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HISTORY OF COMPANY "F", 141ST INFANTRY

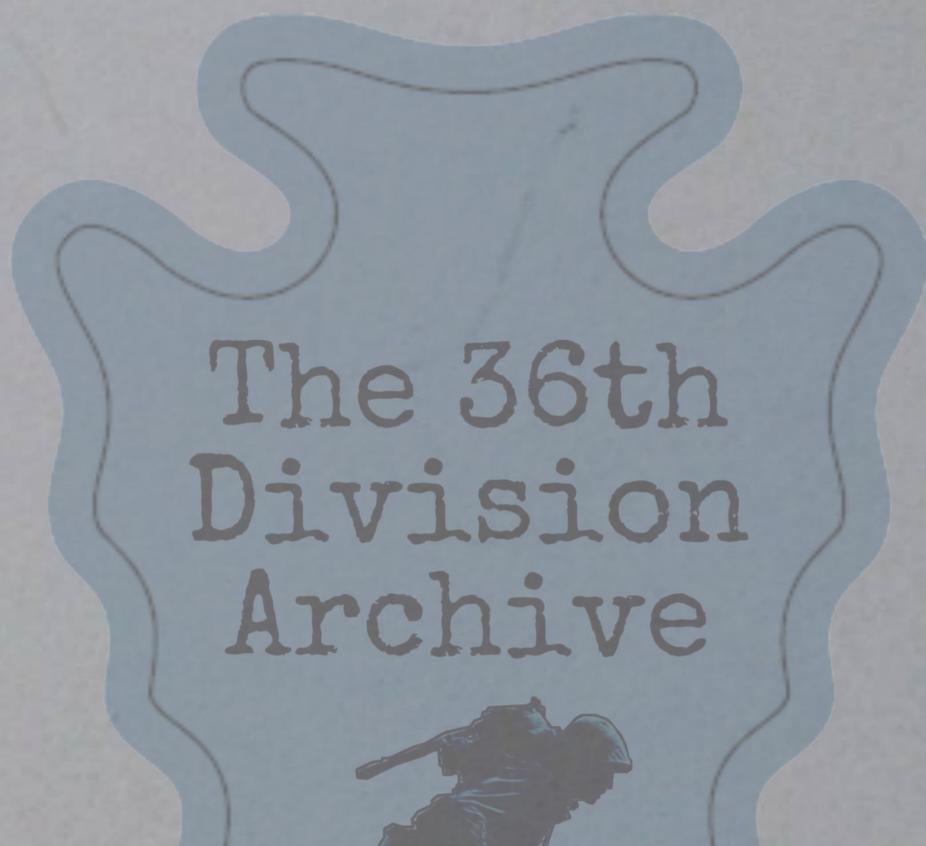
36TH INFANTRY DIVISION

FOR

THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY
1944

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ONE HUNDRE D FORTY FIRST INFANTRY RECIMENT, RIFLE A. P. O. # 36

COMPANY "F"

U. S. ARMY

HISTORY OF COMPANY "F", 141ST INFANTRY FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 1944

- PROLOGGE TO THE NARRATIVE FOR FEBRUARY -

In order to gain a true picture for the narrative it is necessary to know the attitude, temperment and the mood of the soldier of this organization.

The condition and the temperment of the Company at the begining of February was such that it reflected the catastrophe that the 36th Division had just gone through. To a new-comer in the Company it was evident that something very unusual had just happened. After listening to the conversation for a time all the grim horrifing details of that two day slaughter were expressed.

The single outstanding topic of conversation was the crossing. Every man feared another attempt to cross with a similar plan and it was not until a plan was sent down which seemed reasonable that the men regained confidence in their commanders and their staff.

Two predominate reasons why the Company as a unit did not reach the far bank were expressed by even the lowest ranking private. First, the terrain along the bank and the condition of the river itself remained a deep dark secret until too late. Platoon leaders had no idea what type of banks they had to go down or the swiftness of the river they had to cross. Secondly, squad and platoon leaders had little chance to know their men. Sixty percent of the Company had less than ten days in a combat organization. Eighty-five men had only six training days with their unit — twenty of the men had none. In the final analysis this unability to even recognize their own men proved a large factor in depleting the effective man power of the Company.

Every NCO expressed the desire to have the following mistakes corrected in any similar mission we may have in the future. First and foremost - Engineers with the "guts" to stay with us. Most of the Engineer guides deserted the boat commanders in the heavy barrage that we had to go through. Some did not know the route to be taken when the tape was severed that marked the path. Very few ever reached the water edge and actually supervised the placing of the boats in the water.



Due to this incompetant Engineer personnel and poor supervision seven boats were sunk before they left the shore. Four boats were overturned when the current swept them against cables and ropes which were strung across the river for a boat bridge the night before. Only one boat crossed the river from this Company out of fifteen. The other three were knocked out by Artiltery fire on the road to the river. These seven boats which sunk before been warned that the bank was high and steep. Due to a combination of the above difficulties, the courage of our men and the company Commander were able to affect an immediate reorganization of about sixty percent of the Company.

The Company was pulled back to Hill 102 and gug in on the defensive. There Captain Barnett joined and took command of the unit. A few days later three replacement officers, Lts. Rice, Schroeder and Thayer were assigned. These four with Lts. Bramley and McFadden brought the Company back to strength on officers, which now brings us to the physical and mental condition of the organization as of February 1st.



- HISTORY OF COMPANY "F", 141ST INFANTRY FOR FEBRUARY 1944-

The month of February started off mildly with the Company on "Hill 102", dug in and "sweating out" another attempt to cross the Rapido River. Two plans were advanced but were never attempted, possibly because we were relieved on the 5th of February. In those first six days of February enemy artillery fell intermintently throughout the area causing fourteen casualties.

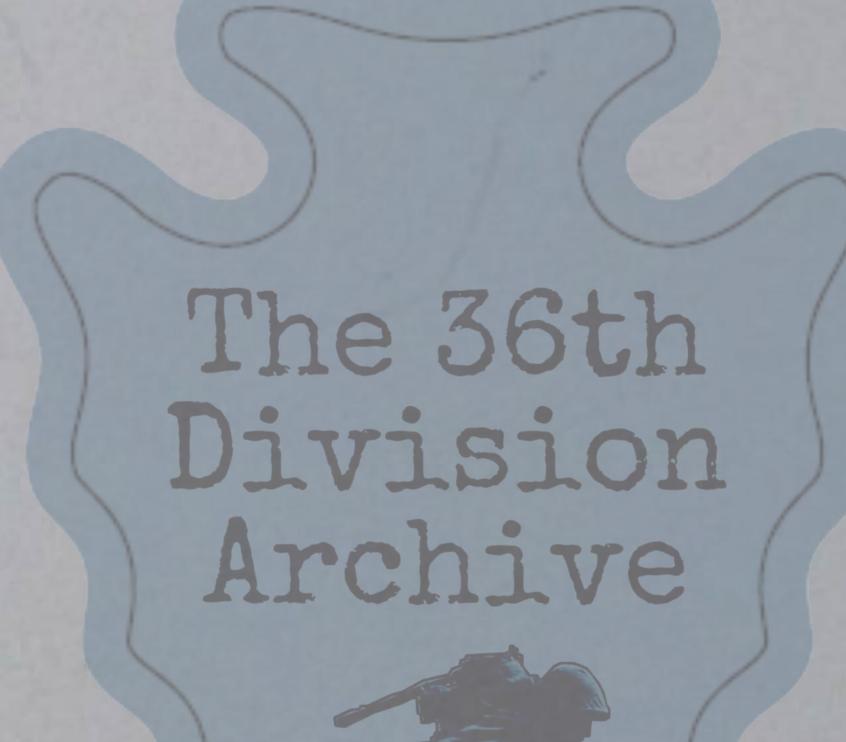
On the night of February 1st and 2nd "F" Company patrols evacuated fifty-the Italians from homes in "No Mans Land". Two of them, aged and bed-ridden, had to be evacuated on stretchers and the next might a mother and her three day old baby were carried back to safety by members of this organization.

We arrived early on the sixth of February at our bivouac area near San Vittore. During our two days and one night there we devoted our time to digging fighting holes and brushing up on some weak technical points and wishing we could get a bath. On the night of the eighth of February at 2130 Hours we received orders to be on the road headed North at 2200 Hours. The Company Commander received no further instructions as to direction or mission until they hit the road. There he was told to proceed toward San Michelle. Later on that night he was informed that we were going to Cairo.

The march to Cairo was a long, hard, tiresome journey. The road was wet and slippery with inches of mud to plow through. Walking through the rain for hours drenched every ones equipment and bed rolls became heavier with every step. The march was finally finished with a temporary loss of only five men due to trench feet and fatigue.

Arriving at the base of a mountain about a mile north of Cairo, we were instructed to take up all around defensive positions, and that holes were already dug and all we had to do was to find them and then get some rest. After stumbling around on that steep mountain side looking for their positions most leaders fo und holes for their men after dawn had arrived.

With a tightning of the lips the men settled down in their wet clothing and bedding, looked at the sky and tried to outguess fate on the o tcome of these new developements. At 1530 Hours we were notified that we would be moving out about dark. So, stiff, sore and wet, we selected either a "K" or a "D" ration and tried to satisfy our hunger.



At 1800 Hours on the ninth of February we started going up. At 2330 Hours we arrived at the top exhausted from the long, steep and slippery climb. By mid-night the relief of that Company of the 34th Division was completed. Mud, water and the chills couldn't keep one from sleeping that night. Those who were on duty were still soberly thinking of the future.

The morning of the 10th dawned and men looked around them interested in what they could see. First looking to the left and at about the same level, one could see the famed Benedictine Monestary which overlooked the entire valley, including the positions which we held. Many times during our stay on "Hill 706" Jerry directed artillery fire and harrassed us with small arms fire from that famous spot. Next one looked to the front and there 350 yards away Jerry waited just as patiently as we, on a nice long ridge with a steep open side toward us. If one looked to his rear he could see the whole valley behind him, all the way from San Angelo in the South to Cairo on the North edge of the valley. To the West was snow capped Mt. Caroll dominating our whole rear area.

The day of the 10th was spent in hunting for "C" rations among the debris of the 34th Division, checking positions and perfecting our holes. The night, like the day, was taken up with dodging the ever-present artillery and mortar fire. In addition there were ration and water details, patrols, listening posts, outposts and 50% night alerts to keep most men from gaining enough rest to sustain them for very long.

The night of the 10th was also our most uncomfortable one, for every man in this organization was again drenched in a heavy down pour and melting snow. The night was filled with noises; chattering teeth and the steady dripping of water into the already half filled holes predominated. After bedding and clothing were brought to the saturation point many men gave up bailing and tried to get what rest they could.

The day of the 11th was spent in emptying holes, drying blankets and wishing for a warm day. That night was another to live forever in the memories of every man up there. Wet and without a warm period of rest either day or night for 93 hours, Jerry threw the largest barrage ever experienced by this unit. Every known enemy high angle of fire weapon took part in that barrage. Ammunition was neither poor in quality nor short in quantity. Jerry had no favorites that morning, although many times it seemed in the final count of casualties that he was most interested in the first paltoon, Company headquarters and the mortar section. Our losses wereheavy for a dug in defensive position.



Some of the holes had direct hits and many had close ones. At the end of the barrage at 0620 Hours our casualties were as follows: Killed in action - First Sergeant Fanto and Communication Sergeant Weber and Privates First Class Kirk, Hernandez and Gaffke. Wounded in action were O Lieutenant Rice, Privates First Class Carter, DeSantis, Clark, and Parris and Privates Bolek, Dougherty, Siegel, Lojeski, Dye and Dixon.

During and following the barrage the unit on our left repulsed an enemy counter-attack and every man felt better when, the next day a truce was called, and it was announced that Jerry had an estimated six hundred casualties of thich one hundred seventy five were killed.

During the barrage snipers penitrated our lines and constantly harrassed every man who left his hole. All men took a renewed interest in deepening their holes and making themselves more comfortable. Later in the day our sniper trouble was terminated with a couple of well placed grenades. Jerry still threw enough artillery and mortar fire to keep every one close to his hole. The day grew warmer and it looked as if the addage that "It's always darkest before the dawn", was to come true again.

The 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th were just routine days with an occassional snow flurry to whitten the mountain. The dead were removed b stretcher teams and the Company settled down to its long, dark, watchful nights. Artillery still took its toll and every day at least two new names were added to the roll of men hit with whell fragments.

Rumors started curculating about a relief for the command. Many of these had a very good basis; others were just wistful thinking. We received information many times about destroying Cassino and the monestary, both by artillery and bombardment. Numerous instructions were passed along about different plans to push through us and around us, but still we just sat and took it. Every day a few more casualties were added to the ever growing total.

The morning of the 17th dawned bright and every man had a ring side seat at the bombing of the Abby. Each man felt relieved new that Jerry couldn't observe his mortar and artillery fire.

Most members of this organization felt that it should have been destroyed sooner, because of its excellence as an observation post.

The next unusual event was the counter attack on our left flank, which was stopped by a squad of snipers from the second battalion, and heavy supporting fire from British units on the hill east of us.

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The 23rd had the monotony broken by the capture of two young Germans who had become lost on their way to their listening post. When captured they had their arms full of American equipment. Upon being questioned they told us they were on their way back to their own lines after having become lost.

As February drew to a close each and every man was sweating out a relief. On the 25th we received information that the French would relieve us that night. No one put any faith in this official information because of the many past disappointments. At 1230 Hours a French officer was brought up to look our positions over. Every one then dared believe that it was finally going to happen. Late in the afternoon the French officer returned and brought his 60 MM mortars with him. How could andy one now doubt that we would soon have a warm, kitchen prepared meal? The time was set at about mid-night and every one made preparations so nothing would slow down the mechanies of being relieved. Just after sunset, dark gloom settled over the command; the French were needed elsewhere and the men took it calmly, but their heavy silence indicated their trend of thought.

The next morning, the 27th, started out wet and meeary with every one convinced we would be there for some time. By noon we were informed that the 88th Division would relieve us about midnight. Needless to say we were not easily convinced this time.

Mid-night came and with tit the Company who was to relieve us. The relief was without event except for an enemy patrol which started to operate in front of our listening post about the time we were being relieved.

The morning of the 28th found the Company loading up in trucks for a thirty-eight mile trip to the rear. It still seemed unreal to most men and their thoughts constantly returned to those friends which they had left behing. Their expressions were not happy ones for such a festive occassion, for most men believed that their stya in the rear would be a short one.

Additional statistics for the month are as follows:

	9
Number of hot prepared meals	26\frac{1}{5}
Number of hot prepared meals.  Number of days in contact with enemy.	39
Number of days in contact with ending. Number of casualties	11
Number of casualties	28
W.I.A Small Arms	32%
Small Arms	
The of Duty	ensive
mane of Duty	

Type of Duty ..........