDER

1. The period covered by this report includes one month of active pursuit of the enemy from the vicinity of LYON, FRANCE to DOCELLES, FRANCE. The action was characterized by continual improvement of German organization, supply and communication which enabled the Germans to better their delaying tactics from day to day. These aspects, combined with the diminishing effectiveness of the Marquis and French Forces of the Interior, forced upon regimental and battalion commanders slower methods than had been employed when the Germans were disorganized, and the French Forces of the Interior well organized and helpful. The slower methods spoken of here constituted many foot marches as opposed to making motorized and mechanized marches, more careful reconnaissance and patrolling, more careful planning of the many minor attacks necessitated by enemy delaying forces and road blocks, and allowance for the fatigue being experienced by officers and men alike.

2. During a pursuit, there will invariably come a time, unless the enemy is entirely defeated, when he can establish blocks, delays, defenses and effect counterattacks, which if not properly anticipated and prepared for, may cause the pursuer a considerable number of set backs. While aggressive action must be continued, objectives should be shorter, units must get closer together, and the general strength of the pursuer must gradually be collected so that when the stronger resistances appear the pursuer has the force at hand to deal with them. The necessity for recognizing signs of improvement in the enemy situation is most important and must be known to all commanders. This was most forcefully demonstrated to me during the crossing of the MOSELLE River. The Germans had attempted to hold the MOSELLE River Line and were moving in to that line such formations as they could gather up. Our crossing was made under the coloring of continued pursuit as opposed to establishing a firm bridgehead. Our objectives were widely separated and difficult to reach even without opposition; our engineer support was not gauged on a river crossing. In other words, we were using pursuit tactics but encountering the strongest resistance we had met since MONTELMAR. Because of our widespread formations, the Germans were able to counter us with relatively light strength but at the same time prevent a rapid establishment of a bridgehead. The enemy was able to do this because our strength was scattered and we were unable to strike back with sufficient force to throw him back, although we had, numerically and materially, superior forces in the area. Having once located our crossing, the enemy because of our dispersion was able to harass us all the more. And what is more important, he was able to slow us down, increase his materiel defenses and concentrate near our crossing such strength as he had available to him, all of which, combined with the favorable terrain available to the enemy, allowed the Germans to succeed in their desire to delay us for an extended period of time.

3. Future operations must be scheduled with some planned rest periods wherein officers and men are able to recuperate from the strain of combat. While little shooting occurred during many days of this pursuit, there always was present the possibility of immediate engagement which places a strain on those concerned. This mental strain, of active fighting or the constant anticipation of fighting combined with the physical fatigue inherent to all operations, results, eventually, in a physical and mental lethargy which is almost unbelievable until observed at close hand. The solution to this problem is having short rest periods of two or three days. On the one day of rest permitted this organization, I was able to observe a definite pick up in all personnel. Such rests, of two or three days duration, frequently interspersed in the fighting, would, in my opinion, increase the over-all efficiency of all organizations and in the long run this policy would pay boundless dividends.

Paul D. Adams
PAUL D. ADAMS
Colonel, 143rd Infantry
Commanding

OPERATIONS IN FRANCE

On 1 September 1944, the 143d RCT was in the vicinity of VALENCIN, FRANCE southeast of LYON, FRANCE; the 1st Battalion at HEYRIEUX, the 2nd Battalion at LA FOUILLOUSE, the 3rd Battalion at CHAFONDAY, each patrolling actively in its sector. Four (4) officer-led patrols were ordered to operate in the 143d RCT sector with the mission of seeking the presence of enemy in the area, the presence of mines in the area, and the location of German installations, strong points and antitank obstacles. Road blocks were set up at the road junction east of HEYRIEUX.

At 010700 September 1944, 143d RCT moved to attack northward, met no opposition and continued the advance on the MIPLAINE-GENAS line.

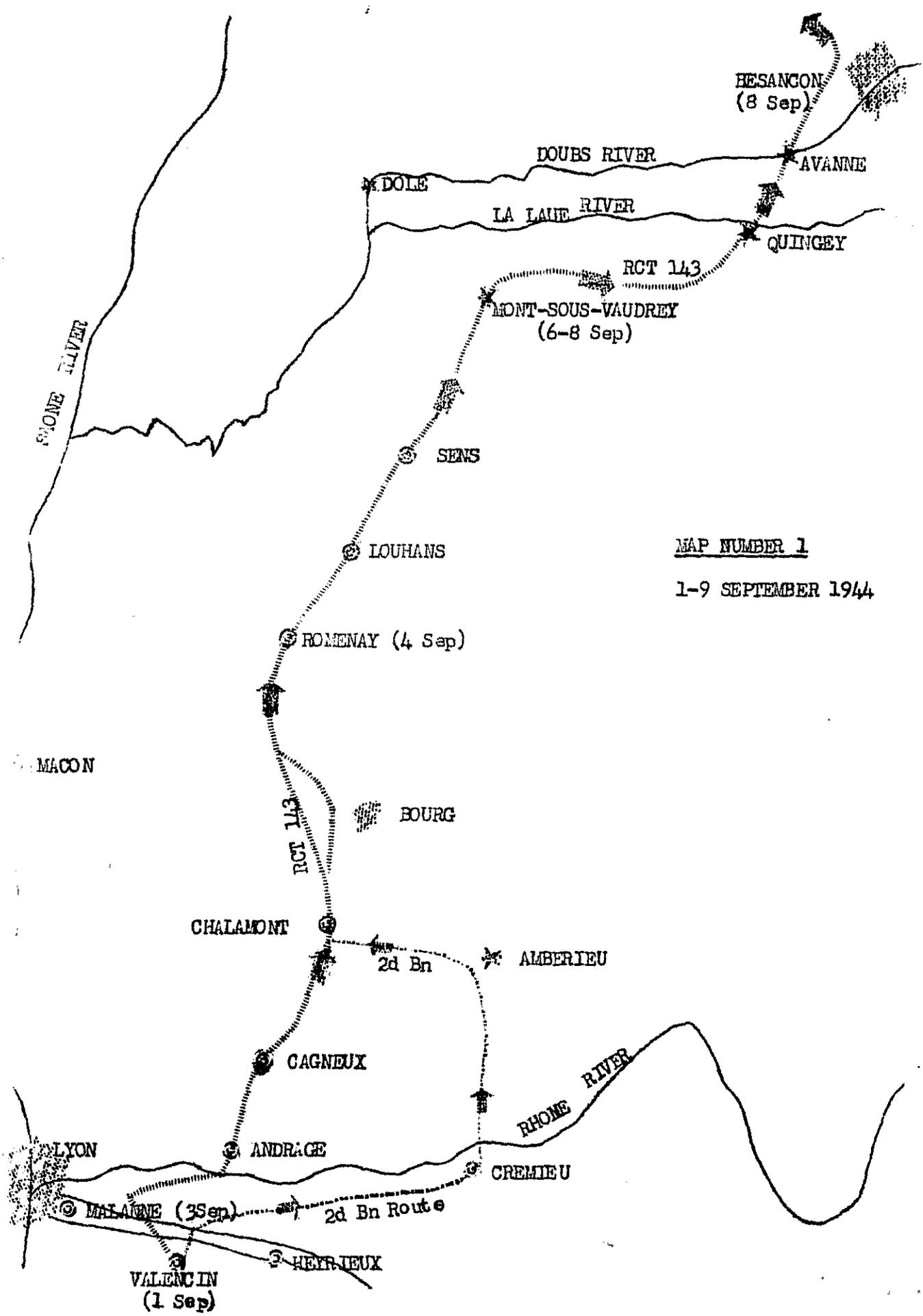
The enemy was retreating to the north and northeast. His forces were composed as far as could be determined of remnants of the German 19th Army, numbering approximately twenty-three thousand (23,000) men, several batteries of artillery, and an unknown number of tanks and self-propelled mounts. The size of this force increased as its retreat northward picked up other enemy retreating units.

During the period from 1 September to 8 September 1944, the enemy resorted to delaying actions to hinder our advance, making no more contact than was forced upon him.

The 143d RCT made contact with stragglers or with scattered delaying groups varying in size from twenty to thirty to several hundred men placed at advantageous defensive positions. He established road blocks, especially at main road junctions. When time permitted, he resorted to the demolition of bridges particularly at unfordable streams. When closely pursued, he used artillery, self-propelled mounts, small arms, and sniper fire to delay the 143d RCT advance.

The VI Corps, in constant pursuit of the enemy, had, as the purpose of its operation, the destruction of the enemy, by killing or capturing the maximum number of enemy formations. Every formation of enemy regardless of size, was to be engaged. Tanks accompanied the leading infantry elements and tank destroyers the leading tanks. All units were supported by artillery emplaced well forward. The pursuit was geared to maintain contact with the enemy and not to allow his escape.

The 143d RCT pushed active reconnaissance, maintained constant inter-battalion contact patrols, as well as patrols to adjacent 36th Division units



MAP NUMBER 1

1-9 SEPTEMBER 1944

and units of the VI Corps. Road blocks were maintained to prevent movement of the enemy or his attempted penetration of our lines in an effort to escape.

On 1 September 1944, the 36th Reconnaissance Cavalry reported concentrations of enemy in the area southeast of LYON including the towns of TOUSSIEU, MIIONS, and CORBAS in strong road blocks, and in camouflaged factory building strong points. These installations were supported by enemy tanks and artillery pieces, with as many as five hundred (500) Germans in one sector where the 1st Platoon of the 36th Reconnaissance Cavalry received small arms, mortar and antitank fire. Standing between the line of our advance and the city of LYON, this enemy force confronted our left flank. As a precautionary measure, the 143d RCT placed antitank guns on our left flank and the whole area east of LYON was divided into patrol zones, each zone to cover the main approaches to LYON from the east. The 3rd Battalion, in order to contact the 142nd Infantry on our left in the vicinity of CHAPONNAY, created a three to five mile gap between our battalions. This area was strongly patrolled by motorized elements, while the 1st Battalion was held in readiness to push the attack.

The 36th Division Operations Instructions for 2 September 1944, ordered the 143d RCT, reinforced by the 141st Field Artillery Battalion, to attack at 0700 hours, to the northwest and seize and hold the general line east of LYON.

Planning to attack LYON from the south and east with the 142d RCT on the left and the 141st RCT on the right, the 143d RCT zone of action extended on the left flank from the area of VILLENEUVE north to Highway #518 running from HEYRIEUX into LYON, and on the right flank from COLOMBIER-SAUGNIEU through GENAS to LYON. The 1st and 2nd Battalions were in assault and the 3rd Battalion in reserve, with the line of departure the highway between ST PIERRE de CHANDIEU and HEYRIEUX. By noon all objectives were taken while the enemy continued to withdraw along the axis of Highway #7 to LYON, protecting his east flank with infantry and tanks and impeding our advance by demolishing bridges and laying mines.

Although heavily mined, the huge airfield southeast of LYON was secured by the 143d RCT, at 021600 September 1944.

In the afternoon of 3 September 1944, the 143d RCT prepared to cross the RHONE River in order to advance north on the east bank of the SAONE River. During that night, the 2nd Battalion, 143d Infantry with Company B, 753d Tank Battalion; Company B, 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion; Antitank and Cannon Companies, 143d Infantry attached, moved via ST LAURENT, CREMIEU, AMBERIEU, and CHALAMONT, contacting the 141st Infantry and establishing road blocks at strategic road junctions.

The remainder of the RCT left one and one-half (1½) hours later via route JONAGE, DAGNEUX, joined the 2nd Battalion column at CHALAMONT, made contact with the 45th Division on the right at BOURGE-EN-BRESSE and after traveling approximately ninety-four (94) kilometers arrived at ROMENAY.

During the 5 September 1944, the 143d Infantry was again enroute by motor shuttle moving approximately thirty-five (35) kilometers from ROMENAY via LOZMAIS to SENS where the 1st Battalion secured the movement of the remainder of the regiment into bivouac by blocking the road net that might offer approach of the enemy.

At 060700 September 1944, the 143d RCT departed from SENS by the route BELLEVESURES, LA CHAUX, SELLIERES, LE DESCHAUX moving approximately forty-eight (48) kilometers to MONT-SOUS-VAUDREY, closing at 0115 hours with reconnaissance initiated and road blocks established.

The plan of the VI Corps (issued 052200 September 1944) was to move on the city of BESANCON, a rail center and supply dump of the enemy. While the Third Infantry Division moved directly on BESANCON, the 36th Infantry Division was to protect the left flank of the VI Corps and follow the Third Infantry Division into this area.

The 143d RCT approached BESANCON by the DOUBS River, and its tributary the LA LOUE River. Near the town of DOLE, an attempt of the 11th Engineers to construct a bridge was strongly resisted by fire and did not succeed.

Because the DOUBS River valley formed a natural approach to the German border in the vicinity of MULHOUSE where it enters the Rhine Valley, VI Corps anticipated this escape corridor to be well defended. Intelligence reports indicated that there were approximately three thousand (3,000) enemy in BESANCON.

Since the engineers had been unable to build a bridge across the DOUBS River in the time that plans permitted, the 143d RCT swung eastward leaving MONT-SOUS-VAUDREY at 080400 September 1944, in motor column by the route through MOUCHARD crossing the LA LOUE River at QUINCEY, and the DOUBS River at AVANNE, and moved into western edge of BESANCON where it first met enemy resistance. The 2nd Battalion contacted the enemy at ECOLE, northwest of BESANCON, quickly cleaning out sniper activity and enemy mortar fire with counter-mortar fire.

Prisoners reported that their regiment had been ordered to hold this ground at all cost until 15 September 1944, and then head for the German border. Resistance had been from units of the 195th Division and 159th Reserve Infantry Division, the latter believed to be composed of two (2) reserve regiments, the 9th and the 251st, acting as rear guard elements of the 11th Panzer Division.

Approximately one quarter of the four thousand (4,000) enemy were Turkestan and other non-German troops and gave evidence of poor organization. The enemy had been formed into battle groups of about two hundred and fifty (250) men to threaten routes and hold the two main road nets from DOLE to VESOUL and block our advance in the hills north of the swamp area east and north of LUXEUIL-LES-BAINS.

In the VI Corps seizure of the BESANCON area, the 143d RCT captured a fuel dump containing 700,000 litres of 80-90 octane gasoline and 4,000 gallons of alcohol. After the capture of this city, road blocks were set out; one seven kilometers southwest of BESANCON, and one five kilometers west of BESANCON at the junction of the highway and railroad. The 36th Infantry Division was ordered into VI Corps reserve from 081455 September 1944, to 092000 September 1944.

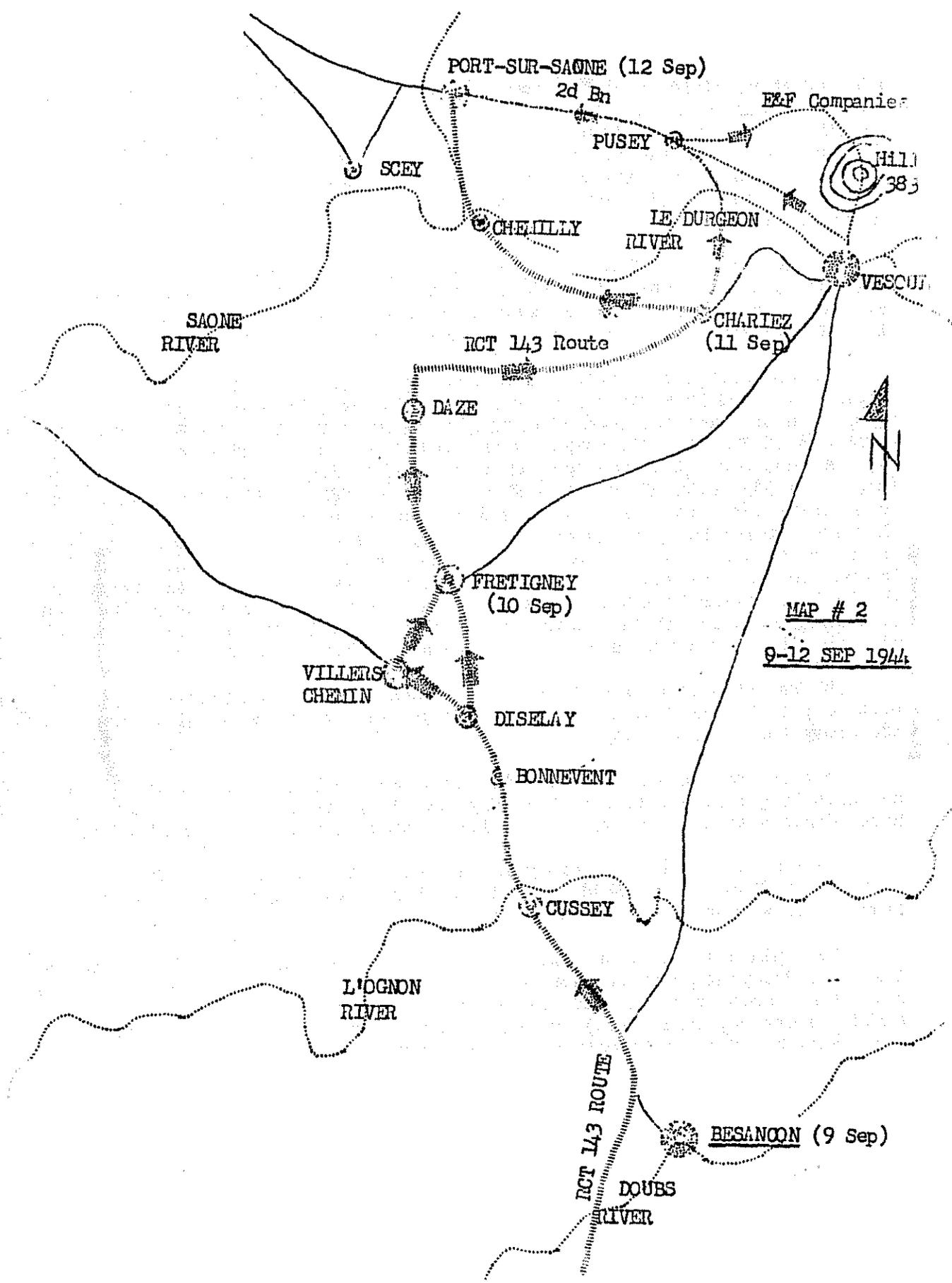
The next VI Corps objective, the town of VESOUL, lay approximately forty-three (43) kilometers to the north. At daylight, 9 September 1944, the 143d Infantry Regiment with the following attachments: Company B, 753d Tank Battalion; Company B, 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion; (reconnaissance company less one platoon) 636th TD Battalion; 93rd Armored Field Artillery Battalion; 133d Field Artillery Battalion; Company C, 111th Engineer Battalion; and Company C, 111th Medical Battalion, moved across the L'OGNON River at CUSSEY-SUR-L'OGNON via BONNEVENT-ET-VELLOREILLE to OISELAY-ET-GRACHAUX to seize and hold at VILLERS-CHEMIN the cross road of the main road net to the northwest from OISELAY-ET-GRACHAUX with reconnaissance elements keeping contact with the Third Division.

At 1700 hours, the Commanding General, 36th Infantry Division, directed that 143d Infantry road block at VILLERS-CHEMIN be relieved by units of the 142d Infantry and that the 143d RCT assemble in the vicinity of FRETIGNEY-ET-VELLOREILLE and move north to VESOUL.

Protected on the north by the dominate terrain feature Hill 383, VESOUL stood astride the LE DURGEON River. A coordinated attack on VESOUL and the surrounding area and the securing of a bridge crossing over the LE DURGEON River, a tributary of the SAONE River, was planned.

While the 2nd Battalion blocked roads leading north out of FRETIGNEY-ET-VELLOREILLE, the remainder of the 143d RCT assembled at FRETIGNEY-ET-VELLOREILLE and proceeded to the northeast by the left road fork to move on the left of the 141st Infantry's route of advance, which was directly toward VESOUL, to seize VESOUL and Hill 383 overlooking the town from the north.

In this move, the night of 10 September 1944, a series of six (6) enemy road blocks was encountered. Units of the 1st Battalion and Cannon Company,



143d Infantry, deployed on the road and on either side of the road, headed the 143d RCT motor column and aggressively smashed enemy resistance. As a result of skillful deployment enroute, fifty (50) Germans were killed, twenty-five (25) prisoners were taken, and seven (7) autos, two (2) ammunition trucks, one (1) bus, and many bicycles were destroyed. In addition, the enemy was forced to abandon five (5) 47mm antitank guns, five (5) 20mm guns, and several heavy machine guns.

The morning of 11 September 1944, the 143d RCT Command Post was established at CHARIEZ, approximately five (5) kilometers west of VESOUL. From this position in the vicinity of CHARIEZ patrols were sent out to south and east and the 143d RCT prepared for a coordinated attack with the 141st RCT on VESOUL.

The 2nd Battalion reinforced by Company B, 636th Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company B, 753rd Tank Battalion; and Cannon Company, 143d Infantry was ordered to advance to seize the town of FUSEY, approximately three thousand (3000) yards northwest of VESOUL. Companies E and F reinforced by one platoon of heavy machine guns were given the special mission of taking the dominate terrain feature, Hill 383 north of VESOUL, and blocking the VESOUL-EPENOUX road. Although these units met little resistance on the move to and occupation of Hill 383, they encountered heavy resistance in holding this objective. Company F, moving up the north and east sides of the hill was attacked from the rear by enemy tanks. This attack was driven off by attached tanks and tank destroyers, and the hill was taken by 120610 September 1944. Company E moved toward the town of VESOUL, cleaned out the lower western slope of Hill 383 and gained contact with the 141st Infantry which moved through that town from the south.

The 1st Battalion (less Company A, attached to the 2nd Battalion), proceeded northwest to PORT-SUR-SAONE to secure the bridge across the SAONE River and deny the enemy that escape route.

In these operations, the 143d RCT units were deployed over a wide area necessitating rigid control of friendly artillery fire, especially at enemy horse-drawn artillery, tanks, and vehicles attempting to escape northward.

The French II Corps at this point had moved into position to the left rear of the left flank of the 143d RCT and assisted in forcing the Germans to continue their withdrawal to the north and east.

The rapid advance of the 143d RCT to the VESOUL area denied the enemy the last good delaying position short of the foothills of the VOSGES mountains. His retreat had been so rapid, his losses from all sources (killed, wounded, captured, desertion, stragglers) so high, and his disorganization so great that it was impossible for him to maintain any worthwhile delay.

The principle forces opposing us formed two main battle groups, SCHWERIN and RICHTER (named for their commanders, General SCHWERIN of the 189th Division and General RICHTER of the 716th Division). Their combined strength was thought to be four thousand (4,000) infantry, two or three battalions of mixed artillery and an unknown number of tanks and self-propelled mounts.

Units of the 1st Battalion which crossed the SAONE River in the vicinity of PORT-SUR-SAONE were counterattacked on three sides by an enemy force, estimated at two hundred (200) men or the strength of two companies. This attack was broken up by attached tanks and tank destroyers and some three hundred (300) prisoners were taken by the 1st Battalion.

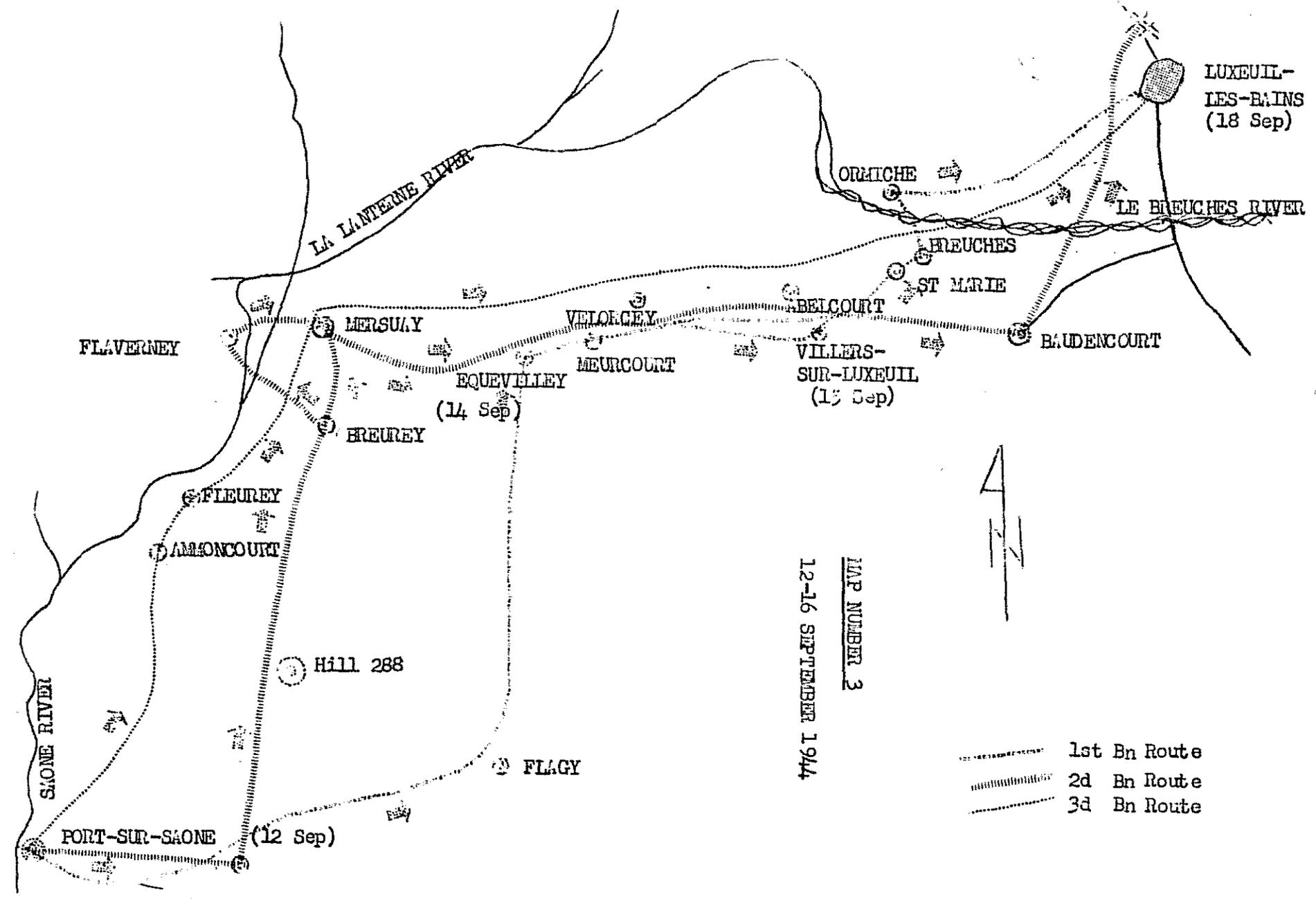
All the battalions now converged on the town of PORT-SUR-SAONE, the 2nd Battalion moving northwest from its position at PUSEY, and the 3rd Battalion with Regimental Headquarters moving from the CHARIEZ area west via PONTCEY and north through CHEMILLY and went into position north of PORT-SUR-SAONE. Orders were immediately issued for the continued pursuit of the enemy to the north and east, toward the town of LUXEUIL-LES-BAINS.

The enemy plan in this sector was to withdraw along the wooded area of the LA LANTERNE River, to allow our troops to advance to the east creating a gap between the 143d RCT and the French II Corps on the left, and then to reoccupy the area vacated by the 143d RCT and attempt to cut our supply line. A captured German map revealed the enemy's general route of withdrawal to be on the line from GRAY, through DAMPIERRE, COMBEAUFONTAINE, ARBECEY, FAVERNEY, BOURGAIGNON, and ST LOUP-SUR-SEMOUSE.

Enemy resistance was characterized by an increasing amount of harassing artillery and self-propelled mount fire, and 20mm fire at fallen tree road blocks. Opposition in the form of small combat groups, were often difficult to extricate from their well prepared positions.

The 36th Infantry Division Operations Instructions issued 130930 September 1944, pointed out the reconnaissance zone of responsibility for the 143d RCT with the 141st RCT on the right. The 143d RCT was ordered to make contact with the 117th Reconnaissance Cavalry, operating on the left flank of VI Corps, and to initiate reconnaissance north and northeast of PORT-SUR-SAONE toward LUXEUIL-LES-BAINS.

In this area the German resistance stiffened on road blocks, his use of artillery increased and he continued to fight a rear guard action using as centers of resistance the small villages between PORT-SUR-SAONE and LUXEUIL-LES-BAINS.



LUXEUIL-
LES-BAINS
(18 Sep)

LA LANTERNE RIVER

LE BREUCHES RIVER

ORMICHE

BREUCHES

ST MARIE

BELCOURT

BAUDENCOURT

FLAVERNEY

MERSUAY

VELOUCEY

VILLERS-
SUR-LUXEUIL
(15 Sep)

MEURCOURT

EQUEVELLEY

(14 Sep)

BREUREY

FLEUREY

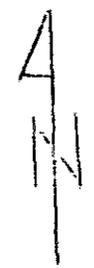
AMONCOURT

Hill 288

FLAGY

SAONE RIVER

PORT-SUR-SAONE (12 Sep)



MAP NUMBER 3
12-16 SEPTEMBER 1944

- 1st Bn Route
- 2d Bn Route
- 3d Bn Route

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The three battalions of the 143d RCT moved in a coordinated pattern, each supporting the other in its zone of action to expedite the mopping up of enemy resistance. The 143d Infantry, closely supported by artillery and tanks, inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy, especially in the early part of this action.

On 13 September 1944, the 2nd Battalion left PORT-SUR-SAONE, moved eastward through BOUGNON, then northward to Hill 288, east of VILLERS-SUR-PORT and to the high ground above FLEUREY-LES-FAVERNEY. It continued east to BREUREY-LES-FAVERNEY to FAVERNEY, then north to MERSUAY through MERCOURT, VELORCEY, ABELCOURT, and BAUDONCOURT, then north following the edge of the woods west of LUXEUIL-LES-BAINS, by-passing that city to cut the highway to the north of the city on 16 September 1944.

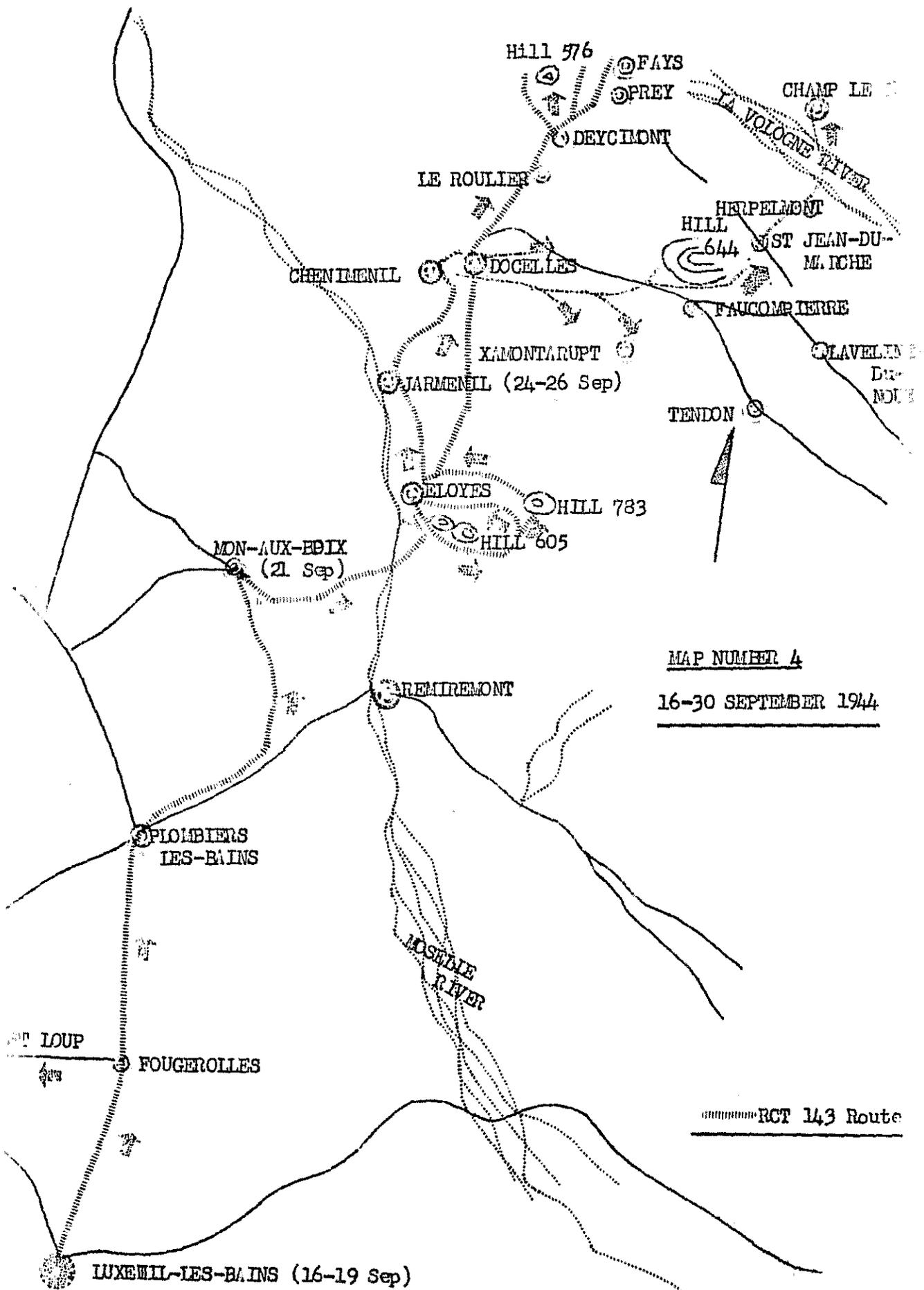
The 1st Battalion, on 13 September 1944, moved east of the vicinity of FLAGY, extended the regimental line eastward toward SAULX-DE-VESOUL to contact the Third Infantry Division. It then moved north through EQUEVILLEY and east through MERCOURT, VELORCEY, ABELCOURT, and ST MARIE-EN-CHAUX. It ran into and smashed stiff resistance along a line extending from ST MARIE-EN-CHAUX north through BREUCHES to ORMOICHE and proceeded on to the vicinity of LUXEUIL-LES-BAINS.

The route of the 3rd Battalion from 13-16 September 1944, was north to VILLERS-SUR-PORT, where it aided the 2nd Battalion in mopping up resistance, then north of AMMONCOURT, following the course of the LA LANTERNE River north-east into MERSUAY, and proceeded to clear the woods running north of the highway to LUXEUIL-LES-BAINS. On 152200 September 1944, the 3rd Battalion, initially in regimental reserve, and in the rear of the 1st Battalion passed through the 1st Battalion and was the first unit to enter LUXEUIL-LES-BAINS, 16 September 1944.

At 170800 September 1944, the 143d RCT reverted to Division reserve with active patrolling to front and flanks to secure the left flank of the 141st RCT moving on FOUGEROLLIES to the north from 16 September to 20 September 1944. At 171530 September 1944, a combat force under Major JOHN C. GENTLE, O-296048, of BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS, consisting of Company F, one section of heavy machine guns, one section of 81mm mortars, one platoon of tanks, one platoon of tank destroyers, one antitank platoon, a wire communication section, and an artillery forward observer, moved to occupy ST LOUP-SUR-SEMOUSE. This force occupied the town with no opposition and established road blocks. A platoon continued on northeast to CORBENAY and established road blocks after dark.

On 201000 September 1944, the 143d RCT made an administrative march by motor to an assembly area in the vicinity of FORET DU HUMONT, northeast of

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MAP NUMBER 4

16-30 SEPTEMBER 1944

..... RCT 143 Route

PLOMBIERES-LES-BAINS to remain until the 141st RCT had crossed the MOSELLE River and had secured the high ground on the east bank.

On 201515 September 1944, while the 142nd RCT was attacking REMIREMONT, the 143d RCT began to cross the MOSELLE River in a column of battalions, the troops wading and hand-carrying their weapons. Only scattered small arms fire opposed the crossing. Having crossed the river, the 3rd Battalion moved to take Hill 783 east of ELOYES, taking this hill at 202130 September 1944. The 1st Battalion moved toward its objective, Hill 605 southeast of ELOYES, while under enemy artillery, mortar and machine gun fire. The enemy, approximating battalion strength, in a series of strong points extending from a cemetery south of ELOYES across the main highway into a group of houses along the southern base of Hill 605; engaged the 1st Battalion units in a fierce fire fight. Company B moved to the east side of the hill, while Company C, initially in reserve, moved to the west side of Hill 605 to relieve Company A which had suffered losses placing Company A's position between Companies B and C. During the night of 21 September 1944, a company of Germans infiltrated from Hill 605 into Company A's positions and at dawn of 22 September 1944, bitter hand to hand fighting raged until the Germans were cleared.

By this time, the bridge under construction by Company A, 111th Engineer Battalion was completed at the ford site and the first vehicles began crossing the MOSELLE River. Cannon Company, 143d Infantry, one of the first to cross, moved up in close support of the 1st Battalion, threw direct fire at enemy troops in the vicinity of the cemetery and southern base of Hill 605.

At 221330 September 1944, Company C attacked the town of ELOYES, with Companies A and B supporting from positions on Hill 605. Bitter house to house fighting continued for five (5) hours before the town was cleared. The 2nd Battalion cleared the base of Hill 605 and moved between Hill 605 and Hill 783 to assist in mopping up resistance, then moved to occupy the high ground north of the town and set out road blocks on the road running to the north. Company C went into position on a hill five hundred (500) yards north of ELOYES on the high ground to the west of the road.

On 23 September 1944, the 1st Battalion was ordered to move up a secondary road north from ELOYES, to seize and clear DOCELLES, and occupy the wooded high ground northeast of DOCELLES. It was reported that DOCELLES was a focal point of enemy troop strength. The enemy was described as dug in on the high ground along a line from southeast of DOCELLES to TENDON. He had increased in the amount of artillery and had an improved supply route. This and the terrain, hilly and covered with thick brush, to heavy forest, helped the enemy to contest every foot of ground before our advance.

The 1st Battalion moving northeast took JARMENIL but met moderate to heavy resistance south of DOCELLES and was ordered to hold its position. On the morning of 24 September 1944, the 1st Battalion south of DOCELLES received a counterattack in force on its right flank and with the help of Company L smashed this enemy thrust.

The 2nd Battalion advanced and seized Hill 500 to the northwest of DOCELLES. An attack of the 1st and 2nd Battalions on this village was repulsed by enemy artillery. On the morning of 26 September 1944, units of the 1st Battalion moving from the south and units of the 2nd Battalion moving from the northwest seized and occupied DOCELLES. The 2nd Battalion continued northward where it made contact with the enemy at LE ROULIER. Contact was made with the 179th Infantry of the 45th Infantry Division on the left and with the 142nd Infantry Regiment on the right.

The 3rd Battalion cleared XAMONTARUPT and FAUCOMPIERRE and seized Hill 644 on 271030 September 1944. The following day all battalions had improved their positions; the 1st Battalion holding the high ground north of the DOCELLES-FAUCOMPIERRE road, the 2nd Battalion holding the high ground northwest of DOCELLES preparatory to an attack on DEYCIMONT, and the 3rd Battalion holding ridge 644.

On 290800 September 1944, the 2nd Battalion attacked from the northwest and cleared DEYCIMONT, while the 1st Battalion cleared the woods of Germans north of that town. Company L with the aid of a tank dozer reduced an enemy road block protecting ST JEAN DU MARCHE and moved into that village. After units of the 141st Infantry Regiment began relief of the 1st and 3rd Battalions, 143d Infantry, these battalions followed behind the 2nd Battalion to seize the high ground north of LEPANGES and west of PREY.

On 30 September 1944, the 1st Battalion held the high ground, Hill 576 at FAING-VAIREL; the 2nd Battalion stood west of LEPANGES on high ground; the 3rd Battalion held high ground west and northwest of FAYS.

With few exceptions, the weather during the last ten days of September was cold and rainy. Because use of armor was restricted and observation was obscured for artillery and tactical use of supporting aircraft, operations were seriously hampered. Hilly and thickly wooded terrain permitted the enemy to capitalize on his use of infiltration tactics. Because the routes of our approach were channelized by the terrain, he was able to make more efficient use of artillery, and more frequent use of mines and booby traps. His position on the high ground improved his observation and his proximity to home bases extended his use of aircraft.

During the month of September, the 143d RCT captured 1,522 prisoners of war. In the movement from the LYON area to the BESANCON area, 1-9 September nine (9) prisoners were taken. From BESANCON to FORT-SUR-SAONE, 9-13 September 1944, 572 prisoners were captured. In the advance from FORT-SUR-SAONE to LUXEUIL-LES-BAINS 13-18 September 1944, 639 were made prisoner. From 18 September to the end of the month, the 143d RCT captured 302 prisoners of war.

These prisoners represented a wide assortment of nationalities, of troop types and of age groups. There were Russian Laborers (OSI Battalion), Cossack combat groups, Turkestan troops, Polish laborers, and French Fascists (Maison Francaise). Captured Germans represented marines, coast artillery men, Luft waffe troops, and regular infantrymen. Age variation ran from fifteen year boys to men in their late forties.

At the end of September, the 143d RCT was pushing slowly but consistent to the north and east.


DOUGLAS M. BOYD
Captain, 143d Infantry
Adjutant

BATTALION COMMANDERS 1 to 30 SEPTEMBER 1944

First Battalion

1 Sep to 25 Sep : Lt Col DAVID M. FRAZIOR 0-222230 ESF Houston, Texas
25 Sep to 30 Sep: Major LOUIS H. PESSIAC 0-23494 ESF Mobile, Alabama

Second Battalion

1 Sep to 11 Sep : Lt Col CHARLES J. DENHOLM 0-21293 ESF Poughkeepsie, N.Y.
12 Sep to 15 Sep: Lt Col VICTOR E. SINCLAIR 0-20795 ESF Not available
16 Sep to 30 Sep: Lt Col CHARLES J. DENHOLM 0-21293 ESF Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Third Battalion

1 Sep to 30 Sep : Major THEODORE H. ANDREWS 0-365318 ESF Caldwell, Texas

COMPANY COMMANDERS 1 to 30 SEPTEMBER 1944

Headquarters Company

1 Sep to 7 Sep : 1st Lt JOE F. PRESNALL 0-423492 ESF Pollok, Texas
8 Sep to 30 Sep: Capt RUFUS J. CLEGHORN 0-411677 ESF Waco, Texas

Service Company

1 Sep to 30 Sep: Capt JOE P. PARISH 0-406965 ESF Huntsville, Texas

Antitank Company

1 Sep to 30 Sep: Capt HARRY C. STAKES 0-407590 ESF Huntsville, Texas

Cannon Company

1 Sep to 30 Sep: Capt WILEY W. STEM 0-406991 ESF Waco, Texas

Medical Detachment

1 Sep to 30 Sep: Major JOEL B. CUNNINGHAM 0-345134 ESF Camden, N. J.

Headquarters Company 1st Battalion

1 Sep to 30 Sep: Capt RICHARD H. BURRAGE 0-407025 ESF Waco, Texas

Company A

1 Sep to 15 Sep : Capt RICHARD W. DASHNER 0-422625 ESF Waco, Texas
16 Sep to 23 Sep: Capt HENRY (NMI) KAHN 0-1299245 ESF Allentown, Pa.
24 Sep to 24 Sep: 1st Lt IVAN M. KIR 0-337485 ESF Waco, Texas
25 Sep to 30 Sep: Capt RICHARD W. DASHNER 0-422625 ESF Waco, Texas

Company B

1 Sep to 30 Sep : Capt JOSEPH G. DOBBIN 0-1292149 ESF Marinette, Wis.

Company C

1 Sep to 30 Sep : Capt ALLEN E. SIMMONS 0-1293664 ESF Belfast, Maine

Company D

1 Sep to 30 Sep : Capt ROY D. GOAD 0-407196 ESF Temple, Texas

Headquarters Company 2nd Battalion

1 Sep to 1 Sep : 1st Lt JAMES E. ROBERSON 0-1703000 ESF Hillsboro, Texas
2 Sep to 30 Sep : Capt WENDELL C. PHILLIPPI 0-1288114 ESF Indianapolis, Ind.

Company E

1 Sep to 30 Sep : 1st Lt JOHN R. JOHNSTON 0-1305782 ESF Montebello, Calif.

Company F

1 Sep to 30 Sep : Capt JOSEPH C. DINE 0-418284 ESF Worcester, Mass.

Company G

1 Sep to 14 Sep : Capt DAN L. HENRY 0-317098 ESF Macon, Georgia
15 Sep to 30 Sep: Capt JAMES R. GAUNTT 0-407587 ESF Waco, Texas

Company H

1 Sep to 15 Sep : Capt DAVID J. HANRAHAN 0-1289077 ESF Bronx, New York
16 Sep to 30 Sep: 1st Lt WALTER L. HUNN 0-482727 ESF Chillicothe, Ohio

Headquarters Company 3rd Battalion

1 Sep to 30 Sep : 1st Lt MARTIN L. BALL, JR. O-1289026 ESF Nashville, Tenn.

Company I

1 Sep to 6 Sep : 1st Lt HAROLD R. HANCOCK O-1294470 ESF Dallas, Texas

7 Sep to 30 Sep : 1st Lt EDWARD R. LEWITZ O-1306863 ESF St Louis, Mo.

Company K

1 Sep to 6 Sep : 1st Lt EDWARD R. LEWITZ O-1306863 ESF St Louis, Mo.

7 Sep to 30 Sep : Capt FRANK A. MERIGOLD O-411346 ESF Chicago, Ill.

Company L

1 Sep to 30 Sep : Capt ZERK O. ROBERTSON O-2055839 ESF Fortol, Texas

Company M

1 Sep to 30 Sep : Capt ROBERT (NMI) HAND O-1289075 ESF Seattle, Wash.