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ON THE WAY

The Story of the 91st Division Artillery

ON THE WAY!

THE STORY OF THE 91ST DIVISION ARTILLERY

By ROY L. MOSKOP

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INTRODUCTION

This is the story of an artillery outfit in World War II. Most of it had to be written after that war was over and the outfit scattered over the land. It very likely has as many "bugs" in it as the post-war auto.

Only two sources of information were available from which to piece this story together. One was the official history of the 91st Division Artillery which bristled with facts and figures, but told little about men and their lives. Whatever was missing, I tried to supply from my memory.

This rather unhistorical combination probably gave birth to statements to which former members of the outfit will take violent exception. However, I believe something more than just a factual and chronological recapitulation of dates, places, and happenings has resulted from this experiment.

Names of individual members of the outfit have been conscientiously avoided. Deeds of heroism noteworthy of mention were too numerous to tell them all. The official history, in its brisk style, carries only casual mention of some. Then, too, in its effort to fix responsibility, the official record tends to mention the names of officers more frequently than those of enlisted men. With only meager evidence to substantiate a few individual accomplishments, it seemed best to avoid them entirely.

The story should not lack for them. It is the chronicle of the artillery of the 91st Division and by being just that, it also becomes the biography of *every* man who was a member.

Instead of men, the characters of this story are the batteries and battalions which coordinated the efforts of their members into a single purpose and result. To the outsider, these units may seem puzzingly identical, but to the 91st artillerymen, they each have as unique a personality as the men who led them and fought under their colors.

Looking at a war through the eyes of the artillery is an unusual point of view. It amounts to something like writing up a football game from the angle of the blocking back rather than the ball-carrier.

However, the purpose of this story is to stimulate the memories of those who lived it. If, when turning these pages, the old 91st artillerymen can relive the episodes recorded here, this book will have accomplished its end.

R.L.M.

March 31, 1947

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to express my gratitude to Homer Lee Sutton, who, as the principal author of the official history, provided the framework on which this story was built; and to Master Sergeant Louis J. Hare whose masterful sketches and cartoons add flavor and spice which could never be captured by words alone.

With but few exceptions, all photographs in this book were snapped by members of the Division Artillery with whatever meager photographic equipment they could carry with them. In each instance, the photograph's owner is listed in the cutline. Thanks go to all those who donated these revealing illustrations of history in the making.

R.L.M.

This book can only be dedicated to those members of the 91st Division Artillery who paid for the Victory with their lives.

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BRIGADIER GENERAL RALPH HOSPITAL

Commanding General

91st Infantry Division Artillery

CHAPTER I

. . . THE BEGINNING was a gradual affair. Officially, the Division Artillery did not come into being until the activation ceremony of the 91st Infantry Division on August 15, 1942. Actually, the handful of officers and men who, as the cadre, stood at rigid attention during the ceremony already had been at work a month. It was work they would continue for two more months until the fillers—civilians wearing new uniforms that smelled of mothballs—tumbled out of trains and moved by what they thought was marching into sections and batteries and battalions. It was then the whole works could first be recognized as a Division Artillery, but not without considerable imagination on the part of the observer.

Camp White existed more in name than fact. The cadre, coming to build a new unit, found they had to start with the camp. While officers of all ranks hauled stones and built paths and roads, master sergeants walked guard and pulled K. P.

The site of the camp was a small patch of rocks and weeds called the Agate Desert jammed in the midst of a tired-looking portion of Oregon's Cascade Mountain. Several miles to the east was one tooth-like, snow-capped peak that was erroneously called Mount Pitt—maps and atlases called it Mount McLoughlin.

Medford—the town just a few miles down the road—had a fair, pre-war reputation as a center for lumbering and pear-raising. After the coming of Camp White, it was remembered by many a soldier and his wife chiefly for its miles of streets walked, and its hundreds of doorbells pushed in search of rooms that existed only in small numbers and at large prices. Medford and Camp White provided mutual headaches for each other.

Major General Charles H. Gerhardt, the division commander, placed unusual emphasis on physical training and endurance in the cadre's training program during the rest of the summer and the early fall. Which, in turn, gave birth to two activities that since have become pillars of the division's tradition—the 91-mile march and the Decathelon!

On September 7th, every man present for duty who was unable to conceal the fact that he possessed two legs, harnessed his pack on his back and joined the long columns that wound their way out of camp and disappeared into the hills. For six days they tramped over and around these hills, marching up and down crude lumbering trails in the mornings, setting up camp in the afternoons in which they bivouacked all night. It was the 12th of September when the division's name had been fulfilled—the 91 miles had been covered—and the footsore soldiers half-heartedly paraded through Medford and returned to Camp White. A sample comment: "If this had been the 104th Division, I'd have never made it."

Although Camp White was short on many things—it was long on space. Miles of the stuff yawned between pistol ranges, rifle ranges, bayonet courses, obstacle courses, grenade-throwing ranges, and—the Rogue River! Of such was the Decathelon. The ancient Greeks, who are now safely out of harm's way, can be blamed for concocting this arrangement whereby a set of contestants compete in a series of ten different athletic events, the winner being the one with the highest total score from all ten. The military counterpart of the Greek's Decathelon was designed to test certain basic military skills as well as physical stamina. It did.

Each man (as was the case in the 91-mile march, the Decathelon was open to all ranks—no one escaped) wore the regulation field equipment: pack, rifle, leggins, helmet, canteen—the works. He shot a clip of pistol ammunition, was scored, then dashed away to the rifle range perhaps a mile away—perhaps more. There he blasted a clip of rifle rounds, was scored, and hiked off to still another event. As the day unfolded, he shot .22's at aerial targets; ran a hundred yard dash breathing through a gas mask; tripped, stumbled and waded through an obstacle course that culminated in a vertical climb up a fifteen foot rope; threw (and generally missed) dummy grenades through a frame propped high in the air; slithered through a maze of barbed wire; and finally—don't forget he's still carrying all of his field equipment—swam across the swift-currented, icy-cold Rogue River. He was scored not only on how well he did in each event, but also on the time it took him to complete the whole works. And should his score not come up to standard—he faced the prospect of doing it all over again. The Decathelon was not popular.

Then came the fillers. Two thousand of them poured into Camp White from all parts of the country. Clerks and students, insurance salesmen and farmers, mechanics and artists, fresh from the "friends and neighbors" who sent them, wearily dumped blue barracks bags of yet unworn uniforms inside dust-colored barracks and went to bed. When they woke up the next morning, they were in the artillery.

Their first lessons were impressive ones that would last all their lives. First of all, they discovered they were in *batteries*—a privilege offered to no other branch of the service. The infantry, the engineers, the quartermaster, the medics, all had to put up with *companies*, a civilian-sounding term, while the cavalry — like the Boy Scouts — went around in *troops*. They wore a distinctive color braid in their caps—not a quiet blue or a flashy yellow—but a good, solid *red!* They were responsible for the largest weapons in the division, yet they were a minority—a unique minority. They

were *artillerymen!* And although these differences were confusing at first, they later became a source of pride and morale that has yet to die.

The Division Artillery consisted of five units. Three were battalions of 105-mm howitzers—fast firing, light artillery that would pump out thousands of shells blasting obstacles directly in front of the advancing infantry. Each of the three battalions was assigned the mission of supporting one of the division's infantry regiments. This "marriage" was permanent and scrupulously observed throughout training and combat. The 916th FA were the big guns for the 361st Inf Regt. The 346th FA took excellent care of the 362nd Inf Regt. And stories and publicity given to the feats of the 363rd Inf Regt. often overlooked the fact that the 347th FA fought and fired every inch of the way with them.

The 348th FA was a lone battalion of 155 mm howitzers—the "Sunday punch" of the division. Assigned the mission of general support of all regiments, their great weapons were to cover the entire division sector reaching out beyond the range of the "lights" to silence enemy artillery as well as to lend a helping hand to the 105s in cracking some particularly tough opposition.

The fifth unit was the Headquarters Battery of the Division Artillery. Besides housing all of the headquarters personnel, its job was to tie the four battalions together with survey and communication so that when necessary, all battalions could act as a single force. A brigadier general stood at the head of all of the division's artillery. As his executive officer, he had a full colonel who—in turn—headed up a conventionally organized staff.

Now to pursue this organization still farther, the breakdown of any of the battalions would reveal five batteries. Three were firing batteries, equipped with four howitzers each, and designated as A, B, and C. A headquarters battery—and so designated—performed the same functions for the battalion as did the Division Artillery Headquarters Battery for the Division Artillery. Finally, a service battery—the battalion's fifth member—provided the entire battalion with supplies, ammunition, and maintenance. Dealing in very round numbers, there were roughly 100 men in a battery—500 in the battalion.

* * *

It was late fall—November—when they tackled basic training. And Oregon checked them a cinch—the weather. Dingy clouds moved in and stayed all winter perpetually vomiting the dirtiest of weather. The brick-like ground that had baked all summer melted with the first rain into an all-embracing quagmire which depreciated with succeeding rains into a sea of goo. Night unnecessarily overlapped day so that two hours of training were completed before the pitch darkness gave way to the dull gray that passed for morning. More often than not, the clouds, moving in for a closer look-see at their handiwork, squatted right along the ground and the exact line where thick fog became thin mud was hard to determine. Latrine comedians quipped about "webbed feet," "Swamp White," and "amphibious training."

Basic training, itself, was uneventful. Private Hargrove, *Yank's* Sad Sack, and countless recruit stories have made its details known to all. The Division Artillery's was not much different. Possibly they trudged through theirs with more Dubbing on their shoes than similar units elsewhere . . . and the nailing open of barrack's windows to insure good ventilation probably was unique. But on the whole, and excluding the weather, things were conducted with a minimum of SNAFU and infrequent visitors from the War Department found things satisfactory. *Time* magazine gave passing note to the Division's physical training methods in a small write-up and observed that things were tough at Camp White. They were.

It wasn't really until March of the following Spring that the artillery came into its own. Basic training had turned the civilians into soldiers—now the soldiers would polish up on the business of being artillerymen. So they went to Yakima.

On the 16th of March, the three light battalions and Headquarters Battery borrowed trucks from the 348th FA, loaded up, checked out of Camp White, and headed north. For three days, the 348th piddled around the area, sweeping out barracks, raking out incinerators, sniffing in grease traps, and, in general, fixing up the camp to fool people into thinking that no one had ever occupied it before. On the 19th of March, they loaded equipment and personnel onto two trains and chugged north. Trains and trucks arrived in Yakima, Washington on the 20th. There, equipment was unloaded, unpacked, and the men moved into a tent camp several miles outside of town.

This was the IV Corps Firing Center. The land was of little practical value for anything except artillery, and for artillery it was near perfect. The rolling, rock-and-sage hills provided terrain that tested the artilleryman, but did not frustrate him. Howitzer positions, observation, ammunition, and time were plentiful—distracting influences, nil. At the end of this period of training, the battalions were never better. The bulk of the lessons of artillery had been learned. The rest of their training prior to combat would be devoted to coordination of their artillery skills with infantry maneuvers.

The entire Yakima training was pointed towards the taking of the Army Ground Forces Firing Tests—tests that placed batteries, battalions, and the Division Artillery in simulated battle conditions with a specific mission to perform. Units were graded on both time and effectiveness. Scores

chalked up by these batteries, battalions, and the artillery as a whole, although not perfect, were of such standards as to earn the 91st Division Artillery a high reputation among contemporary outfits.

And to enhance further this artilleryman's paradise was the city of Yakima itself. Much larger than Medford, Yakima had no large military post nearby and so concentrated all of its hospitality on the relatively small numbers of artillerymen and their families. The influx of the military was not great enough to reach the city's saturation point—and the two got along famously. Of all the towns visited by the Division Artillery, Yakima polls more happy memories than any other.

As the Division Artillery matured, it became pregnant and while in Yakima, gave birth to a cadre that was later to grow into the 70th Division Artillery. This gave many individuals an opportunity for rapid advancement. Many of those who joined the new cadre received promotions as did those who moved up to occupy the vacancies left by the cadremen. Some of the men who stood at attention at the Division's activation ceremony in August of 1942 were now members of this new cadre and faced the prospect of doing it all over again.

All units returned to Camp White by truck. The route led through the colorful and spectacular Columbia River Valley—past the majestic heights of Mount Adams and Mount Hood. Camp White itself, as if to welcome them, turned off the rain and contented itself with but a cloudy day as the trucks roared past a welcoming band and pulled into the familiar motor parks. It was May 5, 1943. And the round trip to Yakima had a mounted to 1068 miles.

Nor was the trip without repercussions now that the artillery had lost its "freedom" and had returned to the role of a mere part of a larger unit. One day, a large group of artillerymen was called upon to give the division yell of "Powder River." The rebellious redlegs responded with a loud and resounding "YAAAkimaaaw!"

The coordination of infantry and artillery began

A 105, poised and ready to cut loose

Photo by Clarence Quirk

Mess kit wash line—Bend Maneuvers

immediately. First, batteries of artillery worked with battalions of infantry; then, battalions of artillery with regiments of infantry. Finally, this phase of training culminated in the never-to-be-forgotten D-Series of maneuvers in which the division operated for the first time as a complete unit.

On the 21st of June, the Division Artillery left the relative comforts of their barracks to bivouac in the fir forests that surrounded the camp. These were to be the maneuver grounds. Obligingly, the weather, which had been waiting in ambush, cut loose with both barrels and rained as it had never rained before. The overtaxed and rutted logging trails that made up the road net took over the mission of draining the countryside and accordingly became roaring torrents in assorted sizes. Trucks—dual tires and four or six-wheel drive notwithstanding—burrowed in the muck and squatted on their haunches refusing to move in any direction except downward. Night came and the necessity for blackout added insult to injury. Vehicles had to be winched from tree to tree. Gun positions had to be simulated in forests as thick as a hairbrush. Conditions were as close to impossible as conditions can get and still be licked.

One can never think of the D-Series without simultaneously muttering "Obenchain." The Obenchain Road was a pair of generally parallel wheel tracks that the division engineers developed from an abandoned logging trail that served as the sole axis of communication for several of the maneuver problems. In rain it was slick and boggy. In dry weather it was rough and rocky. But most of the time it was slick and boggy. If they did nothing else, the D-Series severely tested the truck driver's skill, patience, and vocabulary.

By the 10th of July, all problems were completed and Major General Alexander M. Patch—the commanding general of the IV Corps—commended the entire division on its achievement in spite of the unforeseen obstacles that made tough sledding out of the easiest of problems. In most of the problems, one combat team opposed the remainder of the division in the mock battles that were umpired by officers and men of the 104th Infantry Division.

Returning to Camp White, the artillery—along with the rest of the division—brushed up on rough spots in the training that were brought to light by the D-Series and then made preparations for the coming corps maneuvers that were to be held around Bend, Oregon in the fall. At the same time, personnel was dispatched to umpire a similar D-Series for the 96th Division in the Bend area.

Although Camp White's own particular area was singularly unimpressive, it lay adjacent to one of the scenic masterpieces of North America—Crater Lake. Because of the lake's high altitude it was not until late summer that snow-bound highways could be cleared sufficiently and the traveler could feast his eyes on the cool, impassive beauty of this incredible prank of nature. On the week end of the 24th and 25th of August, all battalions and the Headquarters Battery made motor marches to see this volcano-turned-lake, bivouacking overnight on the shores of Diamond Lake, a lesser-known, but nonetheless emphatic, argument for Oregon's charm. And for two days, the army and the war seemed very unimportant, indeed.

Although it wasn't known at the time, when the truck columns turned onto the highway that speared through the center of Camp White and led to the Bend Maneuver Area, it was to be for the last time. On September 3, 1943, the Division Artillery left Camp White never to return. The 170-mile trip to Bend was completed the same day, all units bedding down for the night—and for several nights to come—in the vicinity of a dud volcano called Lava Butte.

Oregon is a paradoxical state. It seemed to house nothing but extremes within its borders—and the red-legs of the 91st tasted a little of everything. They had simmered through a summer and soaked through a winter in the shoddy Agate Desert. They had maneuvered through tall, majestic, yet almost impassable forests of Douglas Firs. They had stood in snow banks in the middle of Indian Summer and marveled at Crater Lake. They had admired the cool, snowcapped peaks of Mt. Hood, Mt. Pitt, and the three Sisters. Now they were being introduced to the vast Central Oregon Desert—a high, flat plateau studded with shapeless masses miscalled "buttes."

The entire area, at one time, had been an active volcanic region and many of the so-called "buttes" were burned out volcanoes. Some, like Lava Butte and Black Butte, still possessed the almost perfect, cone-like symmetry of the model volcano. But the volcanic activity had covered the entire region with a layer of fine volcanic dust that became the scourge of the maneuvers. A single truck moving down an unpaved (i.e., almost any) road raised a

cloud of dust that choked all the occupants and looked liked a thunderhead. Two vehicles moving down the same road began to plough the roadway into deep wheeltracks separated by dune-like ridges. A whole column would leave a road in such shape that any further traffic would bog down in bottomless drifts of dust. The drivers began to think kindly of the "good old Obenchain."

In the miles of space—from the lumber-and-resort town of Bend westward to the little village of Burns; from the Ponderosa Pine forests around Sisters southward to the dried up expanses of Silver Lake and the amazing formation of Fort Rock—IV Corps had enough sage-covered terrain to maneuver its three divisions (the 91st, 96th, and the 104th) plus attached corps troops over entirely new ground for each problem. Population statistics within this desert narrowly escaped being zero. Sample communities: the one-family town of Wagontire and the one-man town of Milikin.

There were eight problems in all—each division taking its turn to stand off the other two. Problems included many different kinds of combat: meeting engagements where two forces collide unexpectedly, the seige of a well prepared and heavily fortified position, the establishment of a bridgehead across a sizeable river, and so on through the list of military probabilities. Mostly, these varied problems were to train the commanders in the employment of their forces—but to the cannoneer, it was the repetition of the same old story. Occupy a position, dig a foxhole, go through the motions of firing a few rounds, catch about 10 minutes of sleep, then get the order to move again. If the kitchen truck didn't get lost, they could count on at least two meals a day and "C" and "K" rations helped out for the missing third meal. Night time meant no let-up for then was the only time movement could be effected with any degree of secrecy. Real rest came only during the 24 to 48 hour breaks between problems and then only if the move to the next maneuver area was not too long. Just as maneuvers couldn't compare to real combat for danger, so real combat couldn't hold a candle to maneuvers for just plain hard work.

It was during these maneuvers that the Division Artillery lost its commanding general. Brigadier General Edward S. Ott, who had led the artillery since its conception, was transferred to a new command. It is hard to tell the story behind the tears in the eyes of hard-bitten non-commissioned officers when they said goodbye to General Ott. Too many accounts—both fictional and factual—have described leaders who, by the force of their own personalities, have inspired the efforts of those under them. As a result, the words and ways to express this fact have lost some of their flavor and meaning. The full story of how Edward S. Ott forged a fighting organization out of civilians in the dust and muck of Camp White can only be appreciated by those who lived it.

Brigadier General Ralph Hospital succeeded General Ott as the Division Artillery commander and with Major General William G. Livesag, who had relieved Major General Gerhardt as division commander shortly after the D-Series, was to guide the unit through all of its Mediterranean campaigns to the end of the war and the final demobilization of the 91st.

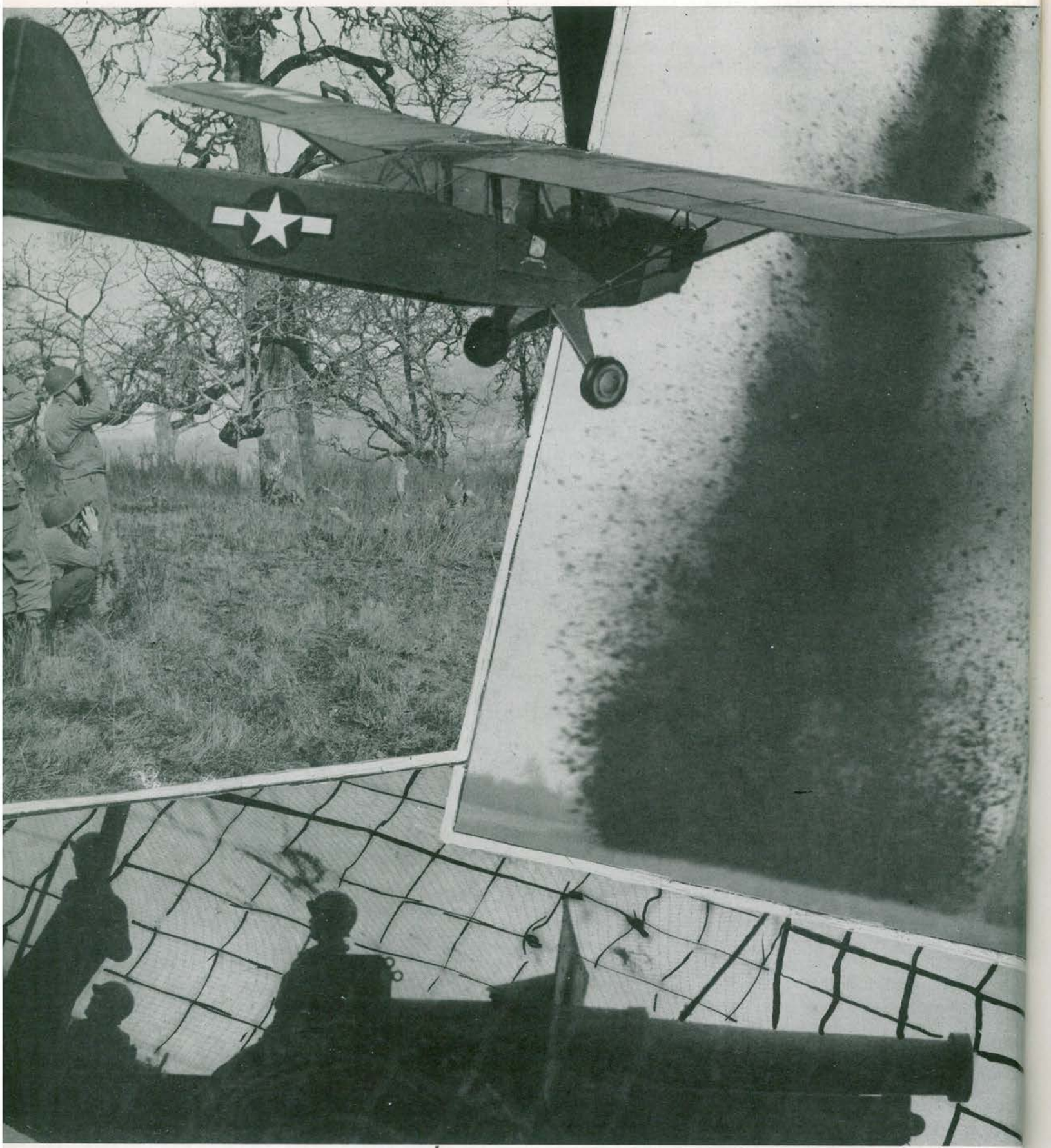
It was the beginning of November before the Bend Maneuvers were completed permitting the discovery that just as deserts can be hot in summer, so they can be cold in late fall. The last few problems had frost then snow and ice as complications not written into the original plans.

Also concurrent with the last few problems came rumors about a switching of camps. The 96th and 104th Divisions began their careers at Camp Adair and now rumors pointed towards the 91st as being the division that would take up residence at Adair with either the 96th or the 104th taking the 91st's place at Camp White. Letters were written hurriedly and wives of one division traveled and met wives of another division in an effort to swap housing before all the best accommodations were gone. And the rumors were correct. So it was towards Camp Adair that the 91st's motor columns moved on November 2nd.

Camp Adair—yep, still in Oregon—was located inside a triangle formed by three cities: Albany, Corvallis, and Salem. The surrounding countryside was made up of some of the best farming land in Oregon, a sharp contrast from the Agate Desert. These three good-sized towns near the camp plus several smaller ones provided fairly good housing for the families of the soldiers as well as much better entertainment facilities than they ever had at Camp White. The city of Portland was less than a hundred miles away providing convenient stamping grounds for those who wangled three-day passes.

The Div-Arty dentist wields his drill on the Bend Maneuvers

Photo by Clarence Quirk



A montage of pictures taken during training at Camp Adair

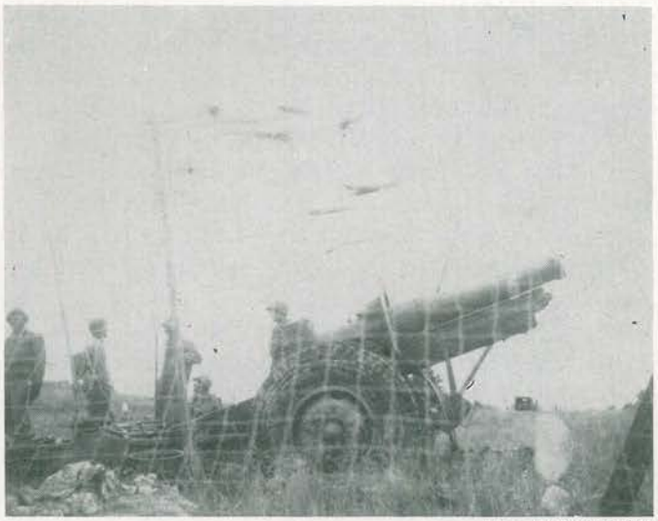


Photo by Roy Moskop

A 155 mm howitzer (Schneider) in position at Camp Adair

But there still remained the rains—and the rains remained all winter. Then coupling with the weather the fact that liquor sales were rationed in Oregon on a monthly basis, many a redleg agreed with the Ancient Mariner that there was ". . . water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink. . ."

Training continued refreshing the rusty spots, but the individual cannoneer was living only in anticipation of the overseas alert. Those with families knew their days with them were numbered and were hoping to postpone the inevitable. Others, who had been in the army for a long time and were anxious to rid themselves of the boredom of more and repetitious training, wanted to get into the fight—the sooner the better. But, no matter what the individual's slant on the problem was, it still amounted to his "sweatin' it out."

A 155 mm howitzer cuts loose on the artillery range at Camp Adair

Photo by Roy Moskop

CHAPTER II

. . . THE ALERT came on January 20, 1944. The 91st Infantry Division was given until March 1st—almost 2 months—to prepare itself for overseas shipment. That sounds like a long time. In almost any "B" movie of those days, the hero ended up going off to war which he accomplished at the mere drop of a hat, taking just enough time to pick up his pack that lay all ready for him at the head of his bunk. Let those who think the army lets men going overseas get off that easily pay close attention to the paragraphs that follow.

Right off the bat, the supply sergeant, who as a rule ranks fairly high on the G-I's "list," soared to undisputed first place. For it fell this poor man's lot to make doubly certain that each soldier was clad and had a duffle bag full of flawless clothing that fit him like the label on a beer bottle. Considering the rather vague sizes of army haberdashery and the amazing shapes human anatomy can acquire, the job called for unusual methods. Each man, wearing only his hair, reported to an inspection team that watched him try on every item of clothing he possessed, regardless how small, unimportant, or personal it may be. Because other last-minute odds and ends of the preparations took up most of the day, these inspections often were made after hours lasting until late at night.

Nor was possessing a batch of clothes that fit any indication that a given individual successfully had passed this gantlet. Clothing had to be "serviceable." Loose or missing buttons, patches, worn collars, or mended tears rendered an item unserviceable and no matter how perfect the fit—out it went. Another way to unserviceablize clothes—and also give any S-2 a case of screaming twitches—was to remove the division patch from a shirt or jacket leaving a perfect set of stitch marks in a pine tree outline.

One inspection would pronounce a man well fitted and equipped. Another would discover items that were unserviceable. Being short, the man would be issued articles to replace the ones that were thrown out. Then he may flunk the fitting test with this new stuff. And so it went.

The special training that outfits alerted for overseas receive was all of the "must" variety. That meant that each man had to be accounted for on every phase making it necessary to run, rerun, then rerun again all events until everyone had completed them satisfactorily. Just ask any first sergeant about the likelihood of getting every man in a battery at a given place, at a given time—! Cooks had to prepare the next meal, men were on K.P., C.Q., others were sick, in hospitals, on furlough—the possibilities were as endless as the task of assembling all the men was impossible. So—like trying to find a keyhole in the dark—they just kept stabbing until they made it.

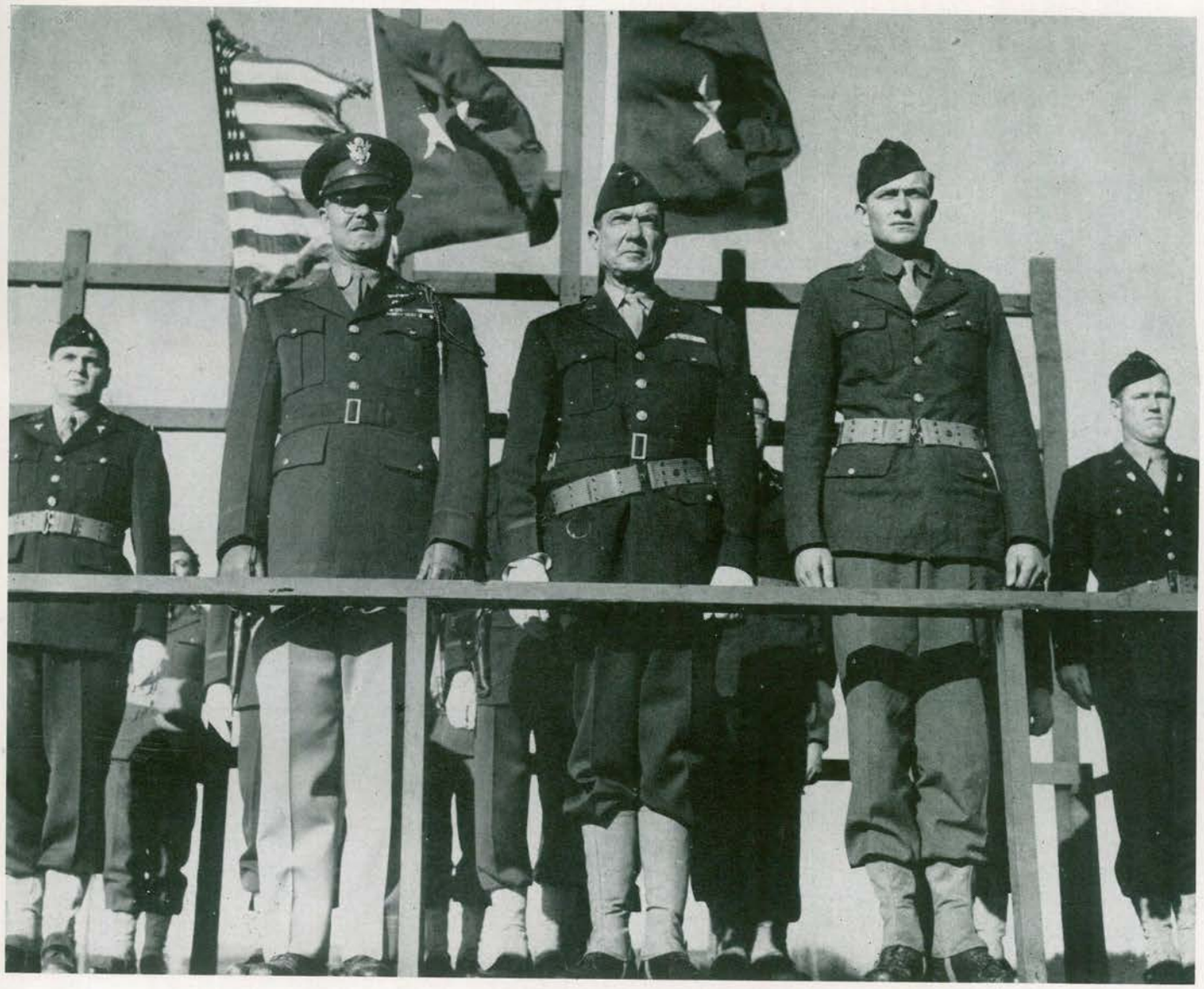
And the training was an unholy conglomeration, made up of odds and ends that were prerequisites for mounting the gangplank. There was the Carbine Transition Course which was designed to brush the men up on the fine points of shooting a carbine. There was the Night Infiltration Course where unfortunates who could not produce documentary evidence to prove they had done this before had to slither through equal parts of mud and barbed wire while sadists fired a machine gun over their heads and detonated preplanted charges of dynamite whenever a victim chanced close enough to a crater to get thoroughly soused in the blast. There was the retaking of the AGF Firing Tests—the same ones that were taken at Yakima—by all units to fulfill a requirement that they be taken every twelve months. And in spite of Oregon's rain, fog, and mud—and in spite of the recent addition to the problems of the element of time fire*; the division artillery satisfactorily completed the tests with an overall average of 79.6 per cent.

And then there was the physical fitness tests!

Although various cannoneers probably had different and vulgar names they applied to this group of tests, they all implied the How-To-Keep-From-Growing-Old idea. Without having had time to train adequately for the events, the batteries reported one at a time to an athletic field behind the Div-Arty headquarters. There the men first grunted and strained to complete 33 push-ups. Then they ran a 300-yard dash in an attempt to cover the grassy distance in 45 seconds. Few did. While still breathing hard, redlegs tackled the next event—doing 11 "burpies" in 20 seconds. The "burpie" was a complicated physical maneuver testing coordination rather than strength and called for a kind of concentration that tired men can't give. Then on legs that were trembling from the 300-yard dash and with arms aching from push-up, each man carried another his own size and weight piggy-back for 75 yards. The time limit was 20 seconds. From there, the line of groans led to a run, crawl, run, creep, run course where the above verbs were performed in that order—the crawling and creeping being restricted by overhead barbed wire. Then as the proverbial last straw, the tests were concluded with a four-mile march executed with full pack and a 55-minute time limit. This meant the distance had to be covered with a half run, half walk pace. Thus, physical fitness was tested—well tested.

When the army packs and crates its equipment to visit distant ports, that equipment would arrive scratchless even though all the forces of hell opposed its passage. Each item was faultlessly cleaned, greased, dipped, wrapped, then packed in wooden vaults that were reinforced, lined, and waterproofed. If all the impedimenta were tied onto a

*Calling for the adjustment of a time fuse on shells that causes them to explode in the air, presumably, at the proper distance above the target.



General Livesay, General Hospital, and a decorated artilleryman on the reviewing stand of a Division Artillery review at Camp Adair.

The 348th battles the mud at Camp Adair

Photo by Roy Moskop

long rope, thrown overboard, and towed across the ocean—packed as it was—you could get odds from the packers that it would arrive dry and in fighting shape. It might at that.

It all started with personnel from each unit attending a packing and crating school where the mysteries of military packing methods were unveiled. These people then returned to their units and trained others until a large enough team was built up to account for that unit's materiel. Lumber piles appeared all over camp. Trips down any street would take you within earshot of whining saws and thumping hammers. Boxes, many-sized and tomb-like, were built, lined and tarred. Metallic objects were dipped in a goo that looked like molten caramel and dried into a muddy-looking parafin. Clerks banged out shipping lists itemizing every object that went in each box, consolidated and reconsolidated the consolidations in a sea of paper work. Boxes were packed, nailed shut, banded, then stencilled on three sides with statistics, dimensions, codes, and numbers. This was followed by more sawing, more hammering, more dipping, more typing, more banding, more stencilling and the stacks of completed packings grew higher and higher.

Inspections were ever-present, harassing, and necessary. Officers inspecting the packing would direct that a certain completed box be pried open and its contents checked for proper processing. Some weary carpenter was forced to stand by and watch hours of his work undone just to make sure it had been done properly. Then when the inspection was over, he did it all over again. Occasionally, however, inspections would disclose oversights which might not only affect the inspected box, but all other boxes of similar materials. So, amid much gnashing of teeth, the work was redone.

Of course, there had to be the inevitable shots. No matter where the G-I goes, there is always a medic brandishing a huge hypodermic needle that looks more like a fire extinguisher ready to immunize the victim against every known disease from malaria to pink tooth brush, from typhus fever to recurrent hangnails. And with the shots came complete physical examinations. Some men were discovered to have physical defects and ills that disqualified them for overseas duty. Others were over-age. So it was necessary for the Division Artillery to get replacements. Sharing Camp Adair with the 91st was the younger 70th Infantry Division—the outfit which grew from a cadre sent from the 91st almost a year earlier. And it was from this division that the 91st received the necessary transfusion of manpower that readied it for combat.

Of such was the preparation for an overseas movement. All these things—training, equipping and outfitting, reshooting the AGF tests, packing and crating, immunizing, inspecting, testing, and

The redleg on the infiltration course who just realized the guy operating the machine gun is the same fellow who owes him 50 dollars.

then more inspecting—were going on simultaneously. Adding further complications, division policy urged that each man be given a furlough before shipping out involving large groups of men being gone at a time. Then as a last straw, several cases of mumps broke out in the artillery making it necessary to quarantine whole batteries at a crack.

To the high ranking officers at the top, this period was a complicated problem that had to be solved by lots of hard work. To the cannoneer at the bottom, it was a snarled and tangled SNAFU to end all SNAFUs. But to guys in the middle—guys like the supply sergeant who were catching it from both ends—it was a nightmare they would swap cheerfully for a strait-jacket and a secluded cell with upholstered wallpaper.

* * *

Then the readiness date was changed! Instead of March 1st, it was to March 14th. Battery carpenters, now thoroughly resigned to a fate of packing and unpacking for the rest of their natural lives, opened boxes for the third or fourth time to regain equipment that would be needed for the additional two weeks of training. The time passed quickly. Boxes were nailed shut and rebanded unenthusiastically to await the next change. . . .

. . . which never came. This time it was for keeps.

The officers of the Div-Arty Headquarters and the Headquarters Battery.

Bottom Row: Capt. John McCormack, Maj. E. H. Druley, Col. John M. Reynolds, Brig. Gen. Ralph Hospital, Maj. Dan Johnson, Maj. Martin Sichel, Chaplain Howard Bomhoff.

Middle Row: Capt. Luther Nelson, Lt. Robert Knieriem, Capt. Newell Arnegard, Capt. Roy Moskop, Lt. Sydney Morgan, Lt. Frederick Borden, WOJG Vernon Johnson.

Top Row: Lt. Philip G. Begley, Lt. Edwin C. Munter, Lt. Lloyd F. George, Lt. John Timmons, Lt. Arthur W. Battin, Chaplain Draper Bishop.

CHAPTER III

. . . THE MOVE got underway when the advance parties left Camp Adair on March 13, 1944. Their job: to precede their respective battalions and prepare for the battalions arrival at the overseas port. Six days later, the 346th and 916th entrained and moved eastward. The remaining artillery elements, the 347th, 348th, and the Headquarters Battery, were among the last elements of the division to leave, finally quitting the camp by March 27th.

It seemed that all units trained on the East Coast were shipped to the Pacific, while the outfits that trained out West were committed in Europe. No matter how you looked at it, there had to be a transcontinental train ride mixed up in the deal. The 91st Division completed its training so far out west that on quiet nights imaginative souls swore they could hear the cannonading in the Philippines. So, the 91st Division was to fight Germans—was to ship out from Hampton Roads, Virginia.

A troop train ride from coast to coast is about as easily forgotten as a non-fatal fist fight with a wildcat. The trains were made up of about 12 cars: two baggage cars, two kitchen cars, and the rest—Tourist Pullmans and/or Troop Sleepers. Such a train carried about 400 men. Except for brief halts for exercise, the men lived in the car to which they were assigned. There were no lounge cars or diners. Meals were served by KPs lugging steaming cauldrons of chow through the cars. All courses of the meal were heaped onto a single, floppy, paper plate from which the soldier wolfed his food before all the gravy was blotted up.

Don't they ever take a ten minute break on this tub?

Tourist Pullmans were the standard type familiar to civilian travelers. Two men shared a lower while the possessor of an upper slept alone. The Troop Sleepers, on the other hand, were horses of a different hue. These were specially constructed cars designed to be made quickly and in quantity to bolster the overtaxed rolling stock of the railroads. Their outstanding feature was the fact they had wheels. From the outside they looked like box cars with windows. From the inside, they looked liked box cars with triple-decker bunks. Actually they were box cars with windows AND triple-decker bunks. They were also painted.

Kitchen cars were of two types. One was a carefully designed car made exclusively for an army kitchen. The other was not. The exclusive model was a mess sergeant's delight. It came equipped with stoves, utensils, running water, cavernous pantries, ice box, a shower, and plenty of room for moving about. The other variety was a plain and simple baggage car—nothing more, nothing less. Its use as a kitchen car resulted entirely from military elbow grease. After being thoroughly cleaned, scrubbed, washed, and laundered, the car was outfitted with stoves, tables, water cans, gasoline cans, an ice box, pantries, fire extinguishers, utensils—all of which had to be nailed, tied, chained, lashed, braced, or somehow affixed to the car so that the lurching of the train would not scramble the whole mess into a shambles. The tables, ice box, etc., had to be expressly constructed for the occasion inasmuch as such items were not of army issue. But lumber was.

All of the trains did not take the same route. For purposes of security as well as wide distribution of traffic over war-fatigued roadbeds, all transcontinental routes were used. However, since the trip began in Oregon, the northern lines received the bulk of the load.

The time was spent as soldiers usually spend their time when they have only each other for companionship. Dice rattled, chips clicked, books and magazines passed from one man to another. Some slept, some just thought, and some had the doubtful pleasure of seeing their own homes appear, pass, and disappear as the train rumbled relentlessly on and on. Several times a day, the troops were taken off at halts for organized exercise, but to keep unit identities a secret, individual browsing at stations was forbidden. Like most long train rides, monotony, boredom, aching muscles, restless nights, and that "wish-to-hell-this-ride-was-over" feeling were all present—only more so. Nevertheless, it was, in

a way, momentous. Some men were taking their last train ride.

* * *

Camp Patrick Henry, the dockside staging area, appeared to be a very impromptu affair. It looked like it just had been built — but wouldn't last through the night. Its barracks were single-storied wooden crates covered with black tar paper that gave token resistance to the rain. The general landscape was flat, muddy, and cluttered with trees. The weather: gray and cold. The camp's sole bright spot was that one's stay there was short.

The 916th and 346th FA Battalions arrived at Patrick Henry on March 24th—their train ride having taken six days. By the time the 347th, 348th, and the Division Artillery Headquarters Battery pulled in on the 1st and 2nd of April, the first two battalions had completed their processing and were loaded aboard ships awaiting their convoy's departure. By April 3rd, they had sailed.

The men of the last half of the artillery had just begun to be processed. This consisted of subjecting them to movies and lectures on security, censorship of the mails, and a save-your-money-to-avoid-foreign-inflation policy. They scrambled down rope nets with full packs simulating abandoning a sinking ship. They sniffed anxiously in gas chambers trying out newly issued gas masks. They stood showdown inspection after showdown inspection to prove to the inspecting authorities that the inspecting authorities back at Camp Adair were on the ball. Then, on their own time, the men sweated out PX lines in a list-minute buying spree of cigarettes and candy; they sweated out telephone lines to make a last call home; they sweated and stewed over balky fires to keep their tar-paper barracks and shower water hot; they sweated out several more cases of mumps.

Finally there came the final physical examination —the last hurdle that would qualify or disqualify a man for overseas combat. Understandably, then, there was tension in the air when the men marched into the medical building, stripped down, and paraded their anatomy before an assembly line crew of doctors. And in ten minutes they were back in their clothes again! "Physical Exam," growled a disillusioned sergeant, "why anything with teeth and a second rate embalming job could have passed that!"

* * *

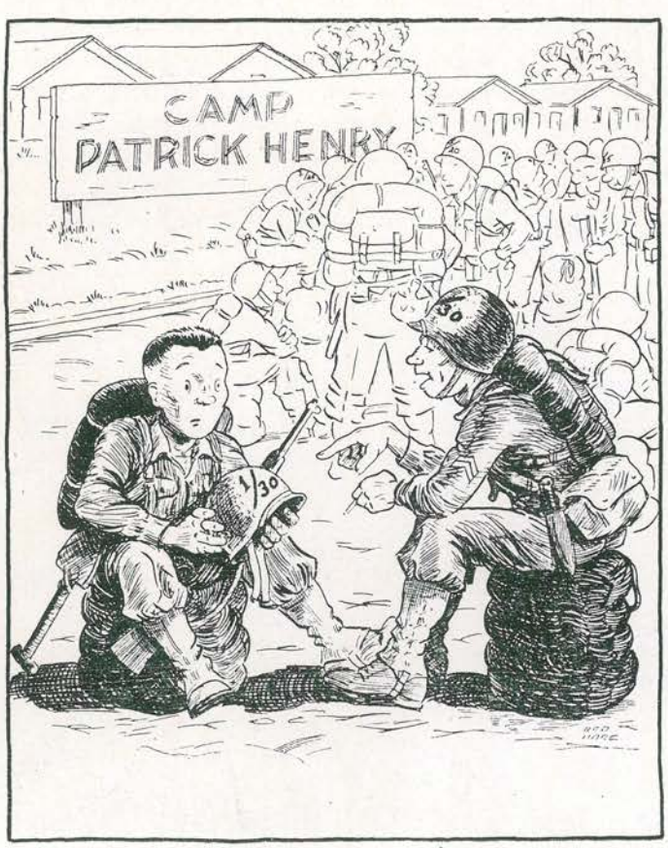
On April 11th, the 347th FA Battalion ferried across the mouth of the James River to Norfolk where it boarded the SS *Ward Hunt*. The next day, the 348th traveled the same route boarding the SS *Archbishop* Lamy. Since the sardine-like accommodations of a Liberty ship could not quite stretch to embrace a complete battalion, elements of the service batteries of both of these battalions sailed on the SS *James W. Nesmith*. The Division Artillery Headquarters Battery boarded the SS *Charles Aycock* on the Newport News side of the harbor, while from the next pier, ten officers from the Division Artillery staff climbed the gangplank to the SS *William Few*. Brigadier General Ralph Hospital and his aide sailed on the convoy flagship, the SS *Toltec*.

By this time, the 346th and the 916th, who shipped out ten days earlier, were well on their way. Nevertheless, to keep the records straight, here are the names of their Liberties: 346th, the SS *James Moore* and the SS *William Floyd*; the 916th, the SS *James J. Hill* and the SS *George Eliot*.

As the men clattered up the make-shift gangplanks and disappeared into the bowels of the ships, brassy and blaring bands played accompaniment. Cannoneers of the 346th heard with strained expressions a parting tune of "What Do We Do in the Infantry." Other battalions drew more appropriate selections such as "The Caisson Song" and "Pistol-Packin' Mamma." Then they put out to sea.

The Liberty ship (for to visualize this voyage is to visualize this boat) was an early development of the war. It was to the Merchant Marine what the Troop Sleeper was to the Pullman Company. Designed as a wartime expedient, it boasted only the basic essentials—hull, deck, masts, engines, paint—and was slapped together in sufficient quantities to win what newsreels called the "Battle of Supply." The use of this style of ship as a troop-

That's the odds on your chances of getting back!



ship was another wartime expedient—which was stacking expedients two deep. Liberties were pudgy boats with a small boxy superstructure perched squarely amidship among a forest of stubby masts. The single stack was short, vertical, and centered atop the superstructure. At top speed, the blunt bow bludgeoned its way through the sea at all of 12 knots. Voyages were long.

In the ship's cargo holds, bunks were installed. A bunk consisted of an iron frame, roughly 6-by-2½, in which canvas was laced. They were stacked five high with a three-foot aisle between every two tiers. The men took their bags, carbines, packs, and clothing to bed with them. There was no other room. Strict blackout kept all hatches buttoned down tight during the hours of darkness. Every night, the ship ventilators pitted themselves against 500 sweating bodies. Every night, the ventilators lost.

Chow was served to the conventional mess line, slopped in mess kits, and eaten anywhere there was room: rope coils, capstans, hatch covers. Time was spent sunbathing, reading, gambling, sleeping, gabbing, and just plain watching the ocean roll by. Some ships had PA-systems over which radioed news was amplified. Some ships turned out impromptu variety shows. Some ships maintained situation maps on the war's progress. All ships sweated out submarines.

The convoys were large—perhaps a hundred ships—lined up in neat files and rows like an orchard. Those near the convoy's edge could see the tiny destroyer-escorts as they twisted and turned, sniffing the water like a dog running down a mole. The destination of the convoys was at first Naples, then was changed to Oran while enroute. But the troops never knew this. When they left port, they only knew they were going eastward to either Europe or Africa and the only inkling of progress made came when a new time zone was reached and they were instructed to move their watches ahead an hour. However, the survey sergeant of Battery A of the 348th, using only a checker board and a wristwatch, kept such accurate data on the ship's location, the open-mouthed crew finally invited him to use the ship's instruments and help with the navigation.

No submarines appeared. No ships were sunk. The convoys passed Gibraltar and moved into the Mediterranean as Prudential Life Insurance jokes made the rounds of the ships. The pressure was off.

From Gibraltar, the ships never lost sight of land, hugging the African coast until the haven of the Oran harbor was reached. And the African Coast looked like it was supposed to look: bleak, high, red, and lifeless. Oran, from several miles out, seemed dead. Although it turned out to be a busy and somewhat modern city, from a distance it looked like a deserted Pueblo village. Built on a hillside, its clay-colored buildings appeared to be arranged in no particular order and no streets could be made out. There was no visible motion. The only signs of life were the scores of sausage-like barrage balloons that bobbed high above the town, their silver sides glittering in the brilliant sunlight.

It was the 20th of April when the 916th and the 346th Battalions docked in the harbor. The second convoy bearing the 347th, 348th, and the Headquarters Battery steamed in on April 30th, the ships docking late that night and early in the morning of May 1st. One by one, the ships peeled out of convoy and steamed through the opened submarine net at the mouth of the breakwater. They nudged alongside a long finger-like concrete pier. Then gangplanks banged down and troops spilled out and were lapped up by a waiting line of trucks. This was it.

CHAPTER IV

. . . A DRY RUN in army slang refers to a practice session, a dress rehearsal. While the Division Artillery was in North Africa, it was to undergo amphibious training—the last dress rehearsal, the final dry run.

The 916th FA Battalion moved from their ships to a billeting area some 15 miles out of Oran. The next day, they moved to another area in the vicinity of a little seacoast village called Port-aux-Poules. Four days later, they moved again to a spot just a mile or so out of the town of Georges Clemanceau. The 346th went through similar motions. They were hopped about, first to an area referred to as CP 2, then to Port-aux-Poules, finally settling behind the Arzew Beaches near the hamlet of St. Leu. When the 347th, 348th, and the Headquarters Battery docked, plans seemed to have become less fickle, and all three moved directly to sites outside of Port-aux-Poules were they stayed. The actual headquarters of the Division Artillery was assigned desk space in several rooms above one of the town's bars.

Amphibious training was taken by combat teams. That is to say, batteries of artillery trained with their appropriate infantry battalions. Then, when the infantry regiment was ready to function as a whole, its companion artillery battalion collaborated. Because of this arrangement, combat teams began the amphibious work just as soon as they arrived and did not wait for all elements of the division to close in before starting. So, when the 347th, 348th, and the Headquarters Battery landed in Africa, they found the 916th was already underway and the 346th just getting ready to start. About a week after the 346th began amphibbing about, the 347th plunged into the training. Because the tactical roles played by the 348's big howitzers and the Division Artillery Headquarters were not concerned with the initial assault, their participation was postponed until the amphibious problems developed to a division scale.

Life in North Africa began on a high note. The first official act was the distribution of mail—mail that the redlegs had been without for almost 20 days. That they had been sealed off from the rest of world for a fairly long time was duly impressed on several cannoneers who were notified that they had become fathers. Personal news of lesser importance impressed the others. Now, letters that had been written aboard ship could be mailed and for those who so wished, cablegrams could be sent announcing safe arrival.

North Africa looked like a foreign country to most. Although the coastal plain seemed fertile enough, there was an obvious dirth of trees. Lumber, so plentiful in America, was a rarity here.

The fishing and resort village of Port-aux-Poules, Algeria, where the 91st Division received amphibious training.

Photo by John Marolf

Telephone poles and road signs were concrete and steel; houses were brick and stone with tile roofs. The local population seemed to be split between Arabs and French Colonials. The Arabs were more filthy and their wives wore veils. Roads were generally paved. The farmers seemed to grow nothing but grapes. A bottle of champagne cost 60 francs. Mohammedans wore red fezes. And the beer was terrible.

Amphibious training was not difficult for the artillery. The only innovation they had to master was the peculiarities of water transportation. And this amounted to learning how to load a ship, then unload it while at sea into smaller craft which transported the men and guns to the beach. Most of the work was done by the navy.

The first few lessons were concerned with definitions. An AKA is a ship that carries supplies, guns, trucks, materiel in an amphibious operation. An APA carries men. The initials, LCVP, stand for Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel and represented the name of a flat-bottomed scow with an engine and a flat bow that drops to form a ramp down which its cargo of men and jeeps exit. The name Dukw is pronounced "duck" and applied to a 2½ ton cargo carrier that could travel on land or water.

Loading an AKA was almost as simple as stacking blocks in a wagon. The only difficult problem rested on the shoulders of an officer designated as Transport Quartermaster. It fell his lot to make sure the equipment was loaded in such a way that when unloaded, it came off in the order in which it was needed. A Transport Quartermaster—or TQM as he was known—was appointed in each battalion.

Unloading was a little trickier. This had to be done far out at sea where heavy equipment such as trucks and guns had to be lowered carefully into pitching LCVPs and Dukws. This was pretty much the navy's headache, however, and the army's share of the burden was merely the preparation of its equipment in such a way as to stand the gaff.

The LCVPs and the heavier landing craft were seldom able to skim right up on the beach permitting the artillery's vehicles to drive off bone dry. When these craft ran aground—there still was a stretch of water that had to be forded—water that was frequently deep enough to cover a truck's engine. So, to convert a land vehicle into an underwater runabout, the artillery learned how a jeep or a truck could be "waterproofed." Lubrication points, electrical connections, gear cases, and the ignition system were coated with a heavy, salt water resistant grease. The air cleaner was removed and a long tube was grease-sealed to the air intake of the carburetor. The other end of the tube was led to a portion of the vehicle that would stay above water. A similar tube was connected to the air vent of the gasoline tank cap. A truck that

North African fashion note

was doctored up like this could navigate successfully hood-deep water for a limited period of time provided the engine was kept running. If the engine happened to die—so did the vehicle.

A light howitzer, the 105, was brought to shore on a Dukw's back. The piece was mounted in the body of the Dukw with its tube pointed forward and its trails split and braced against the Dukw's sides. Then the howitzer's crew and ammunition piled in with the piece enabling the weapon to begin shooting even during the trip to shore. Having gained the beach, the Dukw lumbered into rendezvous where another Dukw equipped with an A-frame hoisted the howitzer to the ground. Then the weapon was coupled to the rear of the Dukw which served as a prime mover until the regular 2½ tonners could be brought to shore in larger craft.

A typical amphibious exercise began with an infantry battalion and its companion artillery battery loading up and moving out to sea on an afternoon. The following morning before dawn and at a designated H-hour, the infantry swarmed ashore in LCVPs, overcame beach obstacles, minefields and pillboxes, then moved inland. Once the beach was secure, the artillery's Dukws waddled in, the howitzers went into position, registered, and took over the close support of the infantry from the navy guns. When the advance reached a certain

point, the problem ended. Things went pretty smoothly for the battalions on these exercises. The 916th lost a howitzer when rough surf overturned a Dukw, but this was the only major mishap recorded during the early phase of this training.

Life in North Africa was not all work. Bars in the towns of Port-aux-Poules and Mostagenam provided diversion if and when a redleg got an evening off. And Oran was only about an hour's ride away. This city looked like most cities except its streets were a little narrower, a little filthier, a little more crooked, and they smelled to high heaven, All MPs on duty there seemed to hold the rank of major or higher and were hair-trigger quick to levy fines of ten dollars for a failure to salute a superior officer. Because of so many different foreign uniforms in the streets no one knew whether he was approaching a Swiss admiral or a hotel doorman so everybody saluted everybody. The city's thieves were numerous and accomplished. Sample: an English-speaking Arab engaged an army truck driver in conversation while his accomplice cleaned out a load of officers' dry cleaning in the back of the truck.

Movies were rotated between battalions and a home-cooked soldier show, The Cannoneer's Scandals, made the rounds using latrine screens for backdrops and jeep headlights for illumination. Battalion areas were close enough to the Mediterranean to permit surf bathing or just plain bathing depending on the availability of the surf.

Now why do you suppose they call this a dry run?

It was at this time that the Division Artillery got two new models of equipment. The medium battalion was issued the new M-1 155 mm howitzers and the artillery air section got several new style observation planes. Ever since its activation, the 348th trained its gun crews on old 1918 Schneider model 155s which was the same piece that was used in the first World War modified only by the substitution of high-speed pneumatic tires for the old solid wheels. The new M-1s had a greater traverse and a longer range which greatly enhanced the wallop of the division's "Sunday punch." The new L-5 spotter planes did the same thing for the division's eyes. It was a ship that could fly faster and higher than the L-4s which added to its value as a courier as well as an air observation post.

But time was running out. Before the 916th FA Battalion and the 361st Combat Team could finish their last amphibious problem, they were alerted for combat duty in Italy. They were to be attached to the Fifth Army and would be the first elements of the 91st Division to face the enemy. An advance party left immediately for Naples and the remainder of the combat team followed a week later, on May 22nd. Aboard the British troopship, *Samaria,* the 916th sailed out of Oran harbor—not to be seen again by her sister battalions until the middle of July.

As May came to a close, so did the amphibious exercises of the two remaining combat teams. Staff planning at all headquarters pointed to a full division amphibious operation called the "Tarheel Operation." On the first three days of June, all units of the Division Artillery moved from the Port-aux-Poules area to a staging area adjacent to the village of Fleurus. Here all preparations were made for a full-scale amphibious assault. Vehicles were waterproofed and loaded. Howitzers were mounted on Dukws, then the two as a unit were swung aboard an AKA. While one such unit of the 346th was being hoisted by a ship's boom, the tackle broke and howitzer and Dukw ker-plunked into the sea and disappeared. Then, to the amazement of shocked onlookers, howitzer and Dukw sheepishly reappeared and somehow managed to stay afloat long enough for fresh tackle to hook on and lift the dripping fugitives to safety.

By the 9th of June, not only had all materiel been prepared and loaded, but personnel as well had boarded their transports at Mers-El-Kabir, a tiny sea coast suburb on the western end of Oran's harbor. Howitzers and trucks were all aboard navy AKAs along with the men who serviced them. The command personnel, observer parties, communication crews, and liaison teams load on ships carrying their combat team infantry. In the case of the

346th, its numbers were split between the HMS *Winchester Castle,* the HMS *Ascania,* and the Polish transport, *Sobieski.* The 347th's men, not on AKA's, were aboard the USS *Elizabeth Stanton.* Since the Tarheel Operation was not designed to progress to a point where the medium battalion would be called upon, the 348th did not load either trucks or weapons. All of the personnel boarded the HMS *Circassia* and just went along for the ride. The same was true for the Division Artillery Headquarters Battery whose men were split between the *Circassia* and the HMS *Derbyshire.* These British and Polish ships were manned by British and Polish crews marking the first working cooperation the Division Artillery had with any of the other allied forces. Relationships were cordial and business-like.

The next day the Tarheel convoy sailed and destroyers, cruisers, and baby aircraft carriers joined the transports. Men lolled about on deck appraising the other ships, watching the passing shoreline, and waiting impatiently for the morning. For then it would be D-Day.

The Tarheel blueprint called for a coordinated attack by both 362nd and the 363rd Infantry Regiments with the 346th and 347th FA Battalions in direct support. The 362nd Combat Team was to land on the Arzew Beaches just southeast of the small port of Arzew. The 363rd Combat Team simultaneously would land at Ranger Beach to the northwest of Arzew, then both CT's would drive to the high ground southwest of the town completing a double envelopment and effecting its fall. The artillery's mission was to follow the infantry and give them close support in achieving their objectives.

That's the way the plans read. Actualities differed. The artillery was prevented from being an effective force in the operation by a naval blunder which reduced the problem from an artillery point of view into a burlesque. On the night of the 10th, the convoy steamed into position off-shore of the invasion beaches. Then, unknown to the navy, the ships drifted seaward—a fact that was not detected until after daybreak the next morning. Thus, by the time the error was discovered, the waves of landing craft and Dukws had already been dispatched on their way—about ten to twelve miles too far out. The infantry in LCVPs, aside from widespread seasickness, faired not too badly. Their landing craft were sufficiently seaworthy and swift to make shore in good shape only slightly late. The Dukws did not.

A Dukw is primarily a land vehicle, only secondarily a boat. In the water it is slow, clumsy, and unable to weather anything that approaches a rough sea. The extra ten miles of choppy waters turned what would have been a routine run into a

A Neopolitan arcade

battle for survival. H-hour had been 0400. The Dukws had been launched and sent shoreward sometime around midnight. At dawn, when the drift to sea was discovered, the transports churned in to their proper positions. It was then that worried battalion commanders, pacing the decks, had the experience of seeing their ships pass Dukws that for seven hours had been inching their ways toward shore—and still had a long way to go. Eventually they got there. Their landings were piecemeal, scattered, generally on the wrong beach, lost. The occupants had lost all interest in the Tarheel Operation. They were green-faced with heaving stomachs, but at least they were on solid land again.

There were others who had even closer squeaks. One 346th Dukw had a defective pump that was unable to pump the sea out as fast as it leaked in. Slowly, like a run-away faucet in a bathtub, the water got higher and higher in the amphibian truck. Finally the engine drowned out and the pump with it. Then, ten miles out at sea, the Dukw settled down to a water grave taking its howitzer and cargo with it. The men were taken aboard a landing craft that chanced by.

Menwhile a 347th Dukw developed motor trouble

and could only move at idling speed. Then the steering mechanism broke. A neighboring Dukw bearing infantry supplies drifted by with a dead engine but with a workable rudder. By lashing the two together, the crippled engine and the good rudder managed to beach the two Dukws a mile and a half west of the town of Mostaganem—roughly 20 miles from the site of the Tarheel Operation. These were but two examples. Similar experiences were suffered by other gun crews whose Dukws landed at scattered points all along the Algerian coastline.

Yet, somehow, some artillery was gathered together from this fiasco to give at least token support to the infantry. By mid-afternoon, both light battalions had all of their weapons that had not been sunk in action. This was made possible only by the reassuring display of initiative and ingenuity on the part of the section chief and men in each of the isolated gun sections.

The 348th and the Headquarters Battery were alerted to stand by at 0500. They were to go ashore in landing craft just for the experience of going ashore in landing craft. Five hours later, they received orders to scramble aboard their craft and make for the beaches. Trucks took them back to the staging area.

By afternoon, the Tarheel Operation had served its purpose. The infantry had successfully broken through the beachhead obstacles and moved on its inland objectives. The artillery had finally rounded up its scattered sections and had occupied firing positions. The amphibious phase of the problem was over. It was now just a land maneuver, an operation the division considered old stuff. Action was halted at 1400.

Two years of training and preparation were now at an end. The Tarheel Operation had been the dress rehearsal—the last "dry run." Upon returning to the staging area, the 91st Division made ready to ship to Naples, there to join the Fifth Army which was engaging the enemy in Italy.

Unit Transport Quartermasters were busy again. Ships had to be loaded, but this time, not for an invasion. This was to be another port-to-port voyage similar to the one that brought the men to North Africa. Waterproofed vehicles had to be un-waterproofed. Howitzers went aboard AKAs sans Dukws and this time the big 155s were not left behind. Advance parties for all battalions left for Naples on June 14th. The remainder of the units less the rear echelon was to follow on the 16th. The same ships that had participated in the Tarheel Operation were to transport the Artillery to Italy. The 346th and 347th reloaded on the same transports. The 348th sailed on the HMS *Ascania* while the Division Artillery Headquarters Battery was split between the *Ascania* and the *Sobieski*.

The convoy hugged the African coast as it moved eastward until it was opposite Bone. Then it twisted to the north and sailed west of Sicily straight into the port of Naples. The trip was none too pleasant. The sea was calm, the time short, but the ships were uncomfortable. This was particularly true of the British vessels whose rations were unfamiliar and tasteless and whose holds were sticky-hot and overcrowded. For bunks, they offered only canvas hammocks—a new and comfortless experience for 91st troops.

First came Capri—a very rocky looking place for the paradise its publicity describes. Then Vesuvius was sighted. Finally the city, itself, could be made out. The convoy circled about, the ships finding their berths within the harbor one by one. The men unloaded and marched through the city's rubbled streets to a railroad station called the Piazza Garibaldi. And in that short hike, the 91st saw its first real view of what the path of war looked like. True, they had trained in North Africa and had seen bullet pocked walls and crumpled houses —but there had been nothing like Naples. In the vicinity of the waterfront, not a whole house stood —just gaunt walls with ragged edges and blank windows. Only a few streets, the main ones, were passable. The others were choked with rubble, trash, twisted steel, and filth. Yet somehow, in and around that smashed masonry, life continued. The usable streets were filled with little carts pulled by bony horses or donkeys whose harnesses invariably bore tall silver ornaments. Some ancient trucks labored on their way. The people, mostly ragged and dirty, stood in doorways talking while their brazen, noisy children swarmed about the marching columns demanding candy, cigarettes, gum. This was June 19, 1944.

From the Piazza Garibaldi, electrict trains carried the artillery through a series of tunnels and bombed

One of Naples' wounds

Photo by Clarence Quirk

railroad yards to a Neopolitan suburb called Bagnoli. However, the 347th took a more direct route. For a reason never known (although it is suspected that there might have been a shortage of dock space in the Naples harbor), the entire 363rd Combat Team moved directly to Bagnoli from their ships in landing craft. So the men of the 347th, dressed in clean uniforms for their "arrival" in Naples, made their entrance through waist-deep water juggling barracks bags and hand luggage.

At Bagnoli, the Headquarters Battery, 347th, and 348th were billeted in an impressive group of large buildings labelled COLLEGIO FONDAZIONE DEI BANCO DI NAPOLI. The 346th hiked four miles farther to a beautiful valley completely surrounded by a continuous hillmass (possibly an extinct volcanic crater of tremendous size) that was advertised as the private hunting grounds of the Italian royal family. It was now being used as a Peninsular Base Section Staging Area. In a day or two,

A Pompeiian area

Photo by Clarence Quirk

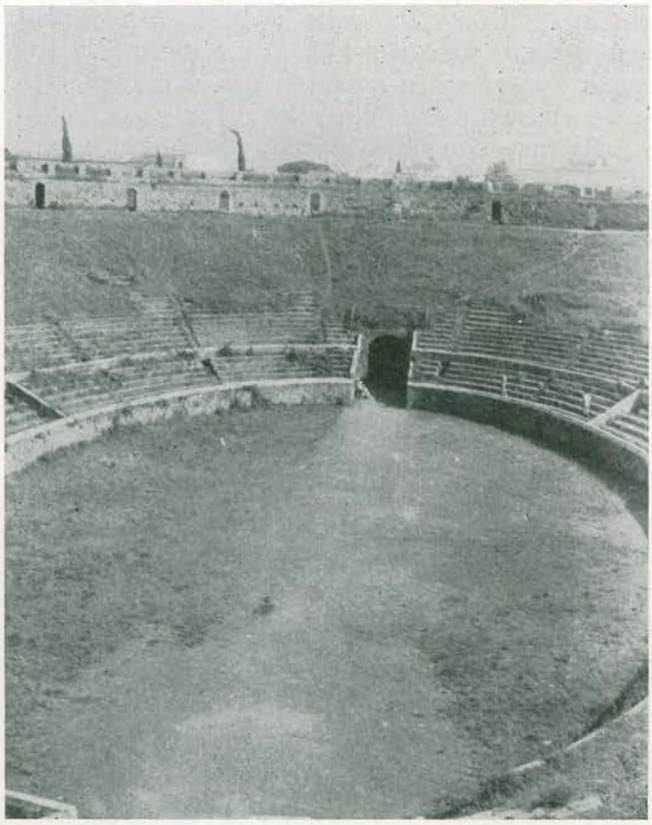


Photo by Clarence Quirk

The Forum of Pompeii

both the Headquarters Battery and the 348th joined the 346th in the "hunting grounds." The 347th remained at the "collegio."

While in this area, units took advantage of free time by sending truckloads of men on sightseeing tours to nearby Pompeii where the ancient Roman ruins could be seen amidst swarms of very modern and impulsive souvenir hucksters whose wares had a risque appeal. Another spot on the sightseeing list was the Solfatara Volcano—a small but easily accessible volcano that featured boiling mud, hot caves, and an overpowering sulphur stink.

There was strange new tension in the air. Battalions fiddled about in their areas fussing over weapons and equipment that were already in top notch condition. Meanwhile, a select group of officers and non-coms were sent from the artillery to the front to get a taste of the fight and study the operations of the 34th Division Artillery—a veteran outfit that had been through the fighting in both North Africa and Italy.

Screw up your imagination and recall how you felt on your last visit to the dentist—how you watched your turn gradually draw nearer and nearer until you were next. Then magnify that sensation by several thousand times and you'll have a hint of what was going on inside of some two thousand artillerymen. They had been waiting for almost two years. Now they were next . . . !

CHAPTER V

. . . THE FIRST SHOT was fired by the 916th FA Battalion. It whistled through the air and crashed into the hills near the little village of San Marino on the road to Rome. It was fired long before the Tarheel Operation. Its story began when the 916th sailed out of Oran after completing its amphibious training.

The battalion took five days to sail to Naples arriving there on May 27th. Then, traveling over the same route that other units of the artillery were to use three weeks later, the battalion entrained for Bagnoli and was billeted at the "collegio." Four days later, the 916th boarded LST's bound for Anzio.

The Anzio Beachhead was no longer in existence at this time. Its troops had pushed far enough out to make Anzio just another staging area—a place where the 916th was told it would stay "indefinitely." So, the men of the battalion settled their spirits down to another wait and whiled away their time watching the fireworks of friendly ack-ack. However, the very next day, Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark gave the entire 361st Combat Team a few words of welcome into the Fifth Army. And in a matter of hours, they were on their way to the front.

Assuming you are not shot at right off the bat, the most impressive thing you experience upon entering combat for the first time is the odor of rotting flesh. The smell of death cannot be described by words. It's like nothing else—penetrating, sickening. It may come from a dead horse lying in the ditch beside the road, its legs and neck, long past rigor mortis, bent and sprawled in impossible positions looking like something that had never been alive. A 916th reconnaissance party saw another source. A 2½ ton truck had pulled a short distance off the road. In it, three men were stacking corpses—American dead—like so many sacks of laundry. Before the immediate area was cleared, the truck had to make two trips. Then it moved off to other areas. But the smell remained.

However, the sense of smell is a spineless sense that backs down in the face of a persistent odor. The initial horror of the stink of the dead soon fades and gives way to a new, more subtle, more terrifying sensation—uncertainty. Uncertainty is a disease that gnaws on the minds of all men in

General Mark Clark inspects Battery C, 916th

Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps

Loading up a 105 mm howitzer

battle. It is a specter that is constantly at their sides regardless of the length of the battle or the number of campaigns. In prolonged lulls, it may become dormant but never disappears. Only one shell whining, then exploding within earshot is all that is necessary to stir up fresh symptoms of worry, waiting, and wondering.

The artilleryman fought an anonymous war. The cannoneer serving a 105 mm howitzer did not see the enemy, his target. He saw nothing but the hillmass in front of his piece that was shielding him from the enemy's view. Over this mass, he pumped his shells and over this mass the enemy's shells came—if they came. Warning? The whine of a German "88" was generally heard only by the survivors. Yes, there were some artillerymen who did not fight so anonymously. Forward observation and liaison parties shared the personalized battles with the infantry, but for the majority of the artillery, they saw nothing and heard only the ones that missed them.

The war for the Fifth Army was centered at this time about the Alban Hills just south of Rome. Velletri had been taken and it was just outside of this town that the 916th occupied its first position. The battalion was placed in general support of the 36th Infantry Division but was not called upon for any fire for an entire day. However, on the next day—June 3rd—the 361st Infantry Regiment was given the mission of encircling San Marino and the 916th occupied a position several thousand yards to the south of the town to support the drive. San Marino was taken and the Division Artillery's first shot was history.

The next day, the first shell was received. Several rounds of enemy artillery barely cleared the group of trees at the battalion command post and exploded several hundred yards behind it. No one was hit, but for the minutes following, what had been a casual interest in foxholes became an obsession and a pick and shovel salesman could have made his fortune on the spot.

Then came the march on Rome. Covering the entry to the city, the 916th took positions just to the south with the battalion laid to fire on the fountain in the Borghese Gardens. But there was no occasion to shoot.

If all the units who modestly admit they were the first allied forces in Rome were laid end to end, the 916th would still be waiting its turn to pass through the city. The battalion did get through, however, and did experience the heartwarming reception given by the Romans to their liberators. The 916th's trucks started through the Eternal City at four o'clock in the morning carrying infantrymen from the 141st Infantry as supercargo. Even at that early hour, Italians, clad in pajamas and bathrobes lined the streets cheering, waving crude replicas of the American flag, throwing flowers into the passing vehicles. The great multitude of tanks, jeeps, trucks, half-tracks, and armored cars moving through Rome taking different routes caused major traffic snarls and columns were halted for hours at a time. In these instances, the Italians brought fruit and—more important—vino for the occupants of the halted trucks to eat and drink. It looked just like the newsreels.

North of Rome, the Germans fought a delaying action. Their tactics called for a fluid defense which would slow down the Fifth Army's drive without pinning down any large German force. In order to insure continuous artillery support to a situation that could run beyond the range of a 105 mm howitzer without much warning, the 916th employed leapfrogging tactics with the 131st FA Battalion of the 36th Division. While one battalion displaced to new positions, the other fired. Then the operation was reversed. Upon occasions, it was necessary to turn the 916th's trucks over to the infantry in order to maintain pressure on the rapidly withdrawing enemy.

The first three days after Rome, the advance moved quickly and by June 8th, the 916th was in bivouac outside the small seaport of Civitavecchia. The Germans were offering stiff resistance from a hillmass adjacent to the town of Tarquinia and the job of pushing them out was given to the 361st Infantry. Firing from positions north of Civitavecchia, the 916th first blasted Tarquina, then rolled up the opposition to the infantry's advance and the town was taken. The German force that defended Tarquinia was a bicycle battalion and so swift was the American advance that hundreds of bicycles were abandoned. For the next few days,

a man on foot was a rare sight. Everybody had a bicycle. Artillery prime movers had bikes lashed to their sides like lifeboats on a ship. But the novelty soon wore thin and one by one they were jettisoned. Within a week, no bicycles were left.

The sector in which the 361st Infantry advanced ran straight up the coast along Highway 1, the ocean being the left boundary. At Montalto di Castro, their advance was held up by a bridgeless river. The enemy was not defending strongly, but the lack of bridges caused the temporary halt. A 916th forward observer found a crossing site. But his jeep also found a teller mine and the observer and his corporal were killed instantly. 24 hours later, a division was crossing the river over the site of the first losses suffered by the 91st Division Artillery.

From here on, the advance continued at a fast pace. Occasionally there were pockets of German resistance that had to be reduced and occasionally heavy enemy artillery fire was encountered. And the 916th suffered its share of the casualties. While supporting the drive against stiff resistance between Capalbio and Orbetello, one gun of Battery A received a direct hit by a German shell killing two of the cannoneers and wounding three. A radio operator and a liaison corporal were killed in the same area by enemy shellfire. But the 916th played this give and take business with emphasis on the giving. More than a few Germans were dropped by volley after volley from the battalion's howitzers when the enemy tried a fruitless counterattack on a hill called Monteti after American infantry had seized it.

It was now the middle of June and the enemy continued to fall back. A day did not pass that did not see the 916th make one or more moves to keep apace with the rapidly moving front lines. The battalion's fire was constantly directed on fleeing enemy columns or on targets whose destruction would hamper the German retreat. In the vicinity of Grossetto, the battalion was called upon to fire a smoke mission which obscured the enemy's observation from commanding hilltops and thus contributed to the taking of Hill 317.

The 916th fire direction center poses for its picture

Photo by Ed Brennan

Photo by Ed Brennan

Battery C, 916th, watches the birdie

Two days later, during a night attack, the 916th scored a direct hit on a gasoline dump. The light from the brightly burning fuel helped to guide the infantry through the pitch black night to its objectives.

The advance progressed at a steady pace and the 916th was obliged to continue making daily moves throughout the rest of June in order to keep the enemy in range. Just north of Grosetto one of those things happened that artillerymen dream about. An enemy column of trucks and personnel crossed over the battalion's base point just after the batteries had finished registering on it. The survivors of that German column are probably still wondering where all that fire came from without warning.

About eight miles south of Cecina on Highway 1, the 916th played another important role in turning back a determined German counterattack. Devastating battalion volleys swept up one side of the road then down the other and the counterattack wilted, collapsed, then fled. From here, the fight centered around Cecina itself and the 916th's fire was a key that helped unlock the door to the city. From positions two miles south, the battalion chalked up two direct hits on enemy artillery pieces, neutralized four German gun batteries, and knocked out a tank loaded with personnel.

At the beginning of July, the battalion was in position near Riporbella. Cecina had fallen and the front lines had stabilized temporarily several

Photo by James R. Ferrell

Two rounds of smoke shell fired by German artillery

News Item: ". . . . in taking Rome, our troops met with only scattered resistance."

miles to the north. For nine days the 916th traded shells with the enemy from this area without making any great moves. Once, the battalion headquarters was forced to evacuate a building when enemy artillery found its range and scored a direct hit. Although no one was injured, a new command post was established before the Germans decided to try that range again. The next move the 916th was to make would be to rejoin its own division and once more become a part of the 91st Division Artillery. Brigadier General Ralph Hospital visited the battalion at Riporbella and arrangements for the return were made.

The first shot had been delivered. Now it was time for the 91st Division Artillery to close in as a unit and begin slugging it out until a decision was reached.

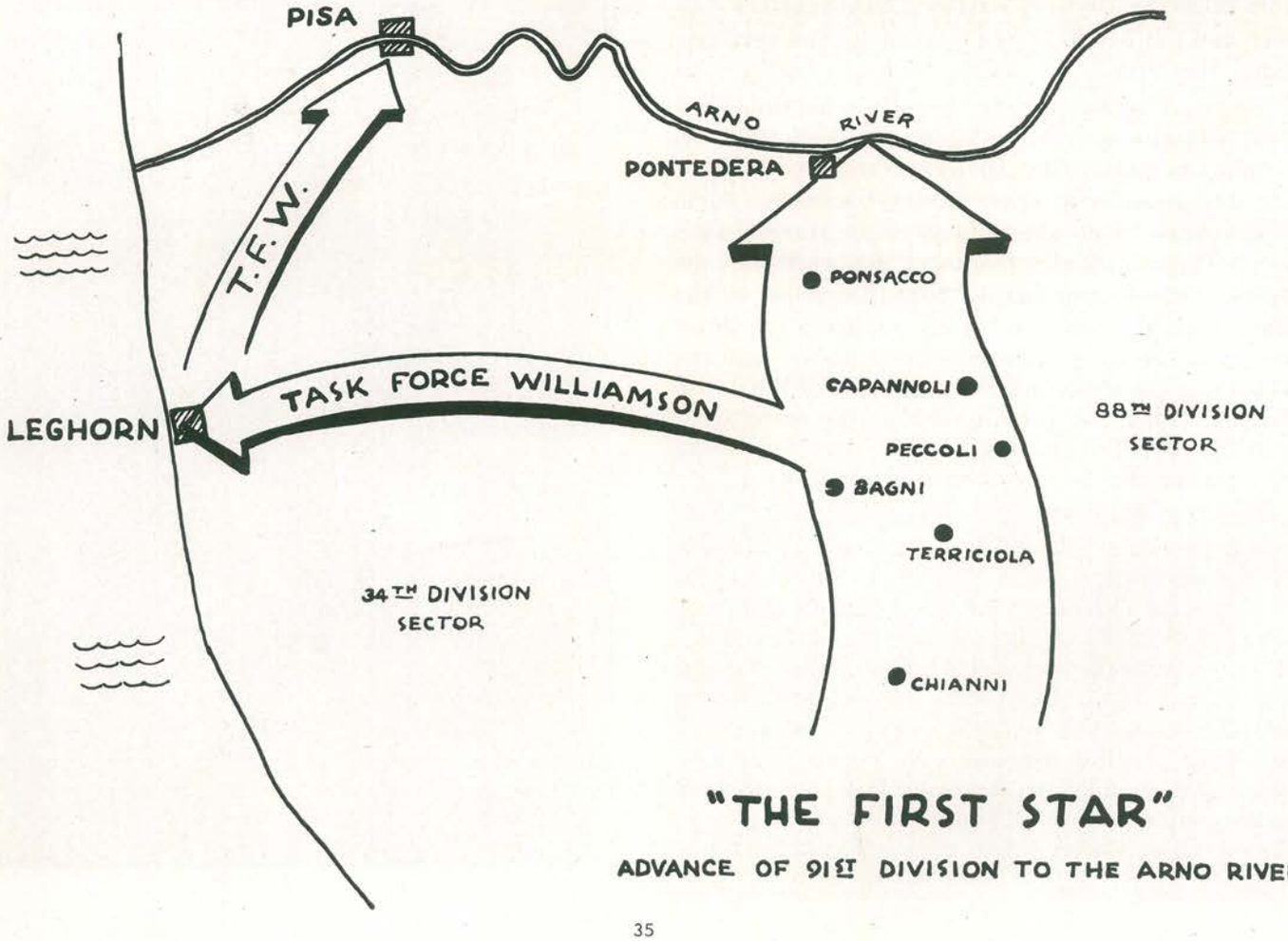
CHAPTER VI

. . . THE FIRST STAR is the story of the Division Artillery's first battle. The star itself was a little bronze battle star which each member of the 91st could fasten onto his theater ribbon. It represented action somewhere in the area between Rome and the Arno River which were the two geographical limits placed by the War Department on this particular "battle" or "campaign." It was here the war began for the 91st Division Artillery.

The Arno River is a stream about as wide as a good city boulevard and flows generally due west. It passes through the cities of Florence and Pisa and empties into the Tyrrhenian Sea just north of Leghorn, Italy's third largest port. As the Fifth Army moved up the shank of the Italian boot, it became apparent that the Germans were going to defend Leghorn stubbornly. Obviously, such a prize would be a boon to the allied drive. Naples was the only first-class port available to the Americans and supplies had to be trucked hundreds of miles from there to the front lines. But the taking of Leghorn looked like a ticklish proposition. A drive up the coastal plain would have to breach the strongest enemy defense and would be costly and difficult. Instead it was decided to flank the port by driving north to the Arno several miles inland from the coastal road. While the veteran 34th Division maintained pressure on Leghorn's principal defenses to the south, the 91st Division was given the job of making the inland drive with the help of the 88th Division to its right.

Moving an infantry division over a long distance under its own power was no easy task. Although the artillery, the engineers, and smaller units of the division had enough trucks to transport all their men, the bulk of the division was infantry which moved on its feet. Obviously, the infantry needed a lift to get it over the 250 or so miles that stretched between the staging areas outside of Naples and the front lines just south of the Arno. And when the infantry needed a lift, it was usually the artillery that supplied it. First, the battalions and the headquarters Battery moved their own personnel up The Appian Way, through Rome, up Highway 1 to a bivouac area about 28 miles north of Civitavecchia. Dumping personnel and equipment there, the trucks turned around and spent the next several days shuttling infantry to within hiking distance of the jump-off positions.

In the artillery bivouac a lesson was learned—the hard way. A group of artillerymen were walking over a stretch of beach along the coast. Someone



"THE FIRST STAR"

ADVANCE OF 91ST DIVISION TO THE ARNO RIVER

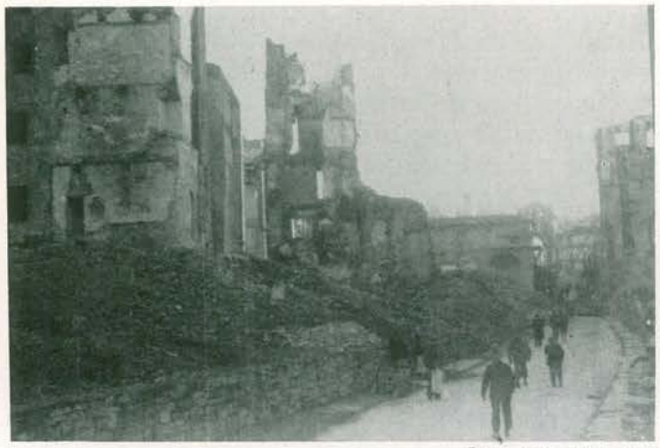


Photo by Clarence Quirk

This was a target of 91st artillery

kicked the trip wire of a land mine and a man died —two others were wounded.

On the 4th of July, eight days before the division was to enter combat, the 363rd Combat team, including the 347th FA Battalion, was sent forward to get a taste of battle. Three days later, the 348th went forward to join the 347th—both units being under the control of the 34th Division. There, they got in a few good licks before being recalled to 91st control.

On the 11th of July, the scattered units were collected. From their bivouac north of Civitavecchia came the Division Artillery Headquarters Battery and the 346th. From their front line positions came the 916th, the 347th, and the 348th. The Division Artillery command post was established near Casaglia and the battalions occupied positions within the sector. 91st Division Field Order Number One issued called for driving the enemy north of the Arno River. It also named the starting lineup: the 363rd Infantry Regiment on the left with the 347th in direct support; the 362nd Regiment on the right with the 346th in direct support; the 361st Regiment was held in reserve which placed both the 916th and the 348th in general support of the entire division front. At three o'clock in the morning of July 12, 1944, the 91st Division Artillery functioned as a unit against the enemy for the first time.

The first fight was not particularly tough—nor was it particularly easy. In seven days, the division pushed northward the 18 or 19 miles that separated it from its objective, the Arno. Although that advance could hardly be compared to a blitzkreig, still, no blitzkreig ever swept through the hills and and mountains of Italy. The terrain was the up and down kind that made it easier to defend than to attack. At the jump-off point, there were only two roads paralleling the drive that the division could use as axes of communication. However, as the advance drew closer to the Arno, the hills flattened and the roads fanned out into a more complete network.

The attack started with a 45-minute artillery preparation during which time the big guns plastered both known and suspected points of enemy resistance. Then the infantry jumped off. The 363rd on the left drove toward the town of Chianni and in the first day's push took hills that dominated the approaches to the town by flanking movements.

Firing on the German Defenders of Chianni, the Division Artillery learned to use a new and terrifying type of fire. Called a T-O-T, or Time On Target, every shell was timed so that all shells fired hit the target simultaneously. Then with all of the guns of the Division Artillery trained on Chianni, death and destruction were served up in large doses. In the town, all would be quiet and peaceful one minute—then the next, the sky literally would rain high explosives. There was no warning to enable the victims to seek cover. Survivors were either lucky or were somewhere else when the shells landed.

On the right of the division front, the 362nd Infantry advanced north along the axis of the Casaglia-Capannoli road but were stopped dead at an east-west road that ran into Chianni. Here, a force of twelve enemy tanks roared into the fight

The enemy sought shelter here

Photo by Clarence Quirk

posing a serious threat to the American positions. However, a well-placed artillery concentration knocked out one tank and dispersed the rest although German resistance was such as to prevent the infantry from driving but a few hundred yards farther before they dug in for the night.

At three o'clock the next morning, the Division Artillery fired a 30-minute preparation after which the infantry jumped off in an effort to pierce the stiff resistance given by the enemy on the previous day. Instead, the Americans found they were virtually unopposed. The Germans apparently had withdrawn the major portion of their forces during the night and only scattered bunches of resistance were left to prevent the advance from gaining too much momentum. Meanwhile the heart of the German army was crossing the Arno to perfect and man its defenses in the highly publicized Gothic Line.

For the next three days, the fighting was termed "fluid" which is a vague sort of term that describes a vague sort of fighting. The front lines did not move over the terrain like a shade being pulled over a window. Rather the advance was like water overflowing the countryside — moving ahead quickly where there was little resistance; backing up, then by-passing areas where the enemy chose to fight. The towns of Bagni, Soiana, and Terriciola were three such areas. However, these towns fell in due order and the advance was never seriously threatened.

At Bagni, the Division juggled its line-up. Refreshed after its several days on the sidelines in reserve, the 361st Infantry Regiment moved up and through the 363rd and took over the task of hammering forward on the left half of the Division's front. The 363rd then fell back for a well-earned rest before it was to make history. This also meant a change in the artillery line-up. The 916th FA Battalion moved over to assume direct support of the 361st while the 347th took over a general support role, but gave the bulk of its attention to the left half of the front and the 361st.

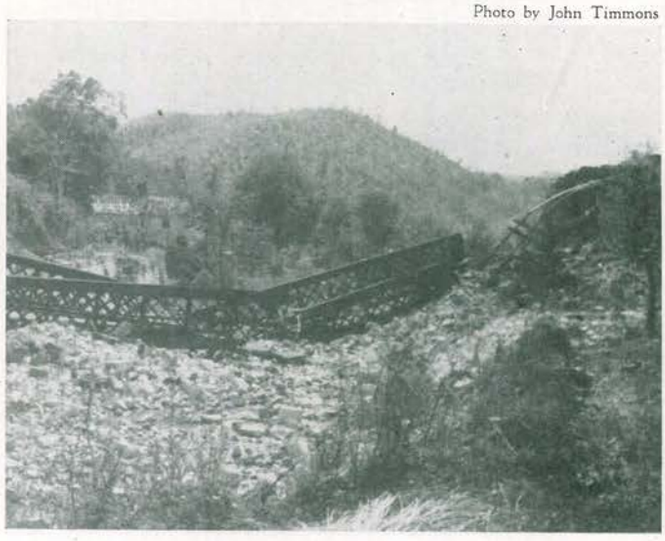
With this extra artillery running interference, the 361st grabbed the ball and kept driving until it was the first unit in the Fifth Army to reach the Arno River. The regiment pushed due northward from Bagni, through Soiana to the gates of Ponsacco where the infantry stopped for breath. It was first and goal to go and the enemy hustled together a force to make a goal-line stand. But the American artillery observers were too keen. They spotted a huge German counterattack forming and dumped the combined efforts of the guns in the 916th, 346th, and 348th Battalions on the counterattack assembly area. There was no counterattack. But the Germans still had another ace up their sleeves—tanks. Some 25 tanks, including the Wehrmacht's newest and most formidable models, were thrown into the battle and only because of vigilant observation and prompt artillery fire was the enemy's armor kept scattered and prevented from combined action. At more than one point of the fight, Corps Artillery—ranging in caliber up to 240 millimeters—came in to save the day with well-placed reinforcing fire. Then, in a smashing first-down drive, the 361st took Ponsacco.

Pausing only long enough to call fresh signals, the 361st grabbed the ball again and crossed the goal-line. With the fall of Ponsacco, the enemy lost all interest in defending the Arno and moved with dispatch to get the remainder of his troops across the river lest they be trapped on the south bank. Moving straight north astride the Ponsacco-Pontedera road, the 361st seized Orceto, then entered Pontedera, itself, and stood on the bank of the Arno. The division objective had been secured and this green division had sparked the Fifth Army's drive through an important phase of the Battle of Italy.

Although the 361st's drive on the left received the major portion of the division's push and publicity, the smashing advance of the 362nd Infantry on the right is not to go without notice. This regiment, fighting without relief since the 91st entered the fight as a complete unit, had a wider front to maintain and its path of advance led over more difficult terrain. Nevertheless, the 362nd stayed fairly well abreast of the 361st until the regiment hit the high ground just south of the Arno itself. There, with the objective virtually within arms reach, the infantry was stopped dead in its tracks by a terrific barrage of artillery and mortar fire. The 346th Field Artillery was more than willing to accept the enemy challenge and slug it out with the German guns, but limited observation prevented the artillery battalion from delivering a knockout punch and the attack had to wait for the next day. Then at 3:30 the following morning, the 362nd jumped off with fresh troops on the line. The fact

A flattened railroad bridge near Florence

Photo by John Timmons



that this regiment did not reach the banks of the Arno as did the 361st this day was not because of the stubborn opposition. Actually, enemy resistance was relatively light. What did slow the infantry down was a particularly rugged piece of terrain which the Germans had skillfully sown with Shu mines—the first the regiment had encountered. However, by three o'clock the following afternoon, 362nd patrols were on the south bank of the Arno. The date: July 19, 1944.

The role played by the artillery in this advance cannot be underestimated—although it usually is. Like air power, a superiority of artillery is essential to almost any infantry success. Without the brilliant interference given by the big guns, the foot-soldiers might have measured their gains in inches—if, indeed, there would have been any gain to measure at all. The American artillery pounded the German guns until they were forced to scatter and operate as single guns or batteries firing haphazardly. Not that they were rendered completely impotent—no, indeed! On more than one occasion the 91st infantry received larger doses of enemy shells than they cared to take in one sitting. But had the German command anything like the highly coordinated artillery fire available to the American commanders, the story might have been quite different.

At the outset of the battle, the 91st artillery observers, fresh to the business of making war, were somewhat taken back by the almost complete lack of activity visible in the enemy-held areas. But they soon became battle-wise. Artillery concentrations were brought down on suspicious areas that *looked* like logical places for enemy guns. Small movements of German infantry deserved plenty of fire because observers learned that a few men visible probably indicated a great many that remained hidden. They learned to pierce the enemy's talent for camouflage and be particularly watchful for the tiny pin-points of flame that revealed the hiding place of German artillery.

This last was extremely important. For the enemy, denied the use of artillery in large numbers, adopted the use of highly mobile, self-propelled artillery. These howitzers or guns, mounted on tank chases, would slip into a position, fire several rounds, then be off before they could be detected and neutralized or destroyed. Although this use of artillery was never a serious threat, it proved to be a very effective harassing agent which, like a hornet buzzing around a swimmer's head, could provide a very painful sting everytime he came up for air. To catch these "SPs," an observer had to be quick. And they were.

But the 91st Division Artillery did not escape all

Sure this is the forgotten front—but them krauts is absent-minded.

We ain't got a chance—if them snipers don't get us your drivin' will!

of hornet's stings. The 916th earned the most Purple Hearts in the dash for the Arno—one of which was presented posthumously. A 916th observer lost his life when, while he was setting up an OP in Pontedera, a German demolition charge toppled a building down upon him. Two men of the 346th were killed when the jeep in which they were riding struck a mine.

But this was not the end of the battle for the Arno. After the 361st carried the ball over the goal for the touchdown, the 363rd—which had been in reserve—took the toss from center and made off around left end for the extra point.

The 363rd Regiment with the 347th Field Artillery plus engineers and other units were designated Task Force Williamson, named after Brigadier General Raymond E. S. Williamson, the assistant division commander, who led the task force. At the critical moment, just as the 361st reached the Arno, Task Force Williamson slashed out to the west and hit the surprised German garrison defending Leghorn on its flank. Knocked completely off balance, the enemy evacuated the port and Leghorn, at whose gates the Fifth Army had been hammering for 25 days fell to this single combat team from the 91st. Within a matter of hours, the 363rd regrouped in the city and began the pursuit of the fleeing enemy northward.

Standing astride the Arno River and located several miles inland from its mouth is the city of Pisa. This was the next objective of Task Force Williamson. The drive up from Leghorn was slowed by a canal whose bridges had all been blown by the withdrawing Germans. By clever use of his artillery, the enemy made it tough going for engineers trying to span the canal, but the advance proved irresistible. Troops crossed the river in one manner or another and in a short time, the 363rd occupied the southern half of Pisa. This was the 23rd of July—just five days after the 361st Infantry Regiment had reached the Arno.

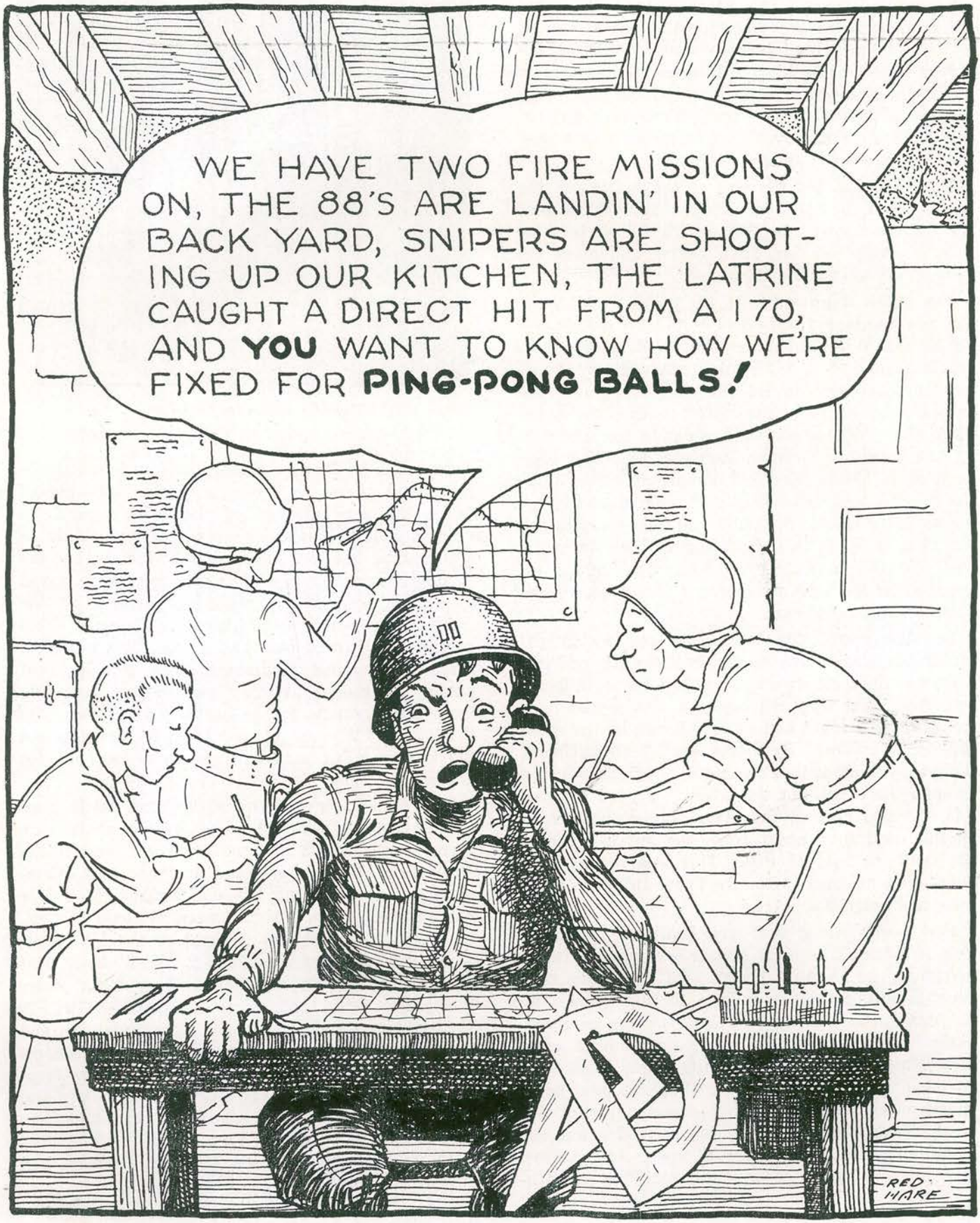
Few people would ever have heard of the city of Pisa if it hadn't been for a famous campanile that's known as the Leaning Tower. Yet Pisa came very close to losing this lone claim to fame when the Germans persisted in using the tower as an observation post. The top of this old landmark completely dominated the table-like plain that surrounded the city and from this vantage point enemy observers were able to direct pin-point fire on the Task Force troops as they dodged in and out of buildings in the south end of town. At one time, General Williamson ordered one battalion to withdraw south of Pisa to escape the murderous shelling. And there the Leaning Tower sat—almost under the very muzzles of the 347th's guns. It stuck out of the pancake terrain as temptingly as a stove-pipe hat to a bunch of snowballers, but the itching trigger fingers of the cannoneers were stayed by orders from the commanding general of the Fifth Army to spare the historic building if at all possible. It turned out that it was. But not until after Task Force Williamson took five days of almost continuous artillery and mortar pounding from the Germans in the north end of town. On the 28th, TFW was relieved from its position and the troops pulled back down south of Leghorn for a short breather.

Photo by John Timmons

Laundry service for artillerymen

That's the story of the 91st's first battle star. It's a record in which a green division chalked up three "firsts" in its first performance: first to the Arno, first into Leghorn, and first into Pisa. Commendations poured into division headquarters. For reaching the Arno, Major General William D. Crittenberger, Commanding General of the IV Corps, wired the division commander, "Well done, 91st Division." For its work in helping Task Force Williamson seize Leghorn and Pisa, the 347th FA Battalion received a string of commendations and "well done's" as long as your arm. The battalion's official history includes congratulatory letters from division commanders, the Corps commander, and finally, General Mark W. Clark, Commanding General of the Fifth Army.

In its first performance, the 91st Division had stolen the show.

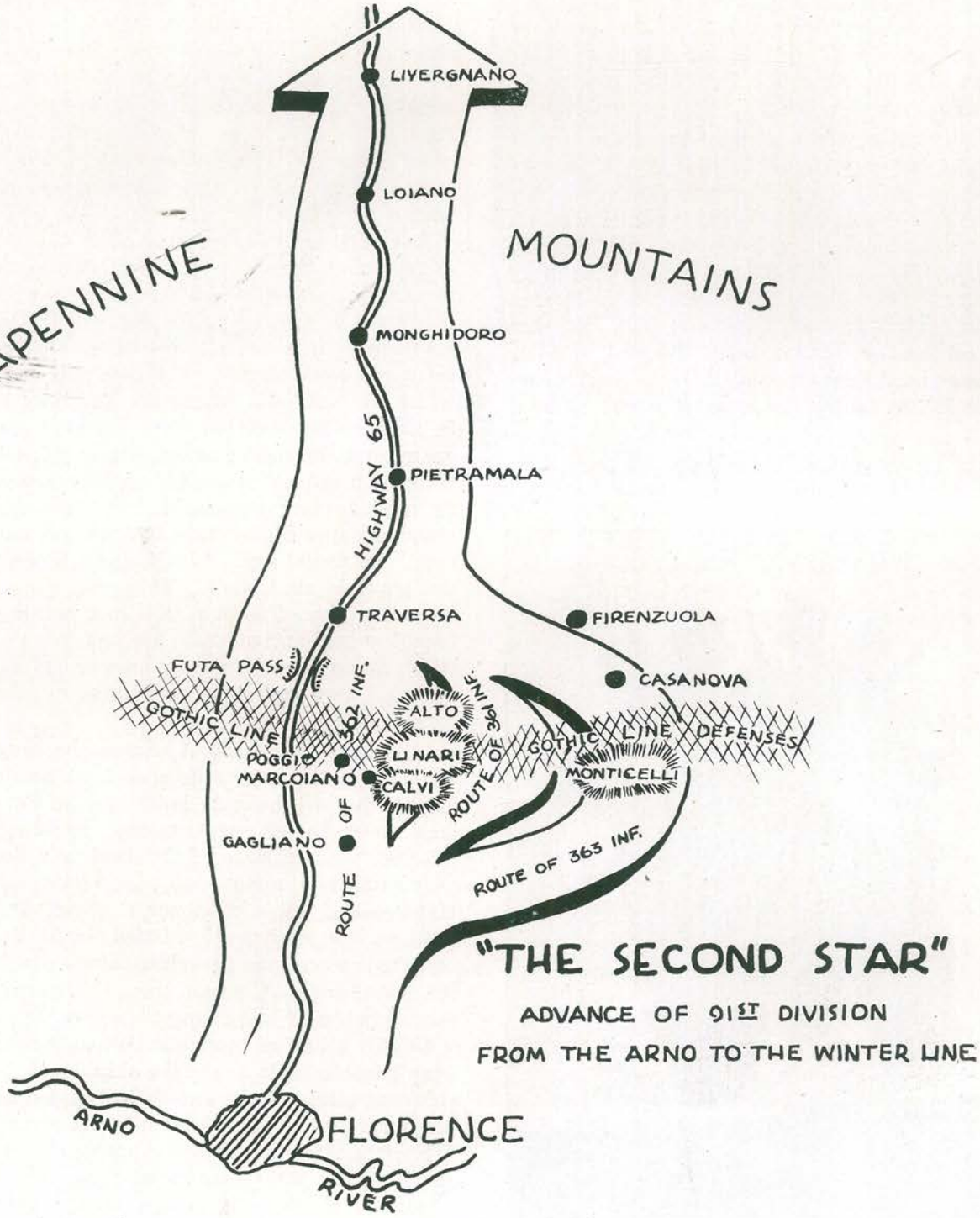


Div-Arty S S O calling

CHAPTER VII

. . . THE SECOND STAR, as any 91ster will tell you, was the one the division would have cheerfully done without. That little hunk of bronze mounted in the middle of 91st theater ribbons represented as tough a brand of fighting as any American soldier had to face. While it's fair to surmise that every combat outfit had that to say about one or more of its scraps—still, the fight through the Apennine Mountains and the breaching of the Gothic Line was a battle that can be ranked with Cassino, Iwo Jima, or the Battle of the Bulge after all counts are totaled and all angles considered. Yet this, the roughest fight of all, got underway in the mildest of manners.

For about a week after the south bank of the Arno had been secured, the division squatted on its prize awaiting orders for the next move. It soon became evident that the Fifth Army would use the Arno as a screen behind which it would regroup before resuming the attack. At first the 91st Division helped to provide this screen, establishing a defensive line south of the Arno while it



sent patrols of infantry and engineers to probe the enemy's disposition and map the banks and fords of the Arno in preparation for large scale river crossings. This screening mission, by the first of August, resulted in the scattering of units of the 91st up and down many miles of the Arno's south bank. While the infantry moved over to the east, the artillery held fast and provided support for a hodge-podge organization called Task Force Ramey.

During the first half of August, nothing happened. That is to say, nothing of historical significance happened. Actually, when a battle slows down to the stage where both sides take a breather and sharpen their weapons before lighting into one another again, the lion's share of the chore of killing the enemy is laid at the doorstep of the artillery. Result: an affair that has come to be known as an Artillery Duel.

This particular Artillery Duel turned out to be duck soup for the Americans—largely because of one factor—the tiny spotter planes. These Air OPs had a field day. The Italian summer weather was perfect. The skies were swept clean of German aircraft by the Allied air superiority. The little monoplanes were able to soar from sunup to sundown adjusting artillery fire on anything that moved behind the German lines. Because of their importance in this phase, and their increasing importance in the battles to come, it seems to be a good time to take a moment and look into these flying eyes for the artillery.

Sure, they take the top of the truck off to lower the silhouette!

First of all, these planes were solely the property of the artillery. Their pilots were men who fundamentally were artillery officers, only secondarily pilots. The artillery battalions and the Headquarters Battery of the Division Artillery had two planes each. However, throughout most of the campaigns, all planes were pooled into a single group. In this manner they were able to operate from a single landing strip and take turns in the air so as to keep a continuous watch. These planes, themselves, were two-seaters, the pilot taking along an observer with him to do the "shooting" while he did the flying. However, it wasn't uncommon for a pilot to both shoot and fly. Nor was it uncommon for both pilot and observer to be shooting different problems simultaneously. Communication, of course, was by radio—the same type of radio that the ground observers used. This put everybody in communication with everybody else—sometimes including the Germans.

But getting back to the war and the south bank of the Arno, the artillery's Air OPs made the artillery duel a very one-sided affair. Enemy artillery dared not to fire during the daylight hours for fear of having their muzzle flashes spotted and their artillery pieces blasted. This left only night firing, which at best, was inaccurate and only harassing in nature. So effective were the tiny planes that on more than one occasion, artillery headquarters received a request from an infantry commander to fly a plane over his sector. "I don't care if the plane can spot the mortars that are shooting up my men," he would say. "Just so the Krauts can see the plane is all I want. Then they'll quit." And he was right. The Air OPs had nothing to fear except enemy anti-aircraft fire and this they avoided by flying behind friendly lines but at an altitude that laid bare just about everything in enemy territory.

If targets were spotted beyond the range of the big 155s of the 348th, the observer's sensings were relayed by telephone to battalions of Corps Artillery whose bigger guns generally accomplished the mission. And in spite of the death and destruction they handed out almost daily, the 91st's private little airforce lost not a man nor a plane. One of the most serious mishaps that befell the 91st's Air Ops occurred when an American shell, humming on its way toward German lines, happened to nick the propellor of a spotting plane and left the pilot with only a half of propellor. When the unbalanced prop threatened to shake the ship apart, the quick-thinking pilot cut the switch and glided home to a safe landing. No runs, one hit, one error.

Shortly after the first of August, the 91st Division Artillery was transferred from the IV Corps to the II Corps. Big things were brewing. The

Photo by Morton Levy

The 100,000 shell being loaded into a C Battery, 347th howitzer

Photo by Morton Levy

"Bologna or Bust" The 100,000 shell fired by the 347th

Fifth Army was just ready to launch a new attack and the II Corps was mobilizing in a small area south of Florence to provide the spearhead. It began to look as if the 91st would again be the very tip of the spearhead.

It wasn't long after the transfer, when orders came down the line to reconnoiter and prepare new gun positions in the vicinity of a little hamlet named Ponterme. No sooner were these positions staked out, when the enemy got wind of them and plastered them with artillery fire. Signals were checked and the positions were abandoned. This little maneuver was chalked off as a feint to give the German command a little more to worry about. It had been accomplished without casualty.

Several days later—about the middle of August—the units of the Division Artillery moved one at a time to a bivouac around the ancient town of San Gimignano. After leaving the Soiana area, headquarters was established temporarily near Castelfiorentino before moving just outside of the historical walls of San Gimignano itself. At this time the 347th FA Battalion rejoined the Division Artillery after its history making end run into Leghorn and Pisa as a part of Task Force Williamson.

It was also about this time that visiting dignitaries looked in on the 91st. Within a week's time, both Mr. James V. Forrestal, the Secretary of the Navy, and Mr. Robert Patterson, Undersecretary of War, dropped in on the division command post. They visited several infantry units, then were on their way again. The artillery just looked on.

Still another matter came up in the middle of August. The 15th of the month was the 91st Division's second birthday. The day passed almost unnoticed.

In the San Gimignano area, the elements of the 91st Division Artillery were out of combat for the first time since the division first jumped off more than a month earlier. This, then was the first time in more than a month that the howitzers weren't emplaced and laid on enemy targets. Men did not have to keep an ear cocked for the all-too-familiar whine of an incoming shell. Both men and material could relax and rest.

But, as usual, there was a catch to it. The 91st was being readied for the fight across the Arno. New replacements joined units where casualties had left gaps in the ranks. Time was spent every day on an intensive training program designed to condition the men for the type of warfare that laid ahead—storming a prepared and fortified position. Besides brushing up on artillery techniques, the batteries spent hours on such subjects as mines and booby traps. Physical training was stressed and new tricks, such as laying wire from a low-flying spotter plane, were demonstrated. Then, too, the

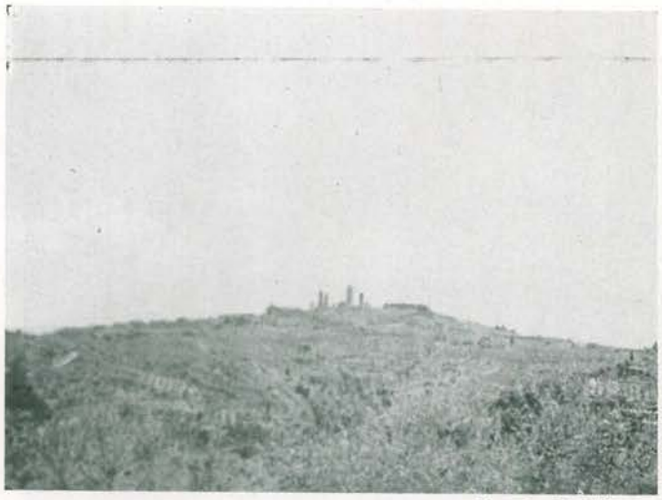
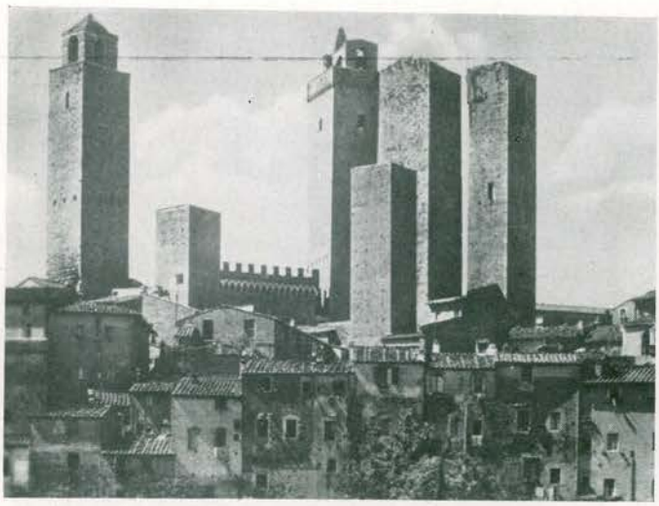


Photo by John Timmons

The skyline of San Gimignano's towers as seen from afar.



Close-up of six of San Gimignano's towers

medics took advantage of the lull and whipped out their needles to give everyone stimulating shots for typhus fever.

But there was pleasure mixed with the work. PX supplies were shipped into the areas frequently, providing plenty of candy, soap, razor blades, tobacco—things that make a fellow feel more like a man than a ground-burrowing animal. Special Service officers and their hard working corporals nursed balky film projectors through several reels of motion pictures every night and a troupe of USO entertainers visited the area for a one-afternoon stand. The Red Cross girls who were attached to the division paid all of the units frequent visits bringing with them their inevitable doughnuts and invaluable feminine chatter. Ball teams were organized and the metallic clank of horseshoes hitting pegs could be heard every evening after chow.

There were occasional "red alerts" indicating that enemy aircraft were flying near, but the 91st was never molested. The bombing of a gasoline dump in Certaldo reddened the sky one evening, but the action was too far away to provide anything other than an object for rubbernecking.

Spare time visits were made to the nearby towns of San Gimignano, Volterra, and Sienna. San Gimignano was a strange looking little town whose many towers gave it the appearance of a modern city of skyscrapers when its skyline was viewed from afar. At Volterra, redlegs bought many trinkets made of the famous Italian alabaster. It was at this time when the mails of the folks at home were flooded with alabaster bookends, alabaster ashtrays, alabaster candlesticks and alabaster inkwells. The city of Sienna had a proud history. As the arch-rival of Florence, it spawned many famous artists in the middle ages. But the few 91sters who visited it found just a tired, dirty, and somewhat mauled town.

Near the end of August, the battalions of the 91st Division Artillery were ordered to reconnoiter and prepare positions near Antella from which they could support the battle for a river crossing. But

Another view of San Gimignano's skyline

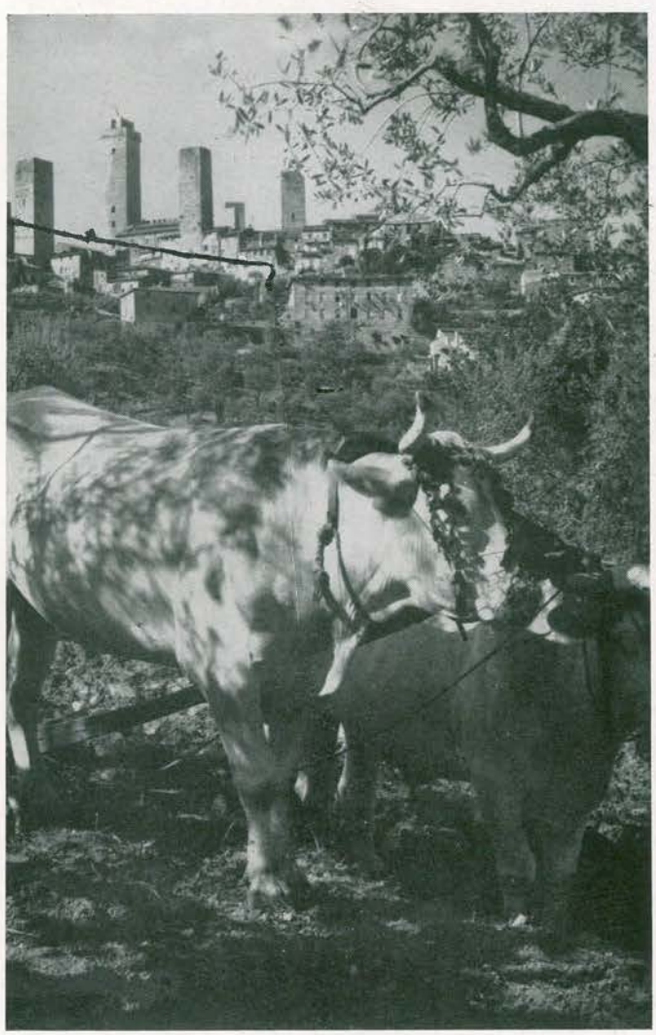


Photo by John Timmons

One of the gates into San Gimignano

after probing the German defenses, American and British intelligence discovered that the enemy had no intention of putting up a scrap on the banks of the Arno. Instead, the German high command apparently had elected to withdraw the bulk of its forces to prepared positions along a smaller stream a short distance to the north. This stream was called the Sieve River.

The Allies were quick to take up the slack. British forces moved across the river to provide a screen behind which the powerful II Corps was readying itself for a thrust through the Apennine Mountains and the formidable Gothic Line. The famous city of Florence fell to the British. The 91st Division Artillery was directed to abandon their prepared positions south of the Arno and begin digging in new ones on the north bank.

On the 4th of September, General Mark W. Clark, commander of the Fifth Army, who had a habit of turning up at a unit's headquarters just before that unit was ordered to move to the front, turned up in the 91st Division Artillery's area. He inspected Battery A of the 348th Field Artillery Battalion, pinned a few air medals on pilots and observers at the air strip, then was gone again. By the next day, so was the 91st Division Artillery. Under the cover of darkness, the four battalions and Headquarters Battery moved across the Arno and occupied positions to the east of Florence in the vicinity of the village of Gricigliano.

But still things weren't right. When the Allies thought they had the German defenses spotted and pinned down, the wily enemy only evaporated and what was expected to be a stiff line of resistance turned out to be an empty shell. Without so much as even firing a shell to register a piece, the Division Artillery moved again. Meanwhile, the sunny summer weather had about run out. A burst of rain turned dust into deep mud and many of the howitzers had to be winched out of positions, coupled to trucks which then slithered and slogged down the little mountain roads back to the highway that paralleled the Arno. Turning west, the Division Artillery convoyed into Florence. Moving through the city, the artillery turned north on Highway 65—the road that was to become the principal axis of advance for the II Corps in its drive toward Bologna, and the road along which the 91st was to bury most of its dead.

On the 9th day of September, the artillery units occupied positions about the town of Pratolino. This is where the shooting was supposed to get started.

A tower as seen from inside the city

The starting line-up was typical of a triangular division—two regiments were placed on the line, the third regiment remained in reserve. On the left, in the vicinity of a town called Vaglia, was the 362nd Infantry Regiment. Of course, this meant that the 346th FA Battalion was in direct support. On the right was the 363rd Infantry with the 347th FA Battalion in direct support. This left the 916th and the 348th FA Battalions in general support, but the 916th was given the special job of reinforcing the fires of the 347th.

The 91st Division was poised in this manner and on September 10th at 5:30 in the morning, the attack lurched forward. It was like several strong men putting their shoulders against a door to break it open only to find out it wasn't even locked. The attack jumped off against thin air—the only opposition discovered were occasional and scattered mine fields. It was afternoon before even harassing small arms and artillery fire was encountered. Under the cover of darkness, both regiments forded across the Sieve River and secured the north bank. Thus, in less than 24 hours, the first division objective of the attack had been taken.

The next day was pretty much the same thing. Again shoulders were placed against the door—and again it was found to be unlocked. The enemy had withdrawn his outposts during the night, permitting the American infantry again to lurch forward groping for his resistance. There was substantially none encountered throughout the day. Meanwhile, the artillery was scurrying along behind, winching trucks and howitzers out the mud, moving forward, then settling down in more mud—always keeping the advance covered just in case. Most of the shooting during this phase of rapid movement was done by the 348th. Because of its bigger howitzers and greater range, it could stay longer in one position blasting away at whatever Germans it could find before it ran out of range and was forced to displace forward. Nevertheless, even the big guns of the 348th had to keep on the jump. One battalion command post was occupied by the forward party just nine hours after the same building had been in use as a German command post.

The gradual slopes of Mount Calvi

Photo by Joe Breidinger

On the third day of the attack, the advance continued but the pace began to slacken. The division was closing in now on the central German positions. By September 13th, the American infantry came to the unpleasant realization that they were now looking straight down the barrels of guns emplaced in the Gothic Line itself. On the left, the 362nd Infantry was looking up the long, naked, and rocky slope of Mount Calvi. An attack moving up this slope would find about as much cover and concealment as could be found on a billiard table. On the right, the 363rd Infantry drew up short before a twisted and jumbled mountain called Monticelli. Although not as high as Calvi, Monticelli had more wrinkles in it than a piece of used chewing gum. A confused set of ridges eventually made their way up to form Monticelli's half-hearted peak, leaving a series of draws between them that were ideal for dugouts and other fortifications. And the Germans were not the kind to overlook any bets.

It was here, the Division Commander threw away the book. Abandoning the old established procedure of two regiments on the line and one in reserve, General Livesay threw all three of his regiments at the enemy. The 361st Infantry was ordered to move in between the 362nd and the 363rd. While the 362nd was storming Mount Calvi and the 363rd was stirring up the hornet's nest called Monticelli, the 361st started off down the middle—with the enemy looking down their throats from three of the four available directions.

From here on, the action was fast and furious. The story is far too complicated to try to tell it all at one time. Each regiment must be followed through the battle like following a single strand when trying to untangle a knotted line. First, here is a picture of the battleground. Highway 65, the main artery between Florence and Bologna, cuts through the high ridges that made up the Gothic Line at the Futa Pass. To seize the Futa Pass would not only pierce the Gothic Line, but it would do it at a point where the principal road net could supply the attackers in their breakthrough and permit them to exploit it by pushing on. Both Mount Calvi and Monticelli stood on guard to the east of the all-important Futa Pass. Beyond these two sentries was the high ground that dominated the pass on the right. By moving over Calvi and Monticelli and taking this high ground, the 91st could flank the Futa Pass and effect its fall. With this in mind, the division went about its bloody business.

Number One on the list was Monticelli.

Most of the slopes up the 3,000-foot hill were wooded, but the last 200 yards to the peak were

as bald as an electric light bulb. On these slopes, the enemy had built pillboxes—cleverly concealed affairs made of concrete, logs, and dirt. These pillboxes were so arranged that they afforded mutual protection to one another. At about 100-yard intervals all of the way up the slope, the Germans had strung entanglements of barbed wire 25 feet wide. Then, as a final protection against an American attack up the many ravines that led to the mountain top, these ravines were heavily mined. On the reverse side of Monticelli, elaborate dugouts had been chipped into the solid rock where troops could lay in wait for whatever attackers who successfully made their way through the pillboxes, barbed wire and minefields.

This wasn't going to be easy.

It was mid-September when the 363rd Infantry began its slow, bloody attack. Barbed wire had to be breached. Then a minefield cleared. A pillbox reduced. Then another stretch of barbed wire. Another minefield. Another pillbox. Then another and another and another. It was hellishly slow and costly business. Each pillbox had to be knocked out individually. If they couldn't be flattened or silenced by artillery, the infantry had to flank them and finish them off with hand grenades.

Nor was the movement always one way. Time and time again, the enemy formed vicious counterattacks that drove the Americans back and erased gains that had been won at great cost. Then the blood had to spilled all over again.

Finally a solid foothold was gained. Company B of the 363rd Infantry overran enemy positions on the ridge running to the west of Monticelli's peak. The company tried hard to hold onto that ridge. The Germans poured concentration after concentration of mortar and artillery fire on them. Counterattack after counterattack was turned back. After one enemy thrust to regain the ridge, two German soldiers were discovered asleep in Company B foxholes. But the doughboys held firm. The Gothic Line had been severely dented if not yet pierced.

The battle for Monticelli was now in its fourth day. Another attack on the mountain's peak had been turned back by the enemy. Then, on September 17th, every resource was marshalled for an all-out effort. All three of the regiment's battalions were hurled into the fight. Spearheading the attack was Company K under the command of a man named Fulton. By early afternoon, Fulton and his hard-hit company were stalled a scant 300 yards from Monticelli's peak. At two o'clock, the 347th FA Battalion laid down a perfect rolling barrage that blasted its way like a curtain of destruction up the final yards of Monticelli's bald pate. The infantrymen advanced close behind this barrage sometimes moving up just a nerve-wracking 50-yards

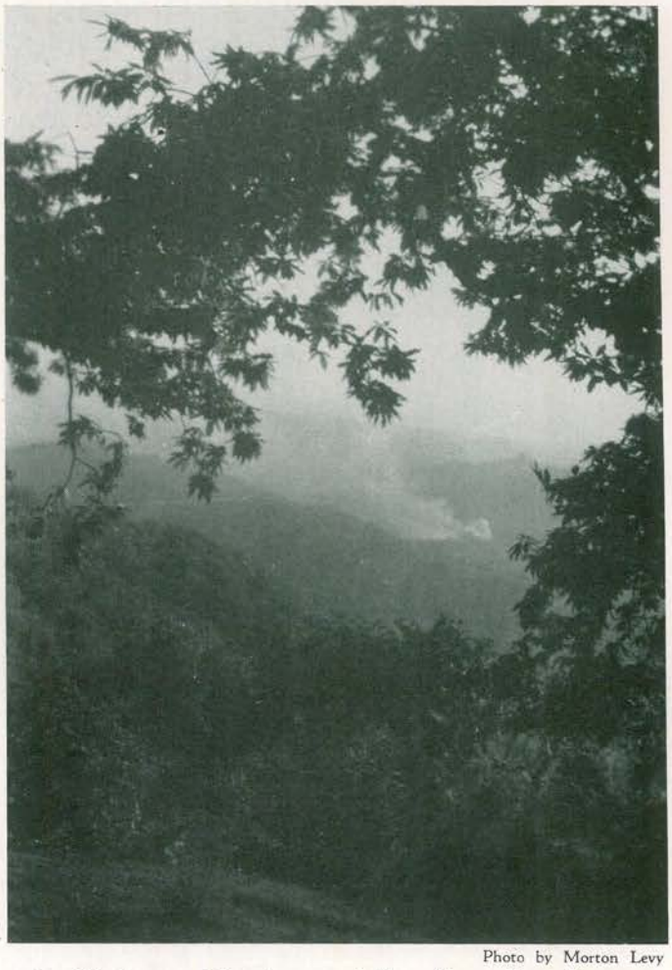


Photo by Morton Levy

An Allied ammunition dump exploding after a direct German hit. Photo taken from an OP on Monticelli.

from the exploding shells. Finally, at 2:48, a message crackled into listening radio sets.

"I, William B. Fulton, am on top of this goddam hill!"

Seven other man had made it, too.

Then all hell broke loose. The Germans pumped volley after volley of mortar and artillery fire on top of Monticelli. A counterattack of several hundred men was forming to the north. It was up to the Artillery to save the day.

Fulton, himself, adjusted the 347th's guns on the threatened counterattack. Five hundred rounds were sprayed into this area. That chilled the counterattack. Meanwhile, more men, equipment, and radios trickled up the mountainside to reinforce the handful that held the peak. An artillery observer from the 347th joined those atop the hill and immediately took over the job of putting the fire of his battalion where it would do the most good. By nightfall, the situation was reported "well in hand."

All night long, the 347th fired a protective screen around the prize of the day. So effective were these shellings, they were likened to a "ring of steel" that isolated the mountaintop from any interference below. There were no German counterattacks.

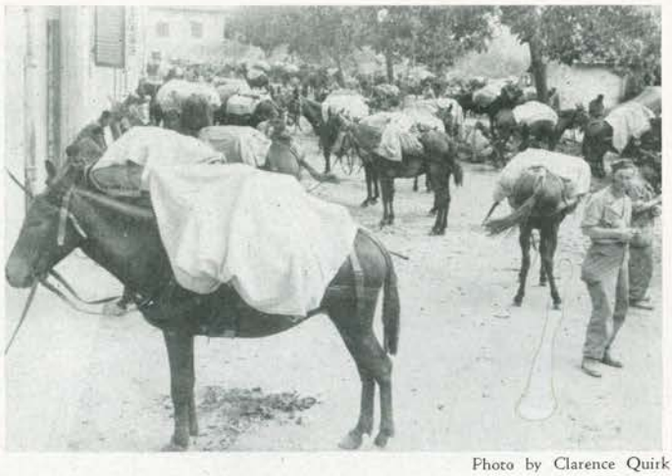


Photo by Clarence Quirk

An Italian mule train gets ready to move out

The following morning, Monticelli was occupied in strength and the events of the previous 24 hours could be evaluated. In one area where artillery fire had been pounding throughout the fight 150 enemy dead were found. In another area 80 were found dead and 80 more were easily taken prisoners. One target that had been plastered throughout the night while Fulton and his little band sweated out the sunrise atop the hill turned out to be an enemy command post. 33 dazed prisoners were taken out of a cave where they had been trapped by virtually continuous artillery fire.

Monticelli had fallen to a closely coordinated infantry-artillery team. And Monticelli had been held by the grace of the massed and accurate fires of the 347th Field Artillery Battalion. "Diamond," which was the telephone name for the 347th, sent 20,000 rounds of 105 mm shells screaming into the defenses of Monticelli and, on more than one occasion, "Diamond" observers adjusted the heavier guns of the 348th and Corps Artillery when a little weightier punch was needed. These observers, to best help the infantry, were up with the infantry. As such, they shared the infantry's casualties. Two men died while on forward observation missions in the fight for Monticelli. Seven others were wounded. Three cannoneers were hit by enemy shell fragments during one of the many times the 347th was shelled by enemy guns trying to silence the battalion's very active howitzers. When these men fell, others moved up to take their places. The war moved on. Monticelli became, once more, just a nondescript hill off the beaten path in the Apennine Mountains.

When Monticelli fell, the Germans reeled back off-balance. Despite the fact that the infantry had suffered many casualties and was desperately tired, it was ordered to maintain that attack lest the momentum of the advance be lost. The commanding general of the II Corps telegraphed his congratulations upon the successes of the 363rd Combat Team but directed that it push on to the Santerno River, a little mountain stream that flowed from west to east about four miles to the north of Monticelli. For the first mile or so, the advance moved easily. It was not until the Americans reached a town with the misleading name of Casanova that any serious enemy opposition was encountered. Here the Germans put up a fight to protect their withdrawal across the Santerno which they completed on the 20th of September. On the morning of the 21st, the 363rd occupied the south bank of the Santerno and sent patrols across to the north to maintain contact with the enemy.

While the 363rd was battering its way up Monticelli, the 361st Infantry, supported by the 916th Field Artillery Battalion, was attacking up the valley that lay between Monticelli and Mount Calvi. The 361st, which had been the division reserve up until this point of battle, had just been thrown into the fight in an all-or-nothing gamble to crack the Gothic Line. The battleground over which this regiment had to move was about as inconspicuous as a downtown department store window. A ridge rose out of valley floor that grew taller as it ran northward. Finally it got high enough to rate the name of Hill 844. Then still higher to become Hill 856. This, of course split the valley in two and gave the Germans another good point of observation. This meant the 361st was literally hemmed on three sides by Nazi eyes. From the left, they could be seen from the heights of Mount Calvi, from the right, from Monticelli, and from straight ahead by binoculars atop Hills 844 and 856.

To add to the regiment's worries, the roadnet in this area was non-existent. It seemed that prior to the war, no one had ever cared much about visiting this valley, a fact that was entirely understandable. So there were no roads. It is here that belated tribute must be paid to the division engineers. Up to this time, they had always been kept busy helping the advance by replacing blown bridges, removing treacherous minefields, maintaining roads. But now, their work was absolutely indispensable. The attack could move nowhere until the engineers chewed out some sort of trail along which the infantry could be supplied. By blasting, chipping, scraping and scratching, these magicians turned steep embankments and mountainsides into a flat surface along which at least infantrymen could walk leading mule pack trains. Then by working night and day, the same engineers managed somehow to widen this trail so that it would be passable for jeeps. By means of such a road, the 361st's supply trains could get from the village of San Agata northward to a forsaken place called Coppo. But beyond Coppo, there were only mule trains. This meant that throughout most of the fighting, every round of ammunition, morsel of food, and drop of medicine supplied the 361st came through the courtesy of

a strong-backed and sure-footed mule. Long live the sovereign state of Missouri.

When the 361st jumped off on the morning of September 14th, the Germans from their seats up in the galleries on the three mountainsides obligingly cut loose with everything they had. Yet, in spite of this terrific plastering, the regiment reported substantial gains after the first day's fighting. However, for the next three days, a bumper crop of barbed wire entanglements, pillboxes, and dug-in defense works caused the infantry to check its pace and the attack shifted into low gear. A typical obstacle was something like this in cross section: 20 feet of barbed wire, 20 feet of minefield, then 20 more feet of barbed wire. All of this of course was under the sweep of German machine guns. This sort of thing was too closely concentrated to be blasted open by artillery—it was a job that had to be done by hand. While infantrymen kept the German small arms buttoned up by constant fire, other infantrymen and engineers bellied up to the wire, breached it with bangalore torpedoes, then cleared paths through the minefield, mine by mine. It was slow, deadly work.

Although this attack only inched along, nevertheless it did keep moving. It was like a flood pushing against a weak dam. The dam held until the pressure became irresistible—then it gave way with a rush. Within a few hours on the morning of September 18th, both Hills 844 and 856 fell to doughboys of the 361st. The regiment kept pushing. By the end of the day, another unnamed hill was taken. The dam was cracking badly.

The next morning it happened. Following a smashing artillery rolling barrage, the 361st swarmed up and over three more hills and were soon overlooking the Santerno River. In the last stages of its attack, the 361st deviated from its northward drive to swing towards the northwest. This shift to the left helped to build up the pressure on the flank of the Futa Pass which was scheduled to be the Achilles' Heel of the Gothic Line.

It was the guns of the 916th Field Artillery Battalion that made possible the success of the 361st Infantry in its drive to the Santerno. Again, a smooth-working infantry-artillery team showed that there is no such thing as a perfect defense. And again, there was a price to pay for success. One forward observer and seven cannoneers were dead; nine others wounded.

The 362nd Infantry Regiment was to be the star of this show. Directly in front of its advance lay the Futa Pass. However, there were also a few hurdles to get over before the pass could be reached. The first of these was Mount Calvi.

Because an attack moving up the bald slopes of Mount Calvi would be about as obvious as a belch in church, the hill was turned over to the artillery for a good going-over, before the infantry stormed its height. For two days, high explosive ammunition was thrown at Calvi's defensive works by the 346th Field Artillery Battalion and other artillery units. When several reinforced houses proved too tough for the 348th's 155 mm howitzers, Corps Artillery's 240 mm's were brought to bear on the targets. With a newly developed super-delay fuse, these huge 240 mm shells crashed through the roofs of these strongholds, plunged through several floors, then finally went off after the shell had penetrated deep into the bowels of the buildings. The walls would buckle, billow out like a blown-up paper bag, then collapse into heaps of used masonry.

Before dawn on the morning of September 14th, a grand finale of artillery shelling shook Mount Calvi—and the infantry jumped off. Behind this preparation, a battalion of the 362nd Regiment stormed and took the hill—only to run smack into a blind alley. Although the south slope of Calvi, up which the Americans charged, was a smooth gradual ascent to the top, the north side fell almost straight down into a deep canyon-like valley behind the hill. Down in this valley—protected from American artillery fire—the enemy had emplaced his mortars which proceeded to lambast Calvi's summit with deadly accuracy. At first, the Americans tried to blast out these Germans embedded at the north foot of Calvi—but to no avail. Even when the 346th tried high-angle fire—pointing their howitzers almost straight up so that the shells would drop vertically down into the offending valley—the results were negligible. It was a lead-pipe cinch the infantry couldn't go over Calvi . . . so plans were drawn to go around it.

Hill 840, located directly behind Calvi, was a higher hill than Calvi. It was the next hurdle before the 362nd Infantry. Then behind 840 was Mount Linari and behind Linari was Mount Alto—each one higher than the one before. One battalion of the 362nd was given the job of moving around the right side of Calvi, flanking Hill 840, then barreling up the ridgeline seizing Linari and Alto. Another battalion was to move around the left side of Calvi and head for high ground to the right of the Futa Pass. The third battalion kept fighting steadily straight up Highway 65 into the teeth of the Futa Pass defenses.

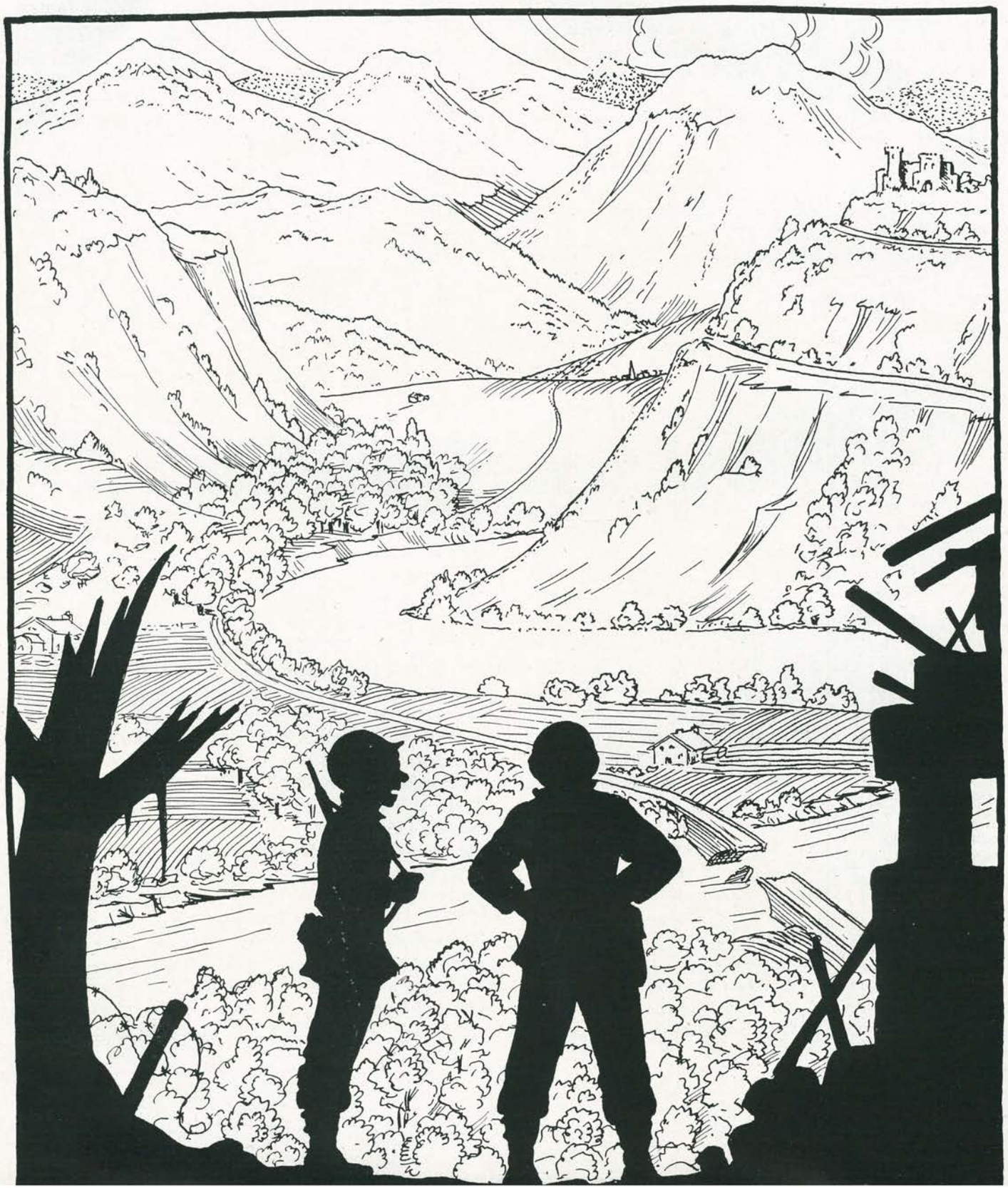
The battalion circling Calvi to the left jumped off first. It was September 15, 1944. Coordinated with the attack was a tricky artillery fire plan that called for nine TOTs to be served up by massed artillery in a matter of 15 minutes. This jump-off did not enjoy lightning success, but it did keep moving. German defenses were slowly whittled away as the Americans advanced on the town of Morcoiano. By the 18th of September, the town had fallen and the battalion headed for a little collection of houses called Poggio.

The taking of Poggio was one for the textbooks.

It went off so smoothly one might almost suspect it was fixed. The houses in Poggio had been reinforced so that each one was in fact an oversized pillbox. The town had been well woven into the Gothic Line defenses so that with its murderous assortment of obstacles and cross fires, it looked almost impregnable. Light and medium artillery shells just bounced off the houses like raindrops or else splashed harmlessly nearby while the well-protected defenders lounged in their holes with not so much as a hair blown out of place. To level these houses one by one with 240s would be a slow process and even then, the enemy could put up a bang-up defense from behind the cover of the rubble. It looked like the time and place to try a rolling barrage.

On the 19th of September, the 346th FA Battalion laid down one of the most beautiful rolling barrages of the war. The battalion, reinforced with six

More mountains! Another river! Damn this scenery anyway!



self-propelled 105 mm howitzers, laid all of its fire along a line paralleling the battalion front. The doughboys moved up to within 300 yards of this curtain of exploding shells. Then the barrage was moved up 50 yards and fired again. Then another 50. Then another and another until this wave of fire chewed its way up to, through Poggio, and out the other side. True, the light 105 shells scarcely scratched the fortified houses, but they did force the German defenders to seek cover from the whizzing fragments that filled the air as the shells crashed into the town. When the barrage passed over them, the Germans leaped to their guns—but it was too late to use them. The 362nd's doughboys followed the barrage through town so closely, they were upon the enemy with bayonets and hand grenades before he could struggle out of his hole. Only a few scattered shots were fired. Suffering hardly a casualty, the 1st Battalion of the 362nd literally walked through one of the strongest points of the Gothic Line and picked up 200 prisoners to boot.

While this was going on, the battalion that had been given the assignment to circle Mount Calvi to the right and look in on Hill 840, Mount Linari, and Mount Alto was doing right well for itself. Hill 840 had fallen after the battalion had flanked it from the east. By the night of the same day, the infantry had scrambled up the ridge line and were enjoying the view from atop Alto. Another day and another numbered hill was taken. The following morning, the battalion was overlooking the Santerno River with machine guns trained on the Futa Pass.

So far, the third battalion of the 362nd had been playing a lone hand. In its attack straight up Highway 65, it was virtually all by itself. With the rest of the division fighting some distance to the east of the highway, the closest unit to this third battalion was more than a half a mile away. Yet to this battalion went the job of seizing the objective to which the entire 91st Division had been pointing for the past week.

On the 16th of September, these 362nd infantrymen ran up against a complicated bit of defensework that bounced them back on their heels. At right angles to the highway, the Germans had dug an elaborate anti-tank ditch that was covered by the crossed fire of many machine guns. Covering the highway, itself, the enemy had emplaced the turret and 88 mm gun from a Tiger tank in a concrete emplacment. Other pillboxes and dugouts supported this tank gun. Here was another job for the artillery.

For two solid days, the 346th FA Battalion poured high explosive shells on the defense works of this anti-tank ditch and on the nearby town of San Lucia. Like a hawk watching a chickenyard, artillery observers called for a new hail of shells every time the slightest movement was detected in the enemy territory. This plastering paid off. The Tiger tank gun was smashed and two German 105 self-propelled guns were knocked out.

When the Americans did attack, it was behind another one of the 346's deluxe rolling barrages. Only this one had a new wrinkle to it. The big guns of the 348th Field Artillery and Corps Artillery were used to box in the route of attack of the infantry on both sides and the far end. Then the 346th lined its fire across the battalion front and moved up this box like a huge piston driving up in a cylinder. Those of the enemy caught in the middle were either very unhappy or deceased. The infantry, instead of moving straight up the highway, attacked up the ridges on the side of the road. The unhappy and surprised enemy was overrun. A day later, San Lucia was taken by a double envelopment and without even pausing for breath, the battalion headed for the Futa Pass. Understandably, another one of those extremely successful rolling barrages was called upon to run interference. It was dished up on a frontage almost a mile and rolled up Highway 65. That night, the 362nd had outposts in the Futa Pass.

Although the Americans now held the pass and the high ground on its sides, the enemy still held Hill 952 which loomed up due north of the pass and was the heart of the Futa defenses. The third battalion of the 362nd started up its slopes on the morning of September 21st. The enemy shot everything but the kitchen plumbing at the oncoming Americans—but the result was inevitable. The dam which had been cracked at Monticelli, split at Morcoiano and Poggio, broke wide open at Hill 952. The Gothic Line was *kaput*.

The enemy had been at work for over a year constructing the Gothic Line. It had been built under the supervision of a famous German organization that specialized in the construction of such defenseworks. To man this line, the German General Staff had used some of its best troops—an example of which was the 4th Parachute Division, one of the enemy units that opposed the 91st in the line. Yet, to smash through such thoroughly prepared positions manned by the best of troops, the 91st Division took exactly 12 days. More than a year's work was undone in less than two weeks by a method of fighting that had been instilled into the 91st Division since the first day of its activation. The secret: infantry-artillery teamwork. This does not mean that other units in the division played roles of minor importance. On the contrary, the jobs done by the engineers, medics, quartermaster, ordnance, signal company and reconnaissance troop was indispensable. However, these specialist troops were like the trainer, manager, and seconds to a champ boxer. They took care of his needs, "serviced" him, and made the going easier. But it was the infantry-artillery team that slugged its way

through the toughest defenses. It was that team that was the champ.

If it had been a tough fight for the Americans, it had been even tougher on the Germans. They lost it. Although the initial enemy situation before the fight had been excellent (from his point of view), the steady pounding of artillery and mortars plus the constant pressure of the infantry had taken their toll. Replacements the enemy had rushed into the line to bolster his faltering ranks were neither properly trained nor properly armed. Prisoner reports indicated that American bombers had inflicted heavy casualties on German replacement units moving down the Italian peninsula to the front. One captured German told how many in his outfit threw their weapons away because they were too weary to carry them any longer. All in all, these captured Germans were poorly clothed and poorly fed. They looked very much like a badly beaten army. But appearances are sometimes deceiving. The war wasn't over yet.

Since this story limits itself to the battle within the boundaries of the 91st Division sector, it is apt to sound very much like a success story of how one division won the war. Perhaps it would be appropriate here to take time out to remember that there were more than a score of other divisions on the Allied line, each battling with the enemy immediately in front of it. Each one had its Monticellis and Futa Passes. But in this particular campaign, the drive of the 91st Division was the focal point of the Allied attack. For it was here the Gothic Line was first pierced and the fight through the Apennine Mountains started. Once pierced, the Gothic Line gradually melted away and divisions all along the front moved forward. But it was the 91st that was first through and it was the 91st that was the spearhead of the Allied attack until the entire front slowed down into the winter stalemate.

The division paused briefly at the Santerno River line before resuming the attack. The 362nd Infantry came out of the line to become the division reserve. The 363rd Regiment swung in on the left of the division front, the 361st on the right, the infantry jumped off, and things started popping again.

The fight was now in the heart of the mountains. Highway 65 coiled around on a high, uncertain plateau that sometimes dropped away into deep V - shaped valleys, then gave rise to ugly, jagged peaks that looked like weathered tombstones. The weather didn't help matters either. Ever since the beginning of the fight for the Gothic Line, the skies got grayer, the rain wetter, and the mud soupier. By the time the division was moving through the Futa Pass, each move an artillery battalion made was with the pain of a rheumatic old man. As the weather got wetter, the pain grew worse. Everything bogged down in the mud. Trucks and howitzers had to be winched in and out of positions. And positions, once occupied, soon degenerated into slopholes. Fog obscured observation, grounded spotter planes. Human existence reached a new low when even the toilet paper became cold and soggy.

But, fortunately, the weather played no favorites. It rained just as hard on the Germans. If the fog obscured our observation, the same was true for the enemy—and he was on the defensive. On September 24th, the 361st Infantry slogged up and took Mount Beni. The next day, the 363rd repeated the act up Mount Freddi. Three days later, Mount Oggioli fell to the 361st and the division had a straight shot north into the mountain village of Monghidoro. In the fight for Oggioli, the Division Artillery had a field day with the little town of Pietramala, located at the foot of the hill. Barrage after barrage was dropped on the town which looked like a hotbed of enemy activity. The 348th FA Battalion, cutting loose with the largest amount of fire since pre-Gothic Line days, tossed 1,700 rounds of 155 shells into the town and vicinity in a single day's time. Later, when the town was occupied, enemy materiel and vehicles were found strewn about in various stages of wreckage. One 88 mm self-propelled gun was among the casualties. An inspection of the houses revealed that the German defenders, with marked respect for the American artillery, had decided against using the outdoor latrine facilities.

Little Monghidoro was not given up easily by the Germans. The number of hills between the advancing Americans and the rich Po Valley was dwindling all too rapidly. For that reason, the enemy held on to every defensive line with the tenacity of a drowning man clutching a life preserver. With such a grip, he held on to Monghidoro.

The job of loosening that grip was given to the artillery. Rejuggling its units on the line, the division slopped forward with the 362nd and 363rd Infantries while the Division Artillery worked over the defenses of Monghidoro with about 10,000 rounds of high explosive. A good many of these rounds were fired as TOTs, that surprise barrage where all shells are timed to reach the target simultaneously. In a tiny hamlet called Frassinco the Division and Corps Artillery collaborated with a TOT on a likely looking target—Germans. A little later the same day more Germans appeared in the same spot so another TOT was dished up. Then more Germans and another TOT and so on until four TOTs had been fired within fifteen minutes. This somewhat dampened the enemy's determination on holding Frassinco. He moved out.

Hill 852, standing like a tough bouncer at the front door of Monghidoro was taken and held only with the aid of considerable artillery fire. The 346th FA Battalion softened the hill's defenses before the infantry stormed and took it. Then, no sooner was

Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps

Monghidoro—after being taken by the 91st Division

the hill occupied, when a German counterattack barreled up the north slope in an attempt to undo what had just been done. The 346th, aided by the 916th, chopped up the counterattack with volley after volley of hastily adjusted fire but the determination and drive of the German infantrymen gave the doughboys on Hill 852 several anxious moments.

This was a pattern the enemy invariably followed regardless of how steep the odds were stacked against him. Everytime he was driven off a hill or out of a town, he would send some sort of counterattack smashing back to retake his lost ground. The Americans learned to expect these counterattacks, no matter how futile a counterattack may have seemed to be. Therefore, after every hill or town was captured, artillery was held like a cocked revolver waiting for the inevitable. Sometimes the German infantry was spotted while it was still forming its drive. Then the counterattack didn't get a chance to start. But sometimes, as the case of Hill 852, the counterattack wasn't located until after it really got rolling. Then things were touch and go for a while. As in the days of Billy the Kid, success depended on how fast and accurately you could draw, aim, and fire. There were scattered instances where German counterattacks successfully dislodged 91st doughboys from newly-won prizes, but in the overwhelming majority of occasions, the artillery proved sufficiently fast and accurate to turn German counterattacks into hundreds of gold stars.

When the 346th moved into positions at the foot of Hill 852 two days after the battle, the hill was still littered with enemy dead.

Monghidoro was taken on October 2nd and with it fell its principal defender, a hill called Montepiano. The expected enemy counterattack upon Montepiano materialized and, with an assist by the weather, was disposed of with deadly efficiency. Visibility was poor and an observer was adjusting the guns of the 347th FA Battalion as best he could by sound and guess. Suddenly, the fog lifted exposing some 200 Germans storming the hill. The observer methodically went to work and several minutes later 190 of the 200 were dead.

The capture of Monghidoro earned the Division another pat on the back from the corps commander. The 91st continued to spearhead the Fifth Army's attack.

The infantry surged forward for several miles until it butted up against the next German stand. It looked like a retake on the fight for Monghidoro

only this time the town was named Loiano and the hill, Mount Bastia. The whole set-up looked tough. The artillery dumped several thousand shells into the town—then, just to see if the water was too hot, the Division stuck in its toe in the form of a small tank attack. It was much too hot. The tanks were blasted before they got to first base. Loiano bristled with enemy guns and defiance.

The longer the infantry looked at Loiano, the stronger it resembled the little village of Poggio back in the Gothic Line scrap. Finally the resemblance became so strong, they decided to prescribe the same treatment. Up came the 346th FA Battalion and down went another one of those famous rolling barrages. Behind the barrage, the 362nd rolled right through Loiano and up to the top of Mount Bastia. That was that.

Along about this time, the weather did something no one thought was possible. It got worse. A thick fog blanketed the ground. Any object that was more than a city block away melted into something that resembled dirty buttermilk. The American infantry groped for the enemy like a man feeling for furniture in a dark room. When small groups of Americans and Germans did bump into each other, they fought it out alone. The fog virtually isolated them from any substantial help from the outside.

Nevertheless, the 91st squirmed ahead slowly. To further complicate an already messy situation, the terrain gave more emphasis to the vertical than the horizontal. To the left of Highway 65, the 362nd Infantry took a hill called Mount Castellari by climbing it with rope ladders under the cover of fog and darkness. During this time, the artillery, deprived of most of its observation, fired as much and as best it could by map, by guess, and by sound. Quite a few rounds were expended on close-in concentrations called for by infantry commanders to break up enemy counterattacks.

On October 7th, the attention of the division became focused on the town of Livergnano. Because of the costly fight that centered around this village, a division historian has tagged it with title of "Little Cassino," but to the cannoneer it was known generally as "Liver-'n'-onions." No matter which way you look at it, the fact that the town's name in some form or other became well known to all is indicative of the magnitude of the battle that raged over its flattened houses and rubbled streets.

Livergnano became important because it was one of two breaks in one of the most impossible strips of rock that ever stretched its forbidding length across a division front. If the Germans had been in cahoots with Nature, the two together couldn't have dreamed up a more formidable barrier than the wall of stone that was known as the Livergnano Escarpment. Like some huge, petrified Niagara Falls, this almost perpendicular cliff, which in some places jutted more than 1,800 feet above its base, divided the plateau into two separate levels. Along its rim, the Germans waited watching every move of the oncoming Americans like a man carefully checking his first shot on a pin-ball machine.

Not much help was the fact that the 91st at this time was well in advance of the Allied divisions to its right and left. This meant that not only were there Germans to the front, but on both flanks as well. It was something like fighting your way up a blind alley at night in a fog.

The Division aimed its attack at the two breaks in this amazing escarpment and tossed the job to the 361st Infantry. While one battalion was ordered to move through a cut near a wide place in the road called Bigallo, another battalion was sent into Livergnano to seize the break in the escarpment through which Highway 65 ran. Bigallo was about a mile to the east of Livergnano and the battalion which was to storm the escarpment at Bigallo, was to follow up by sweeping westward toward Livergnano cleaning off the escrapment rim as it went.

Plans always sound good on paper. Unfortunately, the enemy also has plans that sound equally as good. And when two good plans meet head on in their respective executions, it's wise to make arrangements to be somewhere else. No such arrangements were made for the 361st Infantry. It smashed its way into both cuts, at Livergnano and Bigallo, and in both places ran into traps.

Company K of the 361st was the first into Livergnano. Well-placed enemy machine guns forced the company to seek cover in a building whereupon the enemy began a systematic levelling of the building with point-blank fire from heavy tanks. This brought a show-down and both sides tossed everything they had into Livergnano. But the round went to the Germans on points. Despite desperate efforts to break into the town and rescue the trapped doughboys, all attempts to pierce the enemy fire failed. With the exception of a handful of men who escaped, Company K was wiped out.

However, the Germans had paid dearly for the privilege of holding on to Livergnano. The 916th FA Battalion, backed up by the 348th, had poured shells into the town until it was completely flattened. Two enemy self-propelled guns and the remains of a horse-drawn artillery battery later were found in the debris.

On the right, near Bigallo, the 361st was having only slightly better luck. The cut through the escarpment at this point was not much of an improvement over the escarpment proper. To get through it and scale the cliff, the infantrymen needed all four of their limbs for locomotion. There was no trail. Weapons had to be strapped to their bodies. Heavier ones, like machine guns, had to be disassembled and the parts distributed to the pockets

and packs of several men with the fervent hope that all arrived at the same place at approximately the same time.

Once they gained the top, Companies E and G deployed to engage the enemy. Under the cover of darkness, the enemy infiltrated around the doughboys so that morning found the two companies completely surrounded and cut off from their own lines. As an extra added attraction, the terrain took the shape of a bowl or a saucer with the hapless Americans in the low ground in the middle. This called for another show-down. The 363rd Infantry was sent to the rescue. Slowly, the regiment flattened resistance around Bigallo and under the cover of night sent a battalion to scale the escarpment and reinforce the isolated companies on the top. This round the Germans lost and by doing so they permitted a wedge to be driven into their line which gradually unseated them from their positions along the escarpment rim.

Back at Livergnano, the situation was improving. The see-saw battles for the two hills that dominated the town were sapping the strength of the defenders. On the morning of October 13th, the artillery cut loose with a 2,000-round preparation which followed on the heels of a severe pasting delivered by air force bombers. The two hills at Livergnano were taken and a reconstituted Company K entered the town itself. It was empty save for the dead.

The enemy fell back all along the front—but only after considerable and forcible persuasion. The elements of the 361st which had been trapped near Bigallo now eased their way along the escarpment rim, routing out Germans as they went, and finally joining the rest of the regiment on Highway 65 north of Livergnano.

Meanwhile, elements of the 363rd which had charged through the Bigallo cut to rescue the two trapped companies of the 361st pushed north to take a village called Querceta. Then the regiment fanned out to occupy the right half of the Division's sector.

This marked the end of the battle for the Livergnano Escarpment. The wall-like cliff was now occupied by the 91st along its entire length within the division sector. Captured German prisoners referred to these defenses as the Caesar Line. That made another line the division had smashed. It was another first and ten in the march toward victory. And the 91st still had the ball.

In the fight for the so-called Caesar Line, the 91st Division Artillery specialized in serving up TOTs. These Time-On-Target concentrations were used in every possible manner: to repel counterattacks, as accompanying fires for infantry attacks, for counterbattery blasts. In a 24-hour period between October 12 and 13, 24 TOTs were fired during the hectic hours of the battle. In situations where speed was essential, 91st artillery know-how

Them was me mother's last words—"Be sure to drink plenty of fruit juices."

produced gratifying results. On October 13th, an artillery spotter plane located an enemy artillery unit which had been particularly troublesome. Three guns were observed firing from positions near an exit of a railroad tunnel. Whenever fire had been brought upon these enemy guns, the crews merely wheeled the guns into the tunnel and waited for things to cool off. To nip an arrangement like this called for a fast TOT. While a few adjusting rounds were fired by the 348th FA Battalion (not really enough to scare the Germans into the tunnel), telephone lines were kept busy as the artillery headquarters lined up battalions of artillery—both division and corps— to participate in the big show. Then with the adjusted data determined by the 348th, the whole works cut loose on the enemy battery. With virtually no warning, 200 rounds of 155 mm shells and 24 rounds of 240 mm shells crashed down on the enemy positions. The airplane observer reported three direct hits before smoke from an exploding ammunition dump obscured the scene. Time consumed between the first spotting of the target until the actual impact of the exploding shells of the TOT: 18 minutes.

After Livergnano, it was time to call a halt. The Fifth Army's attack was petering out like old snow. The Germans were just as tough as ever. Every mile the advance gained added another mile onto the tortuous and congested supply line up Highway 65. And finally, the weather clamped a cold and soggy hand down on everything that moved. The hopes of the 91st to take Bologna and break out into the Po Valley before the winter freeze collapsed just ten miles short of the goal.

But there would be another chance . . . later.

CHAPTER VIII

. . . WINTER, according to the calendar, wasn't to begin for almost two months. Nevertheless, it sent a most impressive advance party of rain, cold, and fog to prepare for its coming. Both sides took the hint.

The two opposing armies were desperately tired. Like two fighters who had slugged each other into exhaustion, they could only spit and snarl back and forth until they recaptured their wind. Occasionally one would try to swing a tired, clumsy blow at the other, but it generally missed its mark and spent itself doing more damage to the swinger than to the swingee. For the next five months, all was quiet on the Italian front.

The Germans used the time trying to regroup their tattered forces and brace themselves for the attack that was bound to come. The Americans had to do something about their overstretched and overworked supply lines. They could use the time

Looking down on the Apennine Mountains in the winter, shell holes on the ground appear as black burnt spots on the white carpet of snow.

to stockpile supplies, repair roads, and bring up fresh troops.

The stalemate was officially recognized by Division Field Order Number 25. Instead of indicating the route of advance and directing that the infantry seize specific objectives, it ordered the doughboys to establish a defensive line of resistance with appropriate outposts and counterattack plans. The artillery, instead of planning a sizzling preparation for an attack, was directed to thicken the infantry's defensive fires on logical routes of enemy approach with prearranged normal and emergency barrages.

Normal and emergency barrages were the routine contributions the artillery made to any defensive position. The targets of normal barrages were the most likely routes the enemy would use were he to attack the defenders. Each battery of artillery was assigned a normal barrage and the howitzers of the battery were always kept layed on this barrage whenever they were not firing on another target. In this way the normal barrage was given the

Aerial photo of a portion of the snow-covered Apennines used by the Div-Arty photo-interpreter to locate enemy mortar installations.

number one priority. Emergency barrages covered other likely routes of approach and data to shoot these barrages was prearranged so the howitzers could quickly take them under fire should the enemy lack the wisdom to appreciate the advantages of the routes covered by the normal barrages. Between the normal and emergency barrages, the front could be fairly well blanketed with artillery fire should be need ever arise. And it never really did. There were occasions when nervous infantrymen called down barrages on enemy patrols that were mistaken for attacks in force. But then the ammunition wasn't completely wasted because it had a discouraging effect on the patrol.

The complete halt of the division's advance left the 347th Field Artillery Battalion out on a limb. Shortly after the capture of Livergnano, the battalion displaced forward to positions just southeast of the town to better support the infantry's advance. But the attack skidded to a halt leaving the 347th almost within shouting distance of the German guns. That's when the German guns started to do the shouting. In less than a week's time, more than 4,000 enemy shells pounded the 347th's positions—everything from 88 mm to massive 210 mm ammuntion. Battery A's kitchen truck was overturned and other vehicles were slightly damaged. Battery C had two howitzers nicked. Nine men qualified for Purple Hearts as a result of the shelling, but fortunately, there were no fatalities. That was enough, however, and the battalion moved out. On the night of October 23rd, all but Battery C withdrew to rearward positions near the other battalions just outside of the village of Barbarola. Battery C covered the infantry during the displacement, took another severe shelling, then joined the rest of the battalion the next day. This was the first backward step the 91st Division Artillery had ever made since it entered combat.

Five hundred short—damnit!

Two weeks later, Battery A of the 916th Field Artillery Battalion was forced to make a similar backward step. The battery, like the 347th Battalion, was in a well forward position just north of La Guarda when the lines stopped moving. After absorbing punishment from all sizes of German weapons ranging from mortars to 170 mm stuff, the battery pulled up stakes and went back to a position close by the other batteries of the battalion just north of a handful of houses called Sabbioni.

Because of the nature of his weapon, the cannoneer was pretty well isolated from the battlefield, speaking from an intelligence point of view. He rarely had a clear picture of just what was going on. Scraps of information on the progress of the infantry's fight or on what the "Old Man" planned to do next trickled down to him by word of mouth but usually details were lacking and frequently so was accuracy. Rumors circulated constantly and ran the full range of improbabilities. His most dependable method of determining the score was to solve algebraically the unknown of the battle through the relationship of his own known contribution. When his battery moved up frequently and fired infrequently, he knew the infantry was advancing rapidly against little or no opposition. When his howitzer pumped out shell after shell from the same position several days on end, he knew the infantry was having tough sledding. The winter stalemate made itself known to the cannoneers of the 347th and 916th when units of these battalions were forced to make the first retrograde movement of their careers. The stalemate was emphasized and underlined to all artillerymen at the end of October when the ammunition began to run out.

The surest way for an army to be voted Least Likely to Succeed was to run out of cannonballs. The probability of such a situation seemed so remote to the well equipped and well supplied Americans (comparatively speaking) that its approach had the effect of a low blow. Just where all the shells were was anybody's guess. If the high brass knew, they confided only in lamp posts. One rumor had it that the supply lines couldn't furnish ammunition as fast as it was being shot up. Another said that it was being hoarded for a big all-out push. Still another rumor pointed out that the fight in France was considered more important and cannonballs were being diverted from Italy to feed

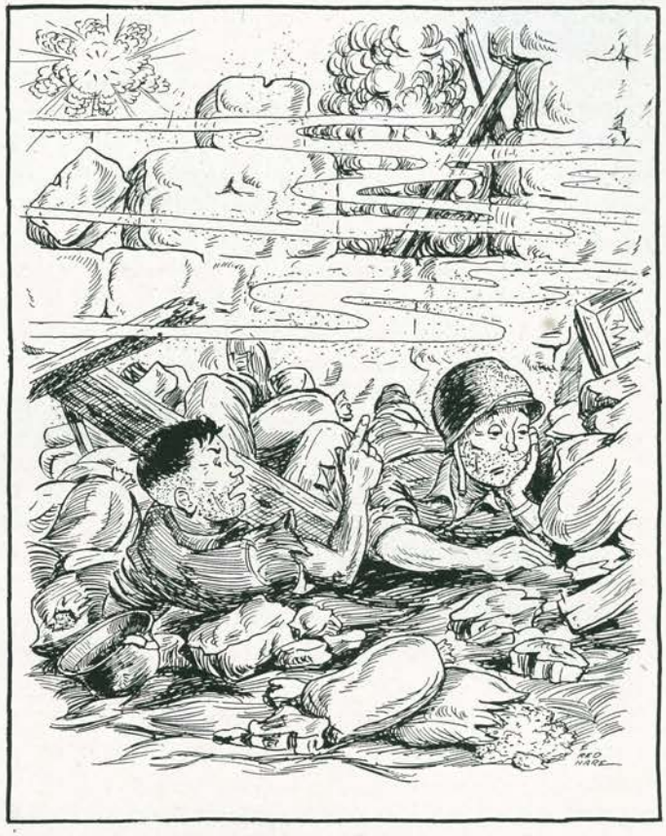
the hungry howitzers on the Western Front. A fourth said that somebody high in supply channels had goofed off. Finally, somebody pointed an accusing finger at the so called "home-front" where production presumably was all SNAFU. Possibly there might have been varying degrees of truth in each one. It was never said. But the fact remained that the supply of artillery ammunition was uncomfortably low in the Italian Theater.

Rationing was the obvious result. During the last week in October, the Division Artillery was alloted only enough shells for each battalion to expend an average of only 363 rounds per day. This meant that each howitzer could fire no more than one round every hour—were all weapons to split the ammunition equally. This was quite a comedown from the pace the artillery had maintained up until then. On the second day of the month, more ammunition had been expended in a single 8-hour period than was shot during the entire last week in October. The Division Artillery was forced to swallow the bitter pill of watching more shells crash in than it could shoot back.

The ammunition supply stayed pretty skimpy all winter long. Sometimes the allotment for a week or so got better. Sometimes worse. Nevertheless some sort of ammunition conservation measures had to be taken at all times which led to new artillery techniques developed by Mother Necessity. Of course, every possible target was carefully reviewed in the fire direction centers of the battalions to determine if it deserved fire—and if so, how much. And it wasn't long before the practice of "sniping" came into widespread use.

It all started when artillery observers spotted single enemy vehicles, or perhaps two or three of them, moving along roads behind the German lines. With both sides merely waiting out the winter as they were, the movement of just a few vehicles was, perhaps, the only activity an observer would spot in a day. Yet with the artillery suffering from an acute shortage of cannonballs, it would be foolish to waste many rounds trying to adjust fire onto a single truck racing along a road. So, like an infantry sniper, the artillery prepared an ambush along the road—and waited.

A single howitzer was adjusted onto a certain spot that could be observed along a road behind enemy lines. The observer then just waited for something to come along. When he spotted a vehicle approaching he made a rapid estimate of its speed. Then, knowing the time the shell would take to reach the appointed spot on the roadway after it was fired, the observer called for the loaded howitzer to shoot when he figured shell and vehicle would arrive at the same spot at the same time. They usually did. Any slight variance in either shell or vehicle was generally compensated by the splash



. . . and we just finished paintin' Pine Trees on the walls too!

of the shell and the far reach of the hundreds of flying fragments.

Many such sniping points were set up. Each battalion had several observers and an observer may have a bead drawn on more than one road. Some got pretty good with their sniping. One officer of the 348th Battalion spotted two enemy vehicles approaching two separate sniping points at the same time. He made rapid calculations for both, cut loose with two howitzers, got two direct hits. Although this sort of potshooting didn't seriously cripple the enemy, it did do a fairly good job of denying him the use of his forward road net during the daylight hours. Every little bit helped.

Nor could the Germans return the favor. They could not afford to fire their artillery too often during the day for fear of being detected by the ever-watchful artillery spotter planes overhead. The Air OPs maintained a constant daylight patrol as long as the weather permitted. When it didn't permit, it was probably bad enough to louse up ground observation as well. There were exceptions to the rule, of course. The enemy hazarded occasional harassing shots on important road intersections and less occasionally bagged himself a passing truck. It happened just frequently enough to give a redleg who was jeeping over an exposed stretch of road an intense feeling of nakedness.

Although sniping was more fun, photo intelli-

gence played a more important role in determining the fires of the artillery during the winter. To keep tab on the latest in enemy position, the Allied command had the Air Forces fly periodic missions over enemy territory photographing the terrain below. The photographing plane flew up and down the German-held ground like a man mowing his lawn until all of it was recorded on film. The resulting photographs—and there were stacks of them—were sent out to all who were concerned. To the 91st Division Artillery Headquarters came shots of the terrain immediately in front of the 91st troops and extending as far back as 91st artillery could reach. At the artillery headquarters, a trained photo-interpreter examined the pictures which were in stereoscopic pairs. Through a military version of the old-fashioned stereoscope, the photo-interpreter was able to spot artillery and mortar positions that might normally escape detection. By means of a simple calculation, he was able to determine the exact map locations of these suspected enemy positions.

This information was used in two ways. The particularly juicy targets (i.e., enemy artillery batteries, etc.) were turned over to the artillery air officer at the air strip to be inspected from an Air OP. If an observer in a plane could accurately locate any of the targets, he would, of course, adjust artillery fire on it until he was satisfied it would cause no more trouble. The less imposing enemy works located by photo-intelligence were plotted on charts in the S-2 (intelligence) section for future reference.

"Future reference" in the last mentioned disposition developed into the extensively used Countermortar and Counterbattery Systems. The operation of both systems was exactly the same—they differed only in that one concerned itself with enemy mortar positions while the other dealt with enemy artillery positions. The underlying principle of their operation was as simple as a snowball fight. If somebody soaks you with a well aimed snowball, your immediate impulse is to locate the snowballer by looking in the direction from which the snowball came. When the "snowballs" were shells, it was usually impossible to actually see who was shooting at you, so you looked on your chart instead.

A stretch of Italian countryside photographed from the air showing clearly the many craters caused by artillery fire.

Just as soon as enemy shells started singing in, the direction from which they came was reported to the artillery headquarters along with the estimated size of the shells. Knowing where the shells were landing, the artillery could plot down the reported directional line on the chart of enemy positions and see which of the positions was likely to be doing the shooting. Then, just to play safe, the artillery placed fire on all suspicious positions in the direction from which the enemy shelling came. In this manner, the enemy's guns could be neutralized before any serious damage was done.

True, there were plenty of ways for such a scheme to go sour. For example, if the original guess as to the direction from which the shells were coming was bad (and it frequently was), the follow through would probably be way out of line. However, a lot of errors in shell reports were compensated by the shotgun tactics with which the artillery returned the fire. So many enemy positions were blasted, the offending one often got clipped for the want of something else to shoot at. It was one way to kill Germans.

It was also a good way to burn up a lot of scarce ammunition. Although both of these systems were set up for instant use, it wasn't often the ammunition situation permitted the artillery the luxury of squandering shells like this unless the incoming shelling took on something like serious proportions. There were other uses, however, particularly for the countermortar chart.

In the event the infantry wanted to run a fairly important patrol action or seize a small portion of ground to straighten out the lines, countermortar fires sometimes spelled the difference between success and failure of the mission. All known or suspected mortar positions that were capable of dumping shells on the locale of the infantry operation were taken under fire, and in some cases kept under fire, until the infantry said whoa. At times like these, the photo-interpreter and his countermortar chart could be very popular guys, indeed. On the other hand, if the operation was fouled up by an excessive amount of enemy mortar fire, the photo-interpreter was greeted with arched eye-

brows and the countermortar chart underwent a complete overhaul.

The longer the artillery stayed in one place, the more elaborate the defense plans became. Besides the regular plan of normal and emergency barrages, other types of defensive fires were computed, recorded on large slabs of paper, duplicated with gelatin pads, and copies sent in all directions. There was an anti-mechanized attack plan which would bring vast quantities of artillery fire down upon any possible enemy tank attack. This plan eventually coordinated all anti-tank weapons in the entire division. Then there was a plan for counterpreparation fires. This the artillery would shoot if the German artillery ever started firing a preparation in connection with an offensive action of their own. Counterpreparation fires were aimed at assembly areas from which enemy attacks were likely to jump off. Finally, carrying their supposing to the limits of possibilities, the brain trusts of the artillery headquarters cooked up a fire plan to support a counterattack. This was to be shot if a long list of "ifs" was satisfied. *If* the enemy decided to attack, and *if* the planned counterpreparation failed to break up his attack in its formative stages, and *if* the system of normal and emergency barrages was unable to halt the enemy drive, and *if* the infantry was forced to fall back and the enemy successfully pierced the 91st's defensive line—then, and only then, would the Fire-Plan-To-Support-A-Counterattack be unleashed to help the infantry retake the lost ground, if possible.

While the brass in headquarters was busy figuring out new fire plans, counting shells, and dreaming up new ways to kill time, the cannoneers, the wiremen, and the others were spending their days to more practical advantage—digging in. Whenever an artillery unit pauses for any length of time in one position, its men devote most of their spare hours to fixing shelters that are warm, dry, and safe. The more time available, the more elaborate the shelters. Now with a whole winter to prepare for, the foxhole became *passe* and gave way to something that, although unnamed, was a real aristocrat of holes. If possible, it was dug cave-like into the side of a hill or embankment. Often there was room for more than one man and bunks were built out of whatever was handy. As the time went on, some sort of illumination was installed as was a stove that for the want of wood or coal for fuel, often burned gasoline or oil. There were occasions when men were injured when makeshift stoves provided more heat than was counted on, but on the whole, the holes were snug and warm and surprisingly comfortable. Those who were in positions where they could not dig horizontally into an embankment, dug straight down and fashioned themselves every bit as elegant a winter home as their cave-dwelling buddies. For a roof over such a

Photo by Clarence Quirk

Cease fire, mission accomplished

diggings, two shelter-halves were buttoned together, pitched, insulated around the edges, and properly ditched to keep rain from washing in.

Of course, there were those lucky ones who were able to take over a building that happened to turn up in their vicinity. Italian buildings, almost without exception, were sturdily built stone and brick structures which gave protection from almost everything but a direct hit from heavy artillery. While most of the space inside a building was devoted to sleeping quarters, there was some corner set aside for what odd bits of furniture could be collected repaired, or constructed: a chair or two, a table or a desk, a stove and a candlestick, or even an electric light if the outfit possessed a generator in working condition. The building had to be perfectly blacked out. Some apprehensive crews even sandbagged in the window and door cavities just to make certain not only that rays of light could not leak out, but that passing shell fragments could not leak in. All battalion headquarters and the Division Artillery headquarters were set up in buildings. These command posts had both tactical and administrative missions to perform and only in buildings could they find adequate space and protection to carry them out. But this did not mean they were located in a rearward area by any means. The most important consideration in the location of a headquarters is the ease by which such a location can be connected with subordinate units by wire communication. A headquarters with no communication is no headquarters at all. It must be right in the middle of things.

The establishment of comfortable quarters was not just the personal worry of each man. Those charged with the responsibility of command realized that the efficiency of their units depended on the health and morale of each member. Housing projects were not just tolerated, they were encouraged and finally made compulsory. Standards were set and inspections made to make sure that every last cannoneer had a safe, warm place to rest,

Photo by Clarence Quirk

The facade of fabulous St. Peter's in the Vatican

Looking down into the court in front of St. Peter's in the Vatican

relax, and store his gear. The importance of this could not be over-emphasized. A man in Battery C of the 348th Field Artillery Battalion received a Division Citation because of the excellence of his dugout. Battery B of the 916th Field Artillery Battalion had such deluxe diggings for all of its men, the battery position became a show spot and a model of how the job should be done.

Once housing was established, it was constantly improved. The Division Artillery headquarters actually repainted the walls of some of its rooms and redecorated them with large replicas of the division shoulder patch. Outside, latrines were put under cover and paths were built through the mud using bricks, stones, and shell packing cases for paving materials. Roads were curried constantly to keep them passable and the 348th built itself a new road which gave easier access to its positions. Lumber from packing cases and shell crates was put to good use by the dugout dwellers who lined their dirt walls and reinforced their dirt ceilings. All of this paid off and paid off well. Neither the weather nor German shells had much effect on the Division Artillery during the winter, although both made a pretty good try. True, men were wounded and killed by enemy artillery, but such casualties usually occurred when the men were moving along roads or performing duties that took them away from their holes.

Not only housing, but clothing showed preparations for an imminent winter. The regular G.I. woolen O.D.'s gave way to, or were covered up by, strange and warm-looking togs. A long weatherproofed, reversible coat was issued to all OP personnel. One of the coat's surfaces was white to provide camouflage in the snow. Truck drivers received fur-lined jackets in place of their regular field jackets a Russian-looking fur cap put in an appearance on the heads of those whose duties kept them outside for any length of time. Shoe-pacs, a cobbler's creation of rubber and leather, became the almost universal footgear. They were waterproof, warm, and heavy. Men were taught that warmth is achieved, not by a few layers of thick, bulky clothes, but by many layers of thin clothing. Woolen sweaters were issued to everybody to provide one such layer. So were extra suits of "long-handle" underwear.

The wedding-cake-like monument to Victor Emmanuel in Rome

Photo by Clarence Quirk

Along Highway 65 between Florence and Bologna

Photo by Clarence Quirk

Photo by Clarence Quirk

St. Peter's dome

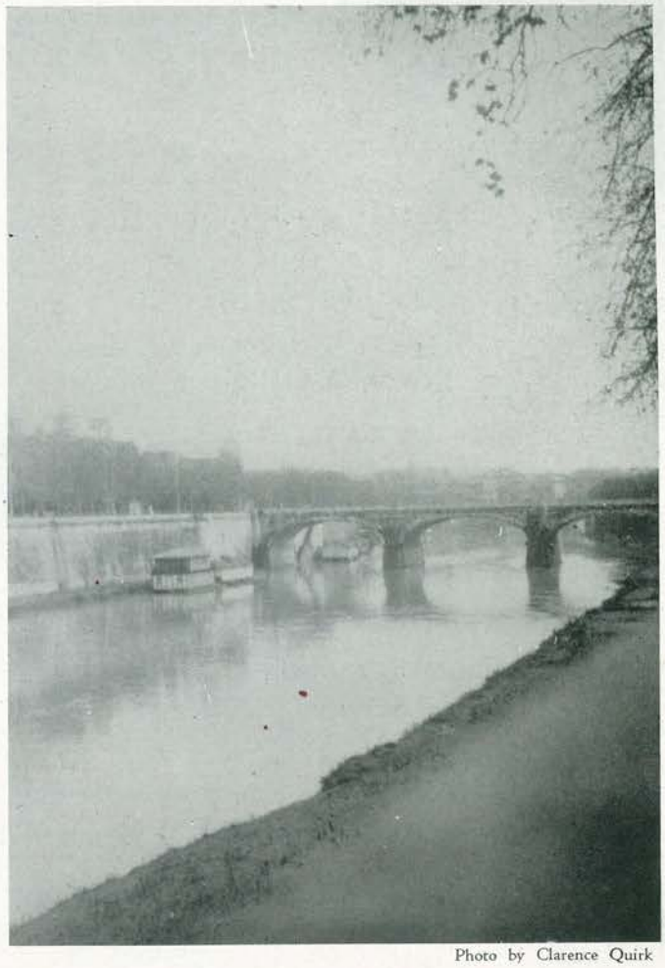


Photo by Clarence Quirk

The Tiber River flowing through Rome

The halting of the attack removed the complications of movement and gave administrative channels the chance to follow through on something that was long overdue. The division had earned two battle stars and it was high time awards and decorations were pinned on the men who did most towards winning those stars. Artillerymen who performed bravely in the middle of such grim businesses as Monticelli, the Futa Pass, Monghidoro, Loiano, and Livergnano were decorated with little strips of ribbon that represented the gratitude of their nation. Those behind the scenes were not forgotten. Wiremen who saw to it that communications were put in and stayed in despite shell or high water received well-deserved recognition. So did those who kept the trucks rolling, those who did the planning and computing, those who cared for the sick and wounded, and all outstanding members of the team, regardless of the positions they played.

Now that movement had ceased and activity was curtailed, there was time for relaxation and recreation. There was a lot in Italy to be seen and enjoyed and now there was time to see and enjoy it. Fifth Army rest and rehabilitation centers had been set up in Florence and Rome to which units of the 91st Division began to send men for four to six days at a time. The words "rest" and "rehabilitation" were really misnomers when applied to these centers. A soldier's "rest" trip to Florence or Rome was squandered just as foolishly and joyously as a seaman's shore leave after a long voyage. After four or six days of almost non-stop fun, the soldier returned to the front where he got his needed (by then) rest and rehabilitation while he counted the weeks till his turn came up again for another "rest" trip.

Florence and Rome were both excellent examples of a large European city. As such they offered a wide variety of entertainment — and satisfaction could be found for almost every taste. The war passed over these two cities with a gentle touch. Although their environs showed ample evidence of a bang-up scrap, the main cores of the towns had hardly a brick out of place. Florence suffered a few black eyes along her river front and lost several bridges, but outside of that, she retained all of her charms. For the sightseer, there were more historical and artistic gems than he could ever cover in one or more "rest" trips. Besides Rome's ancient ruins there were the more up-to-date beauties of the Vatican, of St. Peter's, of the Sistine Chapel, and of St. Paul's besides a host of smaller fry. In Rome,

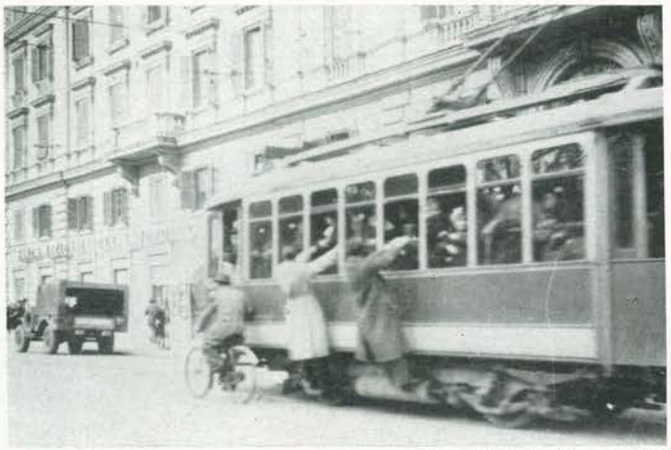


Photo by Clarence Quirk

A Roman trolley doing a land-office business

one could look in on the graves of Keats and Shelley, or for a handful of lire buy a sputtering candle and the right to stumble through a portion of the catacombs. Rome was a natural for the typical, big city, conducted tour. Professional guides were easier to find than the end of your nose. These same guides had shown the same sights to the Germans not too many months ago, but they were able to take the Americans in their stride. They spoke English and German equally well, but speaking English paid better.

Florence, not quite so flashy as Rome, was more on the arty side. In Florence, for those who wanted to ferret them out, were such masterpieces as Michelangelo's "David," but few bothered. Most of those who saw Florence, saw the outside of the city's great cathedral, the inside of several bars, and spent the rest of the time shopping. Not since the days of Volterra when the homefolks received a deluge of Alabaster did the U. S. Mail haul so much freight to home addresses. In Florence there was store after store of leather goods, linens, jewelry, and other assorted knick-knacks. Rome didn't do badly either. Merchants soon learned that the Americans had no other place to spend their money and prices were adjusted accordingly. There was no O.P.A. in Italy.

To supplement Rome and Florence, the 91st Division established its own rest center in a little out-of-the-way place called Montecatini Terme. It was located in the Arno River Valley on the highway between Florence and Pisa. Thanks to several convenient mineral springs, Montecatini turned out to be a famous health resort town of Italy. Although it was not very large, being a resort town meant that the community was geared to big city ways and means. There were many large and somewhat fancy hotels, some luxurious bath houses, a wide selection of movies and theaters, plenty of stores, and, most important of all, an abundance of cognac and vino. The overflow of those undergoing "rest" at Montecatini were quartered in the nearby town of Monsummano, a somewhat lesser known, more run-down and less frilly resort town than Montecatini.

It was about this time that the artillery's attention was forcibly called to something written in small print in the military textbooks. The gist of it: seldom, if ever, is the artillery taken out of the line in combat. The infantry, yes, whole regiments can be taken out of the line and sent back to rest areas for indefinite periods. Engineers, to be sure, whole companies or battalions can be spared at a time. The same goes for medical units, reconnaissance units, headquarters personnel, signal troops . . . but the artillery—no! Those big guns of theirs must always be in place and ready no matter how quiet the battlefield may become . . . just in case. For this reason, it was usually artillery units which piled up the greatest records of continuous time in the line without relief. However, the individual men were given the best break possible, yet still maintain the letter of the law. When whole regiments of infantry were sent back to Montecatini, the artillery battalions were permitted to keep a fourth of their strength at the rest center and rotate until every man had had a crack at it. In this manner, there were always enough men on hand to keep the howitzers shooting.

Most of the time at the front seemed to be spent just waiting. Waiting for the minutes to creep by for H-hour. Waiting for reports on progress of each platoon of infantry. Waiting to see what the enemy planned to do. Waiting until a shelling spent itself. Waiting for nightfall. Waiting for daybreak. Waiting, waiting, waiting! And now, waiting was to be measured not in minutes or hours—but in months. A whole winter!

In the desert of minutes and hours that stretched interminably day after day, occasional movies cropped up like welcome oases in the lives of the artillerymen. The Division Artillery had the foresight to buy its own movie projection equipment before coming overseas. Now the investment was paying off—but not without the additional investment of sweat and prayers on the part of the special service officer and his abused crew of projectionists. The projector was rotated between the battalions and the Headquarters Battery, all of whom, by this time, had set up some sort of movie theaters. They were usually cramped and stuffy places, but no one ever seemed to mind. If everyone couldn't pile in for one show, the film was run again for a second, third, or fourth shift, if necessary. This sort of thing was pretty rough on the equipment which fought back by breaking down when the special service officer's prestige could least afford it. If the projector was operating passably, the generator supplying the current might conk out. Or the wires running between the generator and the projector might offer so much resistance that the voltage would be inadequate to operate

both the light and sound simultaneously. There were lots of things to go wrong and a lot of them did. But somehow the pieces managed to hang together for a lot of shows to be shown and a lot of redlegs were the happier for it.

However, cinema habits needed readjustment from the days of ushers and air conditioning. Many discovered for the first time that films came on reels and that one movie took as many as two and three reels before the final fade-out. The changing of reels provided the rub. It always seemed that a reel would run out just as the villain was about to feed a trussed-up heroine into a buzz saw. Then while everyone waited anxiously, the projector operator would thread through the next reel using the first few feet of the reel to accomplish the threading. When the projector started up again the action revealed the heroine completely free of the villain's snare and the plot continued with no further mention of or reference to the buzz saw. Movie audiences developed slight degrees of frustration because the most gripping part of the film always seemed to appear on those few feet that were used for threading. Still this burden never grew so heavy that anyone was moved to renounce movies altogether. The same gang turned up again when the next film came 'round to be shown.

For the first three weeks in November, things were normal—that is to say, 91st Division infantry manned the defensive positions astride Highway 65 supported by the 91st Division Artillery. For a short time at the end of October and the first couple of weeks in November, the 346th Field Artillery Battalion had been loaned out to the 88th Division, but by the middle of November the battalion had returned to the fold. Then, along about November 21st, the three infantry regiments of the division were pulled out of the line for a well-earned rest and the infantry of the 34th Division took their places! Nominally, the sector passed into the control of the 34th Division and the 91st Division Artillery, which held fast, reported to 34th Division headquarters. This change of supported units brought no change in the artillery's job. Only the 347th was materially affected. Through a switch, its services were loaned to the 1st Armored Division which was holding down the sector on the left.

When December put in its appearance, word came down the line that the Fifth Army was cooking up another attack which was to break out in the Po Valley before the worst of the winter weather hit the mountains. The second of December brought the rested infantry of the 91st back and the sector passed back to 91st control. About the same time, the 347th was returned to its old slot. With all the gathering of the clan, it looked as if something was brewing.

Division Field Order Number 32 was issued. It called for extensive preparations to be made for an

Personnel of 346's fire direction center line up outside a shell scarred CP.

all-out attack. The pattern looked familiar. As usual the big punch was to be delivered by the II Corps which was collecting divisions north of Florence. The 91st, being on the foremost salient into enemy positions, was a cinch for the starting line-up. It began to look like things were going to be a little warm in the Apennines this winter despite the weather.

The artillery had plenty of work to do. An extensive fire plan had to be worked up to support the attack. To keep the surprise until the last minute, the big guns would fire no preparation. The artillery was not to open up until the infantry had jumped off. That made the planning job tougher. It would be hard to predict just where and when fire would be needed most. The countermortar plan was given a last-minute overhauling and its enemy locations were assigned to all artillery battalions as well as attached artillery, infantry cannon companies, heavy weapons companies, and chemical mortar units. One hundred and eighty-seven different targets of known and suspected enemy positions were set up to be fired on at a moment's notice if any showed signs of activity. Working with infantry attack plans, the artillery headquarters set up defensive barrages to protect each phase line of the infantry's attack. Fires were prepared to ring each objective as soon as infantry units had secured the ground.

The machinery for attack was poised and waiting to be set in motion. Then the bottom fell out. A guy

with a monocle and a field marshal's baton named Von Rundstedt had started a German offensive rolling in Luxembourg that looked like it might set the American troops in Europe back on their heels. Everyone became as suspicious as the farmer who heard a sneeze in his henhouse. This could be just the beginning of an all-out German offensive on *all* fronts. Although the intelligence reports did not indicate a piling up of enemy troops in Italy, still . . .

The situation was ripe for it to happen, so it happened. Some units on the far-flung front of the IV Corps fell back before a sharp German attack. Rumor had it that the enemy had begun an offensive down the Tyrrhenian coast headed for Leghorn. Just what the score really was, the redlegs were never told, but two divisions that had been held as a reserve punch for the proposed II Corps attack were dispatched post haste to the IV Corps area to help hold the fort. That did it. Plans for the would-be American offensive withered like a second-hand corsage. Without his right arm, even Joe Louis would probably think twice before picking a fight. Meanwhile, the German "offensive" vanished like thin smoke. After the American troops fell back several hundred yards, nothing further happened. The ground was soon regained and things began to look disgustingly normal again. The dispatched divisions hung around for awhile, though. Just to make sure.

With the collapse of the plans for an attack, the Fifth Army settled down for the winter—this time, for sure. With the German offensive in Europe as a reminder of what could happen, plans for the defense were hauled out and given a once over. Somebody spotted opportunities where the plans could be elaborated, so elaborated they were. No detail was too small to be overlooked.

The artillery, which already had prepared sheafs of defensive fires, now turned to the task of preparing rearward positions which could be occupied should the enemy break through present defensive positions. Then after the rearward positions were established, an elaborate traffic system was set up so that the infantry always had some artillery firing in its support while the displacing artillery units hit the road in such an order as to stay out of each other's way and avoid road jams. The plan looked good on paper. Just the same, everybody, including its authors, were keeping their fingers crossed that its effectiveness would never have to be tested.

Meanwhile, the 91st Division took over the 1st Armored Division's sector to the left and now was stretched over two division sectors. A slight readjustment of artillery positions took care of the widened sector. Additional help came when two artillery battalions of the 34th Division were assigned temporarily to the 91st.

All of which brings the story up to the end of

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas . . .

1944, and Christmas. Spending this holiday of holidays up in the mountains, in the front lines, in a war was, perhaps, not the best way to celebrate its passing. Yet, in a strained situation such as it was, many of the unnecessary frills usually connected with Christmas were stripped away. The day, itself, emerged as it really was—the birthday of Christ. This sort of observance was like a breath of fresh country air after spending years in a smoky city.

There were a few frills, however, to which no one objected. Every last redleg was fed a big turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Although it may not have looked as good squashed in a mess kit as it did on white table linen and chinaware back home, the taste suffered nothing. Then, as long as the U. S. Mail was running, there would be an exchange of gifts. But the real Christmas celebration was in religious services held for all faiths. Impromptu groups of carolers drifted together and sang the familiar songs of Christmas. Winter had moved into the mountains by this time and everything lay blanketed beneath many inches of snow. As the night deepened, everything became quiet, except for occasional rounds of artillery crackling on their way. A sentry ploughed his way through the snow and cold on his appointed rounds. By his standards, a white Christmas was a pain in the neck.

When the last hope to break out of the mountains before spring was abandoned, the Fifth Army began to scramble and switch its divisions around like the carnival sharpie moves his shells back and forth. The Germans were supposed to be confused about which shell the pea was under. In the scramble several units were slipped back into rest areas for a breather before getting back into the scramble again. However, the artillery, for the most part, was spared all of this flitting around. Their gun emplacements were becoming more and more improved as the winter rolled by and a change was only made when enemy artillery happened to find the range of a particular position and knew it. Thus the four battalions of the 91st Division Artillery stayed put along Highway 65 all winter long. Not so with the Division Artillery headquarters and Headquarters Battery. It was caught in the tide of changes and was washed back and forth along the Italian front before returning to its familiar red house just south of Livergnano.

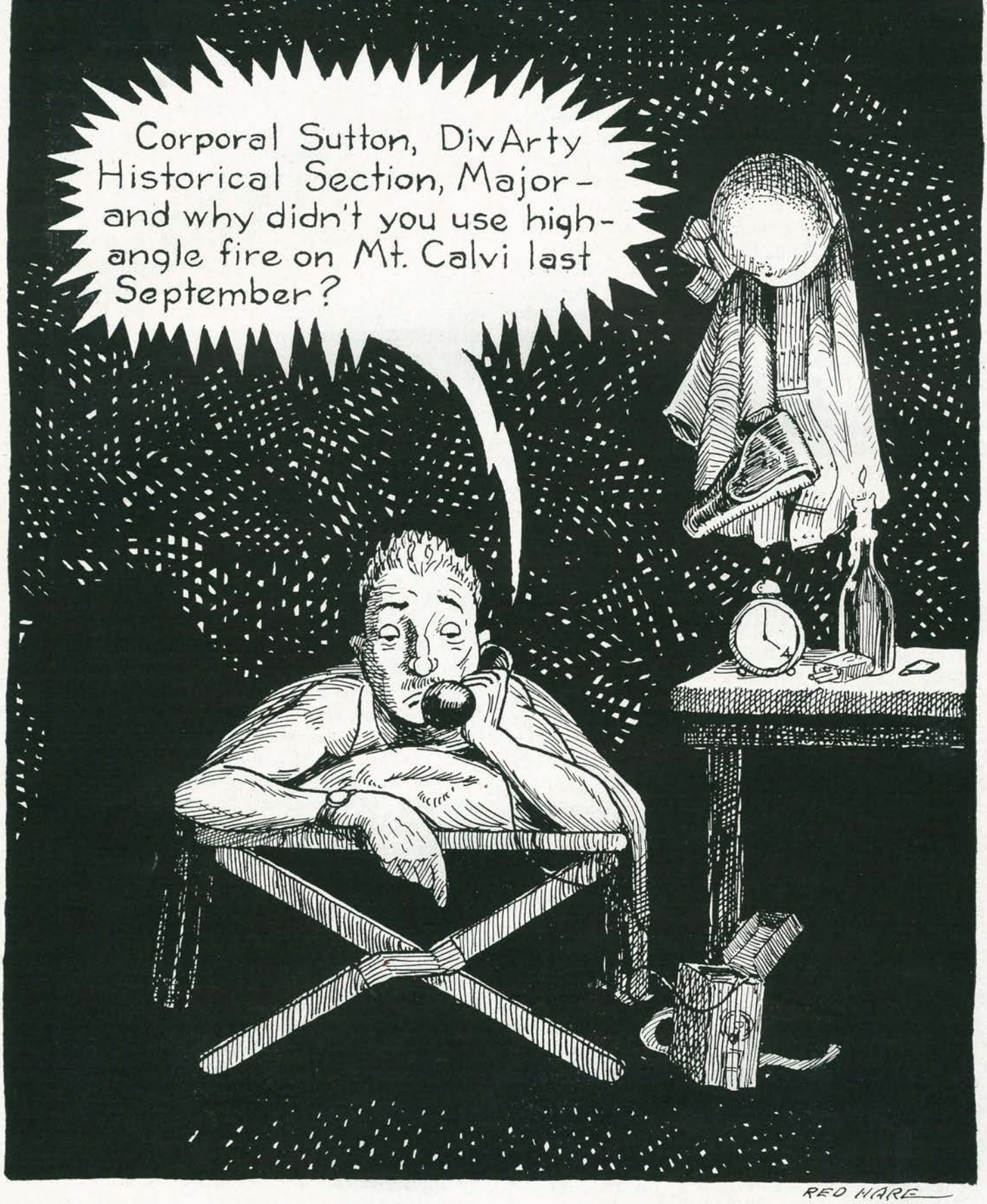
The first change came in the latter part of January—the 24th to be exact. The Headquarters Battery and all of the headquarters personnel were given a short holiday en masse and struck out for Montecatini. At the same time, the rest of the 91st Division, less the four artillery battalions, pulled up stakes and turned over the division sector to the 88th Division which rolled in with all units except its artillery battalions. Everything dovetailed. The 88th Division Artillery headquarters provided command for the four 91st artillery battalions which, in turn, provided the guns for the gun-less 88th artillery headquarters. In the first part of February, the 91st Div-Arty Headquarters Battery moved into the division sector to the right of Highway 65 where it relieved the 34th Div-Arty Headquarters. Here the scramble became rather complicated.

In its new position near a town called San Benedetto, the Div-Arty Headquarters found itself in command of the artillery battalions of the 88th Division supporting the infantry units of the 91st Division. This was an exact reversal of the situation on Highway 65 where the 91st artillery battalions were still doing the shooting for the 88th Division and headquarters. Along in the first part of March, the 91st Div-Arty Headquarters loaded up and convoyed back to the old command post on 65 to resume command of its own battalions who were still being headed up by the 88th Div-Arty. However, by this time, it was the 34th Division which was in control of the sector and it was the 34th Division infantry which was manning the line.

While the 91st artillery was supporting the 34th infantry, an attempt was made to effect a small advance and seize a ridge called Monterumici. The plan called for the infantry to sneak towards the objective at night while the artillery poured HE on all enemy mortar positions to keep them hushed up. Corps artillery helped out by turning its attention to all enemy artillery that might disrupt the attack. Everything went off well at the beginning. The infantry started up the ridge when enemy mortars began to sound off. Shooting from the trusty Countermortar Plan, the artillery cut loose on all positions in the vicinity of the ridge. That stopped the troublesome mortars for a while. However, it wasn't long before they began to open up again and this time another countermortar shoot proved almost completely ineffective. It seemed that the Germans, who were pretty quick at putting two and two together, figured what was up and displaced their mortars to new, make-shift positions. Under the cover of night, they could fire from these with relative immunity from further shellings and they proceeded to blast the American attack right back where it came from. When spring rolled around, Monterumici was still in German hands.

During these winter months, something new was added to the artillery textbook — a clever little gadget called the Variable Time Fuse. When the artillerymen got back to the U. S. after the war was over they found out that this little gadget was considered along with radar and the atomic bomb as one of the outstanding developments of the times. But while still in Italy, it was looked upon as a tricky thingamajig that was an easy way of shooting time fire. Time fire was a manner of shooting a shell so that it exploded in the air above its target rather than blasting a hole in the ground next to it. This burst-in-the-air business was many times more effective against personnel and thin-skinned equipment and vehicles than impact fire. Before the Variable Time Fuse, or VT Fuse as it was called, this air burst was achieved by means of a time fuse which caused the shell to go off so many seconds after it was fired. Such a method was awkward and called for an additional complication to the computing of firing data. But then the VT fuse came along and made it easy.

Boiling the explanation down to simple terms, the VT fuse was, in effect, a tiny sending and receiving radio set. When a shell armed with this fuse was fired, the fuse began to send out a radio signal. This signal radiated in all directions bouncing off of anything solid. As the shell neared the end of its trajectory and was nosing to earth, the fuse's radio signal, bouncing back from the ground, was received again by the fuse. When this reflected signal grew to a certain strength, indicating that the shell was just the right distance above the ground, it caused the fuse to detonate the explosive charge sending hundreds of jagged shell fragments off to to their dirty work. Originally, the VT fuse was designed to arm anti-aircraft shells. Causing the shell to explode when it passed within killing distance of enemy aircraft, the fuse proved fiendishly success-



History in the making

ful. The enemy pilot never even knew he was being shot at until the shell that was his undoing went off. Shortly after its introduction the fuse was exploited fully when the army saw its possibilities as a regular artillery fuse. That was when it was introduced to the cannon tenders in Italy.

There were several complications to shooting VT fused shells. For example, the artillery spotter planes had to clear out of the way when the shooting was going on. If one of the tiny airplanes happened to fly near the trajectory of a VT fused shell, the radio signal bouncing off the plane might be

enough to set the thing off. There was no argument as to who would come out second best. For this reason most VT fire was saved for harassing missions after dark when the Air OP's were out of the sky.

Another new wrinkle in artillery technique was dreamed up and tried out in the doldrums of winter warfare. A tank destroyer battalion attached to the 91st artillery had in its ammunition pile a supply of star shells. A star shell was nothing more than a flare that could be shot great distances to light up a limited area after dark. Working in close coordination with an artillery battalion, the tank destroyer guns would fire star shells over an area of suspected enemy activity. Observers would then adjust fire upon any movement that could be detected under the light of the flares. Because of the tricky co-ordination necessary, this operation was saved for special occasions—such as when intelligence was received to indicate the enemy planned to move large bodies of troops in or out of positions on a certain night.

Besides testing the ingenuity of artillerymen's minds, the winter stalemate posed man-sized problems to the handful of officers and men who made up the air section of the 91st artillery. It was their job to keep two men aloft in a low-powered box kite throughout the daylight hours all winter long. Such a responsibility was rough and tough when the conditions are considered. The front lines were deep in the mountains—the last place an airman would expect to find a suitable landing strip. The closest flat ground available was located just north of Florence in the plain that led up to the defunct Gothic Line. This location put the air strip so far away from the fighting, a plane had to fly north for a half-hour to arrive at a position from which it could observe. This half-hour trip to and from the landing strip put a serious dent in the amount of observation the planes could do. Their tanks carried enough gasoline for only a few hours flying.

Then there were other posers. Often the weather souped up the mountain passes with such a thick fog there was no way possible for a pilot to grope his way to the front regardless how fair the weather may be beyond the passes. And this great distance between the air strip and the artillery headquarters made communication between them very uncertain. All these things prompted a winter-long search for a better, closer-up air field. Several stabs were made at other locations. A mountain-side strip was established in December and pressed into use with crossed fingers and a prayer. Its sloping runway dropped 100 feet in its 280 yards of length making it necessary for all landings to be made running uphill regardless of the direction of the wind. This was ticklish business. Just a slight gust of wind could turn a landing attempt into a couple of Purple Hearts. Over or under-shooting the strip got the same results. A landing had to be perfect on the first try.

This forward strip lasted for about a month. After being snowed in for days on end, it was abandoned and its crews returned to the old air field which had been kept in continuous operation.

A little while later, another forward airstrip was tried out. This one had been chewed out by the 88th Division Engineers near Filigare. But it, too, had more drawbacks than advantages. Turbulent winds swirled through this mountain valley making piloting an unhappy vocation. Added to this was the unpredictable surface of the runway which was both soft and rough. Early in March, the air section for a second time returned to its old field while the 91st engineers took another crack at improving the Filigare strip. Even after extensive work had been accomplished by the end of March, the strip was far from ideal. A 12th Air Force plane crashed when it tried to take off in the only direction possible with a strong tail wind.

Yet despite its uphill fight to stay in the sky, the 91st air section pulled through the winter without any serious mishap. Several planes were wrecked while working in adverse conditions, but no flyers were lost permanently. With hundreds of missions flown and many more enemy targets blasted, no one could kick about the job that was done.

The seemingly endless winter dawdled on and on. But like a streetcar on a cold morning, the spring had to come eventually. And the 91st Division Artillery first got wind of its from an official field order. All of the battalions were to be relieved! There had to be a catch to it. The fine print in the textbook said that artillery units were never removed from the line, unless—unless they were to undergo some sort of a shake-down period to ready them for another big push. It added. Spring *must* be getting near.

As the usual forerunner of a forerunner of big things came—inspections. The Commanding General ordered a complete inspection of everything from the cleanliness of carbine bores to the accuracy of progress maps posted on all the fighting fronts of the war. Not a rusty bolt or a hangnail was overlooked. On the heels of this came a flying inspection by the Commanding General of the II Corps who seemed to like what he saw. Then the outfits pulled out for a rearward bivouac.

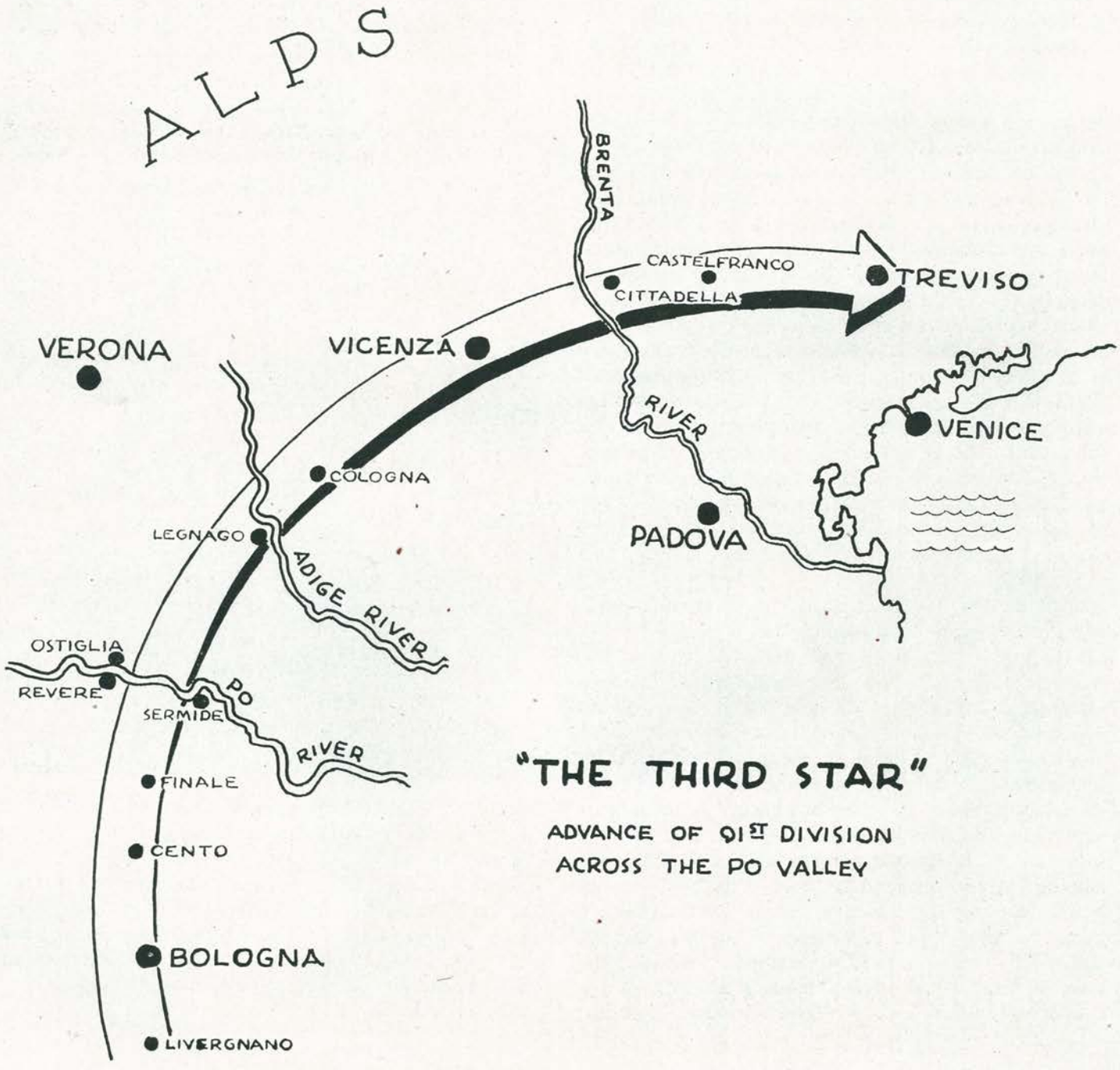
On the night of March 21st, the 346th and 347th Field Artillery Battalions were relieved. Two nights later, the 348th and the Div-Arty Headquarters Battery moved out. Finally, on March 28th, the 916th got its relief and the last unit of the 91st Division Artillery turned its back on the front line. This was something of an occasion. For the first time in 200 days, the battalions could live on top of the ground and relax.

CHAPTER IX

. . . THE THIRD STAR had its roots in Gagliano. It was here the 91st Division Artillery got itself all wound up in readiness for the spring offensive.

Gagliano was a pleasant little village located in the same neck of the woods as the 91st airstrip. And it was a place that filled 91sters with memories of what had been not too many months before. For it was from positions in the Gagliano area that the division had launched its attack upon the Gothic Line. Two familiar profiles loomed to the north. Nobody had to consult a map to recognize Mount Calvi and Monticelli.

The Division Artillery set up its command post inside Gagliano and the battalions bivouaced around it. First attention was given to the equipment. The howitzers were given their six month's check in which the guns were taken apart and put back together again after all worn parts were replaced. In some cases, axles were reinforced. The winter and the war had been just as hard on the big guns as it had been on the cannoneers. While up on the line, several howitzers had muzzle bursts and others suffered cracked tubes blamed on metal deterioration. Just as soon as the ordnance had returned the howitzers in fighting trim, the pieces were fired to determine their shooting characteristics. Once this was known, the battalions regrouped their weapons so that the short-shooting howitzers were in one battery, the long-shooters in another. Also the extent of the long or short shooting a given



howitzer did was determined so that a constant correction factor could be computed into the firing data to keep the piece always on the target range.

The little guns came in for a check, too. During the winter, the artillerymen's carbines were equipped with new sights and now small arms ranges were set up to enable the redlegs to familiarize themselves with their shootin' irons.

Vehicles were brought into top condition. Regular six-thousand mile check-ups were given to all trucks needing them. Winter clothing and equipment were turned in to the quartermaster and all unnecessary equipment was tagged for storage. The men, themselves, immediately began physical training that included hikes and athletics. Classes were conducted on chemical warfare, security, Italian and German languages, venereal diseases, and the handling of prisoners of war.

There was fun, rest, and relaxation, too. Men were still being sent to Rome, Florence, and Montecatini. Movies were shown almost nightly in each of the battalion areas and a make-shift movie theater in Gagliano was good for two shows every night. The ultimate in getting away from it all was achieved when an attractive Red Cross girl with a comfortable southern drawl and an endless gift for conversation was attached temporarily to the Division Artillery to establish—of all things—a club. And a pretty good club it was. After cleaning out and refixing several rooms of an old house, there emerged facilities for card games, letter-writing, ping-pong, radio-listening, and just plain loafing. A final touch came with the addition of a snack bar where coffee and cookies were doled out almost continuously. This Div-Arty Red Cross Club reached the peak of its brief career along about the first of April when it was the setting for an honest-to-goodness dance complete with a real band and equally lifelike women.

In a "Barbershop Quartet" contest organized by the U. S. Army for the diversion of combat troops,

Jack Haley and a USO show make a one-day stand

Photo by Clarence Quirk

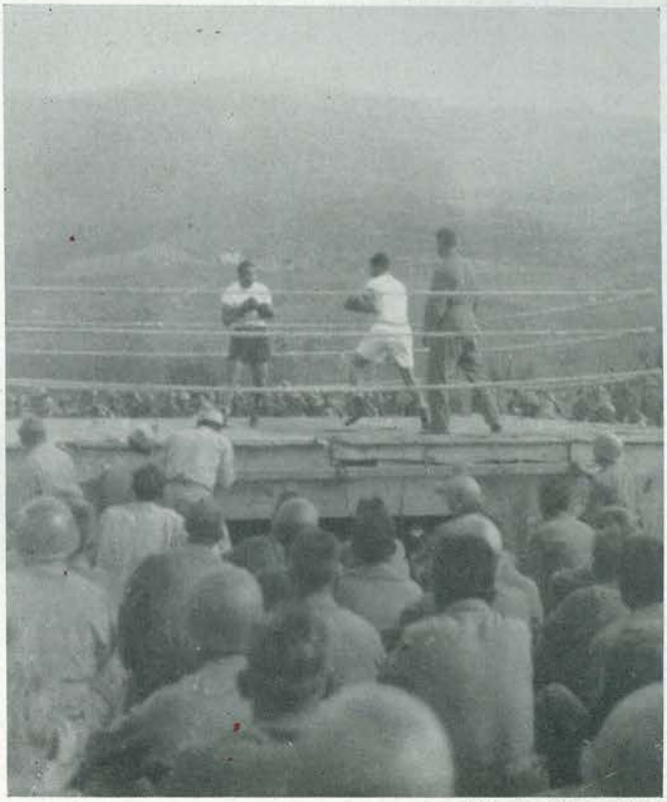


Photo by Clarence Quirk

Heavyweight champion Joe Louis gives an exhibition bout for 91sters.

the entry from Div-Arty Headquarters Battery turned up with a neat set of sharps and flats and skyrocketed to fame of a sort. Under the name of the "Blendaires," this quartet had swung and sung its way through competitions until it won the right to represent the Fifth Army in the North Italian Zone Finals of the barbershop contest. While the artillery was just beginning its Gagliano shakedown period, the Blendaires took a day off and went to Florence where they came away with the number one prize in these finals. Three weeks later, the quartet traveled to Rome where it won second place in the barbership contest for the entire Mediterranean Theater.

But the front lines were still ten miles from Bologna and something had to be done about it. The soupy, sloppy Italian winter had just about disappeared and it was time for Nature and War to come to life again. The 91st Division Artillery observed Easter in Gagliano, then packed up and headed back for the old familiar positions astride Highway 65.

On April 6th, when all units of the Division Artillery were back in position, the sector was under control of the 88th Division. On the line were one regiment of the 34th Division and one regiment of the 91st Division. However, it didn't take long to untie this tangle of units. On the 11th of April, the two fresh regiments of the 91st relieved the infantry outfits on the line. On April 13th, the 91st

Division Headquarters took over the command of the sector and things were on a business-like basis again.

No sooner had the battalions returned from Gagliano and dropped their trails into position to begin shooting when everyone realized there had been some changes made. The stingy ammunition allocations had loosened up like a drunk's tongue. The cannoneers once more could pump out shells in impressive quantities that gladdened the heart. This was the period of softening up the enemy's defenses. Information gathered throughout the winter was consolidated and all possible targets were fired upon. A new countermortar program was put together just as quickly as interpretation could be made of the latest aerial photographs and was revised frequently to incorporate all of the up-to-the-minute changes and new scraps of information.

A large amount of this shooting was lumped together in deceptive fires such as false preparations. For example, a large group of targets earmarked for attention were blasted simultaneously in a tremendous burst of fire from all available guns for, say, a half-hour early some morning. The enemy, who couldn't afford to take chances, would have to alert all his forces to brace themselves because this might be the preparation behind which the Americans planned to jump off. Of course, there was no follow-up attack and enemy troops experienced a let-down and lost a lot of sleep. Some of them might have even been hit. After many such false preparations, the Germans, it was hoped, would become unnerved or else become somewhat calloused to these false starts and drop their guard when the real one came along. It was a sort of re-enactment of the story about the boy who called "Wolf!" too often. Then, too, a lot of enemy men and guns were shot up which made the coming fight just that much easier.

Almost every kind of target was fired upon—with malice aforethought. The big howitzers of the 348th accomplished precision adjustments on bunkers and pillboxes using a special concrete-piercing fuse with excellent results. The light battalions blazed away at mortar positions, machine gun positions, strong points. The 347th and the 916th had fairly good luck with a series of missions fired on mine fields. Observed explosions indicated the destruction of many mines. All battalions gave a great deal of attention to all possible lines of communications available to the enemy. Interdiction and harassing shoots were aimed after dark at roads and trails behind German lines to prevent supplies and reinforcements from being brought up. And a large percentage of this night time fire used the VT fuse. Some concentrations were devoted to depleting existing enemy supplies. At least two ammunition dumps were observed going up in smoke after direct hits were scored.

During this time, the 346th remained discretely silent. Upon returning from Gagliano, this battalion had occupied a new position. To keep its location unknown to the enemy, the battalion was ordered to hold its fire until the eleventh hour before the all-out assault. Knowing this, everyone kept an ear and an eye cocked on the 346th. When its howitzers cut loose, the main event was sure to follow close behind.

The fateful news of April 12th found the artillery engaged in these preparations for the attack that would lead to final victory. Late in the day, word was received that Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States, was dead. The loss of the nation's wartime leader was a shock to everyone, regardless of political beliefs. The great majority of the men in the 91st Division Artillery were young men who had lived perhaps half of their lives while Franklin Roosevelt was in the White House. The fact that he was there no longer focused sharp attention on the uncertainty of earthly plans and their planners. Everybody missed him and almost everybody keenly regretted his loss in a critical time.

On April 14th, the 346th was allowed to register its howitzers and the attack was expected momentarily. On the same day high level bombing attacks were launched by the air forces on enemy installations, then were repeated the next day. On April 16, at 2 o'clock in the morning, the long planned preparation cut loose full blast with all stops out. It was the noisy overture to the final act of the world's bloodiest performance to date. The curtain was going up.

The preparation, itself, was the biggest hail of steel and high explosives the division ever participated in. Every weapon able to shoot, excluding small arms, was shooting north. The Division Artillery's share of the show was split into three phases. For the first 15 minutes, all battalions blazed away on known or suspected enemy installations particularly those guarding immediate objectives of the infantry. Then for the following half-hour, the Division Artillery's attention was devoted to the countermortar program. A final fifteen minutes was spent going back over the targets covered during the first fifteen minutes. In all, more than 220 targets got a thorough going-over, none receiving less than 30 rounds. Some 16,000 shells were expended in all. During this time, the division's fires were being thickened by the bigger guns of Corps Artillery which, in addition, carried on a comprehensive counterbattery lambasting of its own. After all this, the infantry moved into the attack.

Two principal obstacles had to be overcome before the division could move forward. On the right, Mount Arnigo posed the largest problem to the 363rd Infantry attacking up Highway 65. On the left, the number one objective of the 361st Infantry

Formidable Mount Adone

was the towering peak of Mount Adone, the commanding hillmass of the entire area. All winter long, Mount Adone had been a thorn in the Allied side. From its top, the Germans had been able to snoop in the 91st Division sector as well as other sectors down the line. A prominent chunk of mountain like that promised a good fight.

In the attack, the 361st sent a company towards the village of Brento which was halfway up Adone's east slope. However, the hill was not to be had that easily. The company was repulsed by well-prepared enemy positions and mine fields. A new attack had to be taken.

Meanwhile, the 363rd Infantry was spilling blood on the slopes of Mount Arnigo. As at Adone, an initial attempt to storm the hill proved futile. And the first day of the attack ended with the sobering realization that in spite of bombings and preparations, the enemy had plenty of fight left in him. Breaking out of the Apennine Mountains would be far from a push-over.

All this while, the artillery was shooting just as fast as the cannoneers could load and fire. Great TOT concentrations were dropped on Adone, Arnigo, and other prominent enemy strongpoints. Countermortar fires were being fired almost continuously with the 346th becoming an unofficial countermortaring battalion. Since the 346th had no direct support mission with the 362nd Infantry temporarily out of the line, its howitzers were usually available to take on any enemy mortars that were proving bothersome. This left the direct support battalions free to blaze away directly in front of their supported infantry regiments blasting immediate obstacles.

The second day of the attack saw some progress of 91st troops, but the intensity of the German defense slackened not a bit and every inch of ground was bitterly contested. The 347th was twice called upon to halt sizeable counterattacks and more were expected. However, the 363rd Infantry on the right was able to take and hold the little hamlet of Zula on Highway 65 and Hill 377, a foothill on the south slope of Arnigo. Meanwhile, the 361st on the left decided to by-pass Mount Adone and was attacking around the right side of the hill.

Finally, on the third day the enemy was forced to give way before the overpowering weight of the American forces. On the 18th of April, after three attempts to storm Arnigo had failed, the 363rd Infantry finally pushed to the top and captured its dearly won prize. On the same day, companies of the 361st Regiment seized Colombara and Selva Magiare, two villages to the northeast of the mighty Mount Adone. Another company slipped in the side door and captured the now-flattened Brento and the fall of Adone, itself, came shortly after. Each of these prizes were walloped with tremendous TOTs prior to the attack that effected their fall. In one instance, artillery fire alone was sufficient to force the surrender of any enemy force. In the fight for Adone, the 916th drew a bead on an enemy-occupied house and pumped in ten direct hits. This was enough to kill ten Germans. 50 more called it quits and gave themselves up to the infantry.

The division's success gave the artillery the satis-

faction of making its first forward displacement in six months. The 916th and the 346th moved up to positions near Predosa and Livergnano respectively —positions that had been prepared before the offensive ever started. About the same time, the 362nd Infantry was committed to the left of the 361st while the 363rd Regiment dropped back into division reserve with orders to stand by for a quick thrust to take Bologna, if needed. This, of course, switched the missions of the artillery battalions. The 346th became the direct support artillery behind the 362nd Infantry while the 347th gave help where it was most needed in a general support role. The 916th continued to support the attack of the 361st Regiment. And the big howitzers of the 348th always covered the entire division front.

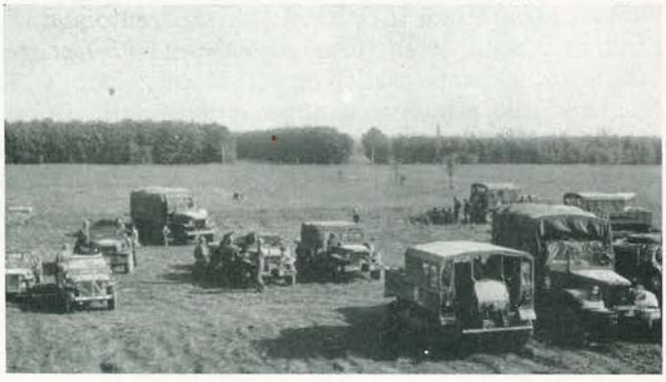
On the morning of the 19th, the Division Artillery opened up with another blasting preparation to help clear the way for the infantry to take the town of Guzzano and the heights of Mount Frati. The enemy was obviously getting punch drunk. Both Guzzano and Frati were taken and the attack began to look more like a pursuit. Nevertheless, the enemy did manage to hurl three counterattacks at the oncoming Americans. All three were smashed by artillery.

The rapidly moving situation was evidenced to the cannoneer by the frequency of displacements and the steadily decreasing amounts of ammunition he was called upon to fire. The 916th moved on April 20th to positions in the area of its previous day's fire at Guzzano. The 346th moved up and occupied positions near Colombara only to find itself already out of range.

April 21st was a big day for the 91st Division. On that day, elements of the 362nd Infantry Regiment entered the city of Bologna from the southwest. About the same time, elements of the veteran 34th Division were entering the city from the southeast. This meant many things. First of all, the objective that dangled tantalizingly in front of the division's nose all winter long had at last been taken. Second, the murderous mountain fighting was at an end. The Apennine Mountains had been breached and the broad, pool-table-flat Po Valley beckoned northward as far as the eye could see. The weather had perked up, too. No longer would rain, cold and mud plague the attackers. There was plenty of sunshine and dust now. Lastly, the Germans were whipped — thoroughly and completely. The heavy fighting had gradually petered out into a headlong dash with the Germans heading for the Alps and the Allies heading them off.

C Battery, 348th, motor park near Gagliano

Photo by Joe Breidinger



This was something new. A fresh set of signals had to be called to enable the division to adapt itself to this running warfare. So key men of the division headquarters and the Div-Arty headquarters put their heads together at an overnight command post on the Bologna airport. It was obvious that the artillery could no longer operate as a single unit and hope to keep up with a situation that changed by the minute. As a result, the decision was reached to split up the artillery and attach the light battalions to their respective infantry regiments. Some of the battalion commanders carried the decentralization still farther by attaching their three firing batteries to the three battalions of their supported infantry regiments. Meanwhile, the Div-Arty Headquarters Battery and the 348th scurried forward to do as much as they could whenever the opportunities presented themselves. In this manner the artillery divested itself of top-heavy chains of command. So streamlined, responsibility fell upon the shoulders of those on the spot and necessary action was not delayed by the need of notifying or consulting a higher headquarters.

North of Bologna, the 361st Infantry dropped out of the fight for the time being and became the division reserve. The 363rd Infantry went into the the line on the left of the 362nd and the division was off to the races.

From here on, the war to the artillery was like a cross-country run to a fat boy. It spent most of the time trying to keep up with the others. Tanks and infantry, of course, had first priority on the roads along with their responsibility of maintaining constant pressure on the fast fading Germans. When the artillery could move up without getting in anybody's way, it did so. But no sooner would it occupy new positions when the fluid lines would be almost out of range and the whole operation had to be repeated. It wasn't uncommon for an artillery outfit to send out an advance party to establish a forward position, only to have to pick up this party while enroute to a still farther forward position because the first "forward" position was obviously too far back by the time the outfit got to it. The situation looked like an endless game of leap-frog to the cannoneer which was "jake" by him because it also looked like the war was living on borrowed time.

In fighting like this, the infantry wasn't as thorough in tidying up the battlefield as it usually was.

In the pursuit to the north, many pockets of enemy troops were by-passed and, quite frequently, the Germans in these isolated pockets were none-too-enthusiastic about calling it quits. As a result, everytime an artillery unit moved into a new position, the artillerymen turned infantrymen long enough to flush out any hidden enemy that might be loose in the vicinity. The number of prisoners bagged this way grew amazingly large. By the end of April, the 347th had taken its own strength in prisoners. But prisoners soon became a drug on the market. Pouring in from everywhere by the thousands, they threatened to clog the machinery of the Allied advance. Sorely needed transportation had to be used to haul them to rear areas. Feeding and guarding them presented problems. The oft-told joke about the German soldier who wanted to surrender and was told by an American to beat it; didn't he know there was a war on was more realistic than funny.

The road nets seemed to be perpetually jammed. Not only the artillery, but everyone else was having difficulties in keeping up with the progress of the attack. The principal north-and-south roads were packed with vehicles, all heading north. Moving in single file, bumper-to-bumper, they formed what looked like a funeral procession that stretched as far as the eye could see. That such a condition could safely exist only attested to the completeness of the enemy's defeat. The fragments of his air-force dared not put in a daylight appearance and his long range artillery was either destroyed or fleeing. With the absence of effective German resistance, the traffic jams took over as the artillery's worst enemy.

Meanwhile, the artillery spotter planes were having the time of their lives. This mobile confusion type of warfare was tailor-made for the Air OPs as was the flat Po Valley which seemed to be a continuous landing strip from one end to the other. From their high perch, Air OP observers could see almost the entire extent of the German debacle. Without half-way trying, they could spot more juicy enemy targets in a glance than they could ever get time or artillery to shoot up. The Germans, too, were having their traffic problems. This was particularly true at such bottlenecks as bridges where great crowds of men and equipment pushed and shoved like women at a department store door during a bargain sale. The obviousness and the amount of such targets seemed incredible compared to past experiences. Observers who formerly squinted and strained to catch a glimpse of a single mortar position to shoot at now had their choice of targets that possibly included several hundred men and vehicles in each. It was like shooting fish in a barrel.

One such mission began early one morning when

I ain't got time for prisoners—Ain't you heard there's a war on?

an air observer spotted a large convoy of enemy vehicles attempting to cross the Panaro River. The observer immediately adjusted fire upon the target and continued to perfect and shift his adjustment so as to blast the entire area until his plane ran low on gasoline and he was forced to retire. A fresh observer and plane took over and continued the fire until his plane was low on fuel whereupon the shooting was taken over by a third Air OP. Through three consecutive flights, this one enemy target was pasted—continuously. With such a deadly simple set-up, the effect of the fire was thoroughly devastating. Officially, 300 vehicles were listed as destroyed which doesn't begin to count the artillery pieces, ammunition and men that went up in the same cloud of smoke.

There was only one flaw to the seemingly perfect conditions in which the Air OPs operated. Although they had virtually unlimited observation and targets to shoot at, they often had a hard time finding artillery that could do the shooting for them. As was pointed out earlier, the battalions of the 91st Division Artillery would no sooner get into a new position when they would find themselves already out of reach of the swiftly moving front lines. This meant that these battalions seldom were able to shoot more than a few close-in missions before they ran out of range and had to hit the road again. The maximum range of particularly

the 105 mm howitzers was such that the light battalions were unable to do any shooting far out in advance of their supported infantry. The weapon was designed for close-in work. That's why for most of their targets, the air observers had to call on the long-barreled 155 mm rifles of Corps Artillery. This limited the amount of artillery an observer could bring down on a target—and, then too, sometimes the "Long Toms" weren't available or were shooting elsewhere. In the event this last were true, the particularly fat targets were reported to the air forces whose fighters and fighter-bombers were having a bit of a field day themselves. But even the fighting aircraft were spread pretty thin when there is the whole of North Italy to cover so sometimes fat targets just stayed fat and healthy.

The little observation planes proved their worth in more ways than just adjusting effective artillery fires. In the fast moving situation, the tiny ships were able to report locations of both friendly and enemy units to headquarters which were otherwise dependent on sloppy or incomplete communication systems. Information on the condition of roads and bridges soon to be encountered was obviously valuable intelligence to have in planning. On several occasions, the pilots were asked to fly infantry officers over the front lines to study the terrain over which they were to lead their units. The planes even flew tank commanders on missions where the tankman directed the attack and fire of his tanks from this vantage point above the fight. Then, of course, the planes were able to deliver messages and necessary things like maps to rapidly advancing outfits in a few minutes whereas the same delivery in a jeep might get snarled in traffic jams for hours.

A battery of 155 mm howitzers and their prime movers
Photo by Joe Breidinger

The air personnel of the Division Artillery performed all of these jobs with a maximum of effectiveness and a minimum of fuss. Because of the specialized nature of their work, these air crews were for the most part on their own. As a result, no one else can lay claim to their "well done." Checking the small size of this group against the enormousness of its contribution makes it a leading contender for the title of Best Performer of the 91st Division Artillery.

But what was the Air Ops meat was the Service Batteries' poison. The conditions that cooperated to give the airboys their biggest boost also conspired to give the supply people their worst go yet. Beside food and ammunition which were continuously consumed, mobile warfare added a new headache to the supply officers' dilemma — gasoline! Without it, his outfit was as effective as a knitted hot water bottle. And getting it was as tough as threading a needle with boxing gloves on. Gas and ration trucks were on the road all day long and frequently all night as well. They had the traffic and isolated pockets of Germans to buck in addition to a few extra problems of their own.

The advance across the Po Valley was so rapid that supplies of maps couldn't be distributed down through the ranks before they became useless representations of terrain already passed. This meant that supply crews roamed the countryside with little more than their intuition and a few vague directions to guide them. It probably didn't matter too much because they often didn't know where they were supposed to go anyway. The supply points at which these crews picked up their food and fuel were constantly being moved forward along with the advance and as often as not the new location of the supply points would be unknown to the battalions' ration and gas trucks crews when they started out for resupplies. Then just to keep it from being too easy, there was one final complication. After a supply dump was located and the trucks loaded, the crew faced the problem of trying to find their battalions again. For it was quite likely that during their absence, the battalions had displaced forward.

Summing all this up, it would seem that the ar-

Photo by Fred Mueller

German artillery abandoned on the south bank of the Po

tillery supply trains were men and trucks that didn't know where they were, where they were going, or where they were from. Yet, no battalion ever bogged down for the want of a critical need. Somehow, the supply sections always managed to turn up when they were needed most. Those who look upon these supply men as the victims of SNAFU and bumbling miss the real point. The best laid plans can go slightly sour in the confusion of a major victory. The story of supply in this difficult time points up and underlines the resourcefulness demonstrated by these supplymen, the truck-loaders and truck-drivers, in piercing the confusion and solving the riddles posed by lack of information. The supply lines may have been stretched taut, but they were never broken.

Beyond Bologna, the advance moved forward as easily as a knife going through lemon meringue. The 91st Division moved almost due north passing through the villages of Cento and Finale in its drive towards the Po River. Mute testimony of the enemy's rout was evidenced by smashed tanks and trucks in the ditches by the sides of the road. Occasionally the wreckage would be garnished with the crumpled body of an ex-Nazi. Scores of the more-alive variety were frequently passed as they were being marched southward to prisoner-of-war compounds. But the extent of the German rout was not realized until the division reached the south bank of the Po.

With its bridges bombed out, the Po acted as a sort of a tremendous dam across the enemy's retreat. Just so many fleeing Germans could get through the dam's spillways and gain the north bank of the river. The rest just piled up on the south bank. Soon this accumulation of retreating enemy backed up along the roads leading to the Po and clogged the streets of south bank towns. When the German situation reached this sorry shape, the American Air Forces took over and began erasing men and machines in wholesale lots. Later, artillery lent a helping hand, but by that time the telling blows had been dealt. The south bank of the Po was literally thick with the debris of defeat.

Roads for miles around were lined with smashed and stalled vehicles. German ordance, ranging from hand grenades to heavy artillery and tanks, lay scattered about like gum wrappers and bottle caps after a ball game. The town of Revere to the left of the 91st Division sector had died of hardening of the arteries. With but a few exceptions, its streets were choked shut with blasted vehicles and putrifying horses. Where bombs and shells toppled walls and buildings down on top of the jammed streets, the town became literally a solid mass of wreckage. A bridge that had once spanned the Po at Revere bent awkwardly into the river as if it had been made of wax and just melted. There didn't seem to be a whole thing in sight.

The Po didn't play any favorites. It presented the same obstacle to the Americans that it did to the Germans. So the attack eased off until the Po was cleared. The crossings were made by ferry and by ponton bridge, but neither arrangement could accommodate troops fast enough to keep from becoming a bottleneck. To prevent columns from queuing up all over the countryside, the division put in force a priority system that controlled the traffic and gave precedence to those who were most needed on the north bank. Units squatted on the south bank until they got the nod whereupon they hustled off to the crossing site, gained the north bank, and dashed off to rejoin the war.

It was a pretty good wait for the artillery—pretty good in that it lasted two days, and pretty good in that it was a barrel of fun. Every American seems to have some beachcomber in him. Everyone enjoys poking through junkpiles and salvaging gadgets he fancies might again prove useful. The time was ripe for this sort of pastime and all the ingredients were present. Within an hour after

Evidence of German defeat in the Po Valley

Photo by Clarence Quirk

Photo by John Timmons

Among the casualties of the Po Valley campaign

the artillery units settled down to wait, the scavengers were about their business. Stalled German autos were tinkered with until they came to life. One redleg got himself a whole sack-full of hopelessly burned German pistols in hopes that the burnt guns might yield enough good parts to assemble a workable weapon. Pistols, the number one war trophy, could be sold for prices ranging up to sixty and seventy-five dollars. Some units latched on to German generators and water tanks. Every wrecked truck was turned inside out in search for anything even slightly useful. A few lucky ones found unbroken cameras and field glasses. German eating utensils, drafting equipment, telephones and switchboards—all were absorbed by the American army.

Those who came too late to get in on the souvenir hunting still could grab themselves a horse and go riding. The enemy was forced to turn loose thousands of horses he was unable to get across the river and, as a result, the countryside was alive with horses. A soldier in war is used to seeing strange sights. He had become accustomed to look upon gory and grisly scenes without batting an eye. But great amounts of live horses—particularly at night—were hard to take. A drive for miles in any direction revealed horses everywhere — in fields, along roads, quietly munching on foliage and eyeing passersby as intruders. Horses are big animals and seeing them in such great quantities everywhere was just all out of proportion, like a bad dream.

The enemy's air force in its anemic condition could do little more than make an occasional nuisance of itself. Normally the Allied units were so scattered that the handful of night-flying planes the Germans had in Italy just couldn't get around to everybody. At the Po crossings, however, things were a little different. Here were a few spots the planes could concentrate on and perhaps cause some real trouble. Although the night helped to conceal these enemy raiders it performed the same favor for the troops on the ground. The planes strafed and bombed as best they could by moonlight. Sometimes their best was too good. Two men were killed and another wounded in the 346th Field Artillery Battalion as a result of enemy air action. Later, when portions of the artillery were attempting a night crossing of the Po, the attentions of a German aircraft caused a delay in the operation. Although they caused considerable stir at the moment, these raids were negligible in effect. Troops crossed the river on schedule and few casualties were sustained in the doing.

It was the 26th of April when the Division Artillery crossed the Po and lit out to the north to catch up with the infantry. The advance, for all practical purposes unchecked continued straight north to the town of Legnago. There it slowed down for another river crossing. The Adige was not as big as the Po, but it was big enough and the artillery had another wait.

After Legnago and the Adige, the 91st Division no longer continued its due northerly course. The entire length of the Italian peninsula had now been taken. Only that portion of the Italian boot which flared up into the continent remained ahead. To overrun this area, the Fifth Army was able to take advantage of the enemy's disorder by fanning out and running its spearheads in three directions. The 91st was on the far right of the fan and its attack bore more and more to the east.

Once across the Adige, the attack tore through Cologna, Barbarano, brushed by Vicenza, then eased up for another river crossing—this time, the Brenta. To get to the far bank of the Brenta, it was necessary for units of the Division Artillery to backtrack and take a roundabout bypass through

The war passed this way!

Photo by Clarence Quirk

the city of Vicenza. But as soon as the river was bridged, the advance moved into high gear, this time driving almost due east.

It was April 29th. Both the month and the enemy had only a few days of fight left in them. The 91st was coming down the home stretch to the finish line.

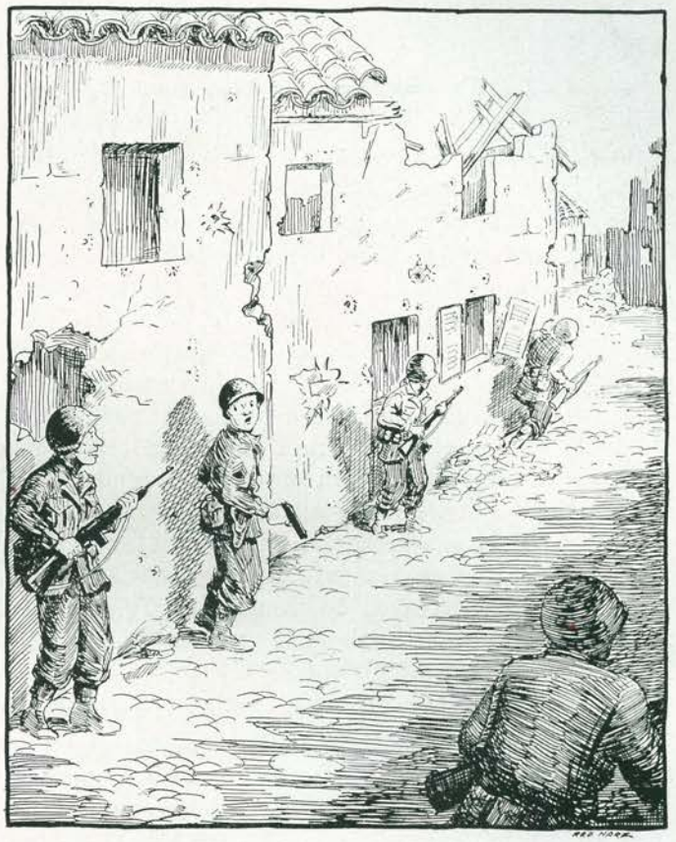
After the division, moving east on Highway 53, had secured Cittadella and Castlefranco, it came to a sliding stop in the city of Treviso. There was no other way to go. In all directions from Treviso, the countryside had been cleared. For the 91st Division, the war was over.

Treviso was a city about 12 miles north of Venice. In the narrow strip of land between it and the coast, elements of the British 8th Army had successfully dispatched all lingering German troops. So, like the painter who ran out of wall, the 91st just had to quit.

It had been quite a race. The division and its artillery had come more than 150 miles in ten days. It had crossed three major water barriers. Captured enemy prisoners were numbered in the tens and hundreds of thousands. A major victory had been gained.

The cost of this victory to the artillery was slight, but nevertheless regretful. Twenty artillerymen were wounded and three were killed in action.

In the closing hours of April, the 91st Division was officially notified that its battles were over when it was placed in corps reserve. Two days later, the German high command in Italy threw in the sponge. Colonel General Vietinghoff surrendered his German armies in Italy to Field Marshal Alexander, the commander of all Allied troops in the Mediterranean Theater. That started the snowball rolling. One day short of a week later the German armies in Germany followed suit and the European end of World War II became just another history lesson.



I'm worried. I got another threatening letter from the Book-of-the-Month Club.

CHAPTER X

. . . POLICING UP was all that was left to do. The 91st Division bivouacked in the Treviso area awaiting its next assignment. The wait was not a long one and the assignment was impressive.

Things were not as they might be on the Yugoslav-Italian border. The Venezia-Guilia peninsula and the principal cities of Trieste and Gorizia were the political footballs in a diplomatic dispute. Under a previous agreement between the Yugoslav leader, Marshal Tito, and Field Marshal Alexander, the areas about these two cities were to be under Allied control (meaning British and American) until the peace conference had determined the boundary between Italy and Yugoslavia. The presence of Marshal Tito's troops in these areas was taken as a violation of this agreement. British and American troops were instructed to move into Trieste and Gorizia with orders to shoot if fired upon. The 91st Division was part of this force.

The units of the Division Artillery packed up and started off on the 100-mile road march from Treviso to Venezia-Guilia. In this new operation the division was placed under the control of the British XIII Corps.

With standards flying and everyone looking as hard as nails, the 916th, with the 361st Infantry, roared into Gorizia on May 5th in what was supposed to be a "show of force." Apparently the show was convincing. Nobody raised a finger to object. Both the infantry and artillery headquarters were set up in the city. The howitzers were placed just outside the city limits.

The next day, the 347th moved two batteries into position about two miles south of Gorizia while the third battery accompanied a battalion of the 363rd Infantry to establish a garrison in Trieste. The 346th set up house in and around the town of Borgnano and the 348th and the Div-Arty Headquarters Battery squatted around the little village of Capriva di Cormons. With the exception of the lone battery of the 347th in Trieste, all other artillery outfits were within a ten-mile radius of Gorizia.

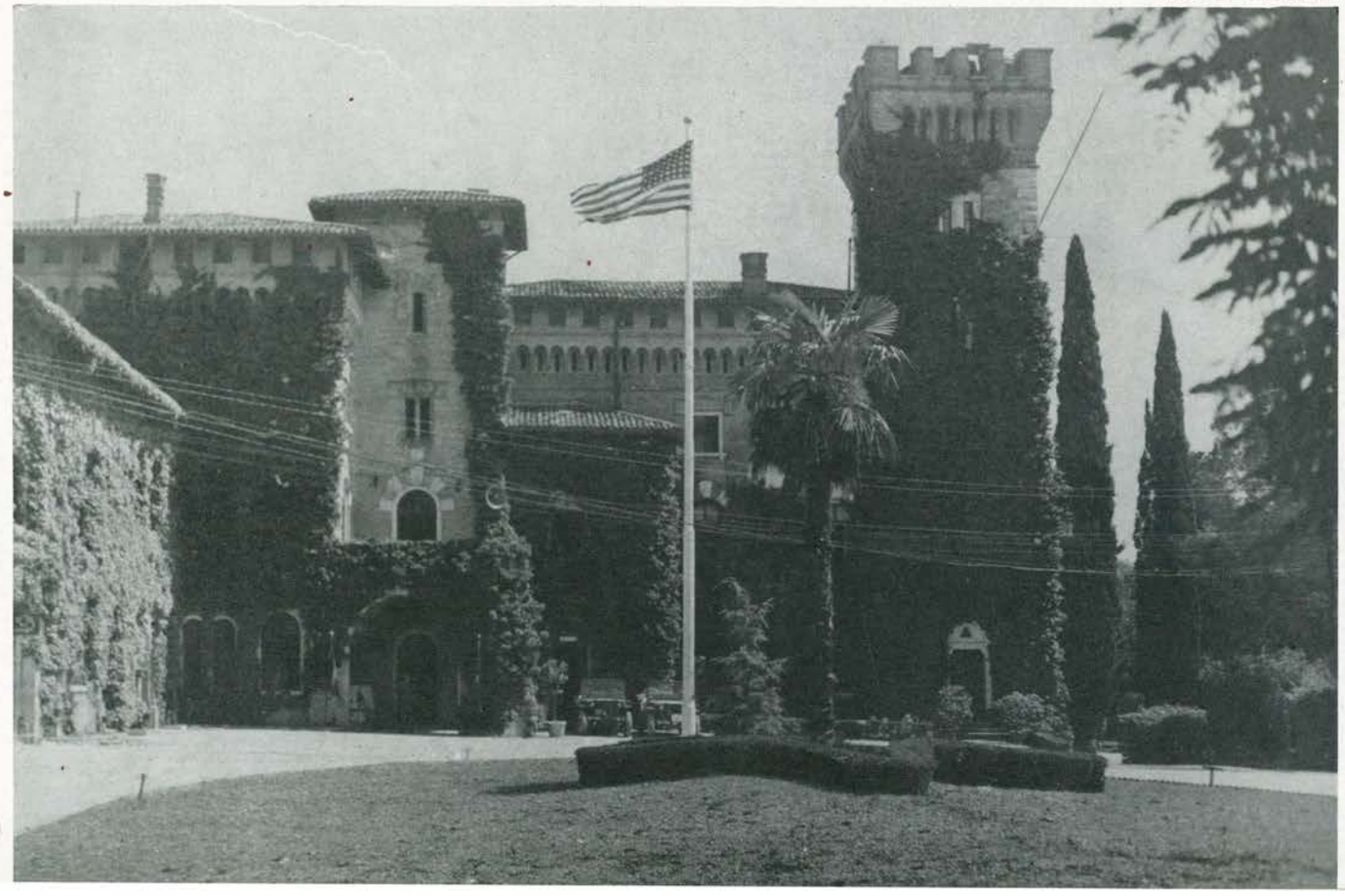
Firing positions were reconnoitered and surveyed. Defensive fire plans were prepared. The division, with a chip on both shoulders and bristling with warlike preparations, stood its ground and quietly eyed Tito's Partisan troops.

Nothing happened. Contrary to expectation, no difficulties came about. The Yugoslavs were very correct in their behavior and in some instances even friendly. Gradually the tension eased and the division, like all army units with nothing to do, began a training program.

The training, however, was partially for the benefit of any watching eyes. Military smartness was stressed through means such as ceremonies, drills, and an overall emphasis on military courtesy. For the benefit of the men themselves, a wealth of information was distributed about the army's redeployment program—that program by which men were

Castello di Spessa. Headquarters for the 91st Division Artillery in the Gorizia area

Photo by John Marolf



either sent home for discharge, kept for occupational duty, or sent to a still-active theater of war.

There was organized fun, too. Tournaments in ping-pong, volleyball, and softball sprung up in each battalion. The 916th even went so far as to invade other nation's sports by organizing a soccer team which took on the First London Scots and Italian teams in Gorizia.

Of course there were the inevitable movies, bars, and clubs run by the units. Dances were thrown by the battalions that sometimes turned out to be social focal points for the whole countryside. One given out-of-doors by the 346th in Borgnano attracted more than a thousand people. Yugoslav soldiers in the crowd took turns holding each other's Tommy guns so all could have the chance to join in the dancing on the improvised, wooden flooring.

This period of relaxation came to an abrupt end on May 21st. Diplomatic negotiations had broken down and the situation once more became tense. Guards were doubled and local security was highly organized. About this time, the American II Corps took over control of the area from the British XIII Corps.

On May 22nd, the battalions of the Division Artillery took up new positions, many of which were along defense lines occupied by the Italian army in World War I. The 916th dug in a mile or so to the north of Gorizia near the village of Oslavia. The 346th occupied mountainous positions to the northwest of Gorizia. The 348th moved into the vicinity of Lucinico, a mile due west of Gorizia. The 347th crossed to the far side of the Isonzo River to place its howitzers into position near Vertoiba, due south of Gorizia.

All howitzers were laid and were ready to fire. Defensive fire plans were arranged, computed, and distributed. Liaison officers reported to their respective infantry battalions and fire direction centers were alerted for instant operation. Ground OPs were manned and spotter planes organized a continuous daylight patrol that covered the division sector every two hours.

91st artillerymen locate Primo Carnera near Gorizia

Photo by Clarence Quirk

Photo by Clarence Quirk

A parade of partisan troops and Tito sympathizers in Cormons

Again no serious incidents occurred. The Slovenian population were as friendly as the Italians always had been and in many instances supplied the redlegs with fresh cherries and wine. However, the 346th was given a good scare. During their first night in the new position, the men of the battalion were startled by great amounts of small arms fire—only to find out that the Yugoslav troops were merely having a bang-up celebration in honor of the anniversary of Marshal Tito's rise to power.

The only untoward incident occured during the night of May 27th when an outpost of Service Battery of the 916th was fired upon by three unidentified persons. One guard was wounded.

For the second time, the situation gradually relaxed and unwarlike pursuits became of greater importance. The educational and recreational programs resumed, but always played second fiddle whenever the tactical situation needed attention. The recreational program was the usual tournaments between batteries and battalions of sports in season. The educational program, however, was something new in the army's make-up.

To make the most of the soldier's time on occupational duty, the army developed a flexible educational program to do the job. Once the war was over, the full-time resumption of military drilling and training would be a good way to sell the soldier's morale down the river. Experiences after the first World War proved this. As long as the soldier had to stay in one place because just his *being there* was important, the best way for him to spend part of his time was in self-improvement. This meant education.

Phoro by Clarence Quirk

A redleg gets decorated by General Hospital

Of course the army was made of men whose educational background ranged the full spectrum of possibilities—from illiteracy to PhDs. An educational program had to be versatile to accommodate everyone. But the great majority of G.I.s were in the high school-college category and could be lumped together by common interests in courses like Accounting, Bookkeeping, Mathematics, foreign languages, English, History, and the like. When a group of men found a common interest in such subjects, a class was formed and textbooks and supplies were procured through the unit's Information and Education Officer. A fellow with advance training in the subject selected was appointed the instructor and school was in session. Different classes were offered at different hours. A soldier could tackle as many subjects as he had time and interest for. The whole set-up was on a voluntary basis. Like a public rest room, the educational program was there for any who wished to avail themselves of it. At the conclusion of a course, all students who were able to pass the examinations (handled by a central authority through the mail) received certificates certifying to the successful completion of such-and-such a course. So comprehensive were the examinations that the majority of educators in the United States indicated their willingness to accept such certificates toward earning either college degrees or high school diplomas.

Special measures took care of the two extremes in education development. For one, there were literacy classes and classes in reading improvement. For the other, there were advanced courses in almost any reasonably popular subject available by mail from Armed Forces Institute Centers in Rome and Florence. For those who didn't mind the longer wait for mail from the United States, the army brought extension courses from any recognized school or university the student designated. Finally, full-scaled G. I. universities were opened in places like Florence where knowledge-hungry redlegs were sent for periods of time dependent on the tactical situation and the student's grades.

For those with a practical bent, on-the-job training was established wherever there could be found an army job whose study could prove useful in a civilian counterpart. The student was assigned temporarily to that job and performed it under the eye of an instructor. Like Santa's bag, the educational program contained something for everybody.

Each battalion of the Division Artillery organized unit schools under this educational program which lasted until it came time to ship out for home. Although the time was too short to measure accomplishments in terms of end-of-course certificates, nevertheless many seeds of knowledge were planted in G. I. heads by these schools that were harvested further along the line.

Military training was not abandoned completely —far from it. Military activities were pursued to an extent to keep men from growing stale on their jobs. Emphasis was placed on qualifying in Gunner's Examinations in all specialties.

Near the end of May, the Division Artillery Commander, Brigadier General Hospital, was selected as a representative of Field Marshal Alexander in a

A gun section of Battery C, 348th FA Bn pose for its picture.

Photo by Joe Breidinger

Photo by Clarence Quirk

Street scene in Alassio on the Italian Riviera

mission involving a trip into Austria to contact the headquarters of Marshal Tolbukhin of the Russian army. This marked the first contact any member of the Division Artillery had with the Russian allies.

On May 30th, Memorial Day services were held by all units. In them, the men of the 91st paid tribute to their comrades who had died in the struggle to bring the European war to a successful conclusion. Nazism and Fascism had been blotted out in the two countries that fostered them. A hope was expressed that a similar scourge, perhaps under a different name, would not plague the world again. Comparable to the use of surgery to fight an extensive cancer, the operation had been drastic. Its thoroughness remained to be seen.

In the middle of June, the 91st Division got the bad news. The division had been placed in Redeployment Category II which meant that it was earmarked for shipment to the Pacific Theater where a war was still being fought. The pill was sugar coated, however, when the word came down that the 91st would in all probability be shipped back to the United States with a month's furlough for all men before checking into the Pacific war.

This added some new angles to the training programs for the artillery battalions. The redlegs had a new enemy to learn about and a new type of warfare to study.

Near the end of June, official notification was received of the end of the Trieste dispute. All battalions moved from their warlike positions back to bivouac areas in or near those occupied initially.

In the last portion of June and the first part of July, the division began to make typical Category II motions. The artillery units were stripped of all but essential vehicles, the non-essential ones being convoyed to Leghorn for shipment to the Pacific. All outfits were screened for high point men—those with enough service, dependents, and medals to avoid redeployment to the Pacific. They were transferred to units destined to ship to and stay in the United States. To take their places in the 91st, low point men from other divisions were transferred in. Meanwhile, the men were so full of anticipation of their journey home they had no time to worry about which came after—in the Pacific.

The institution of "rest" trips that once took artillerymen to Rome, Florence, and Montecatini was doing even better now. The line-up of possible spots to visit sounded like an itinerary for a continental play-boy. Close-by there were "rest" centers at Grado, Venice, and Lido. Longer trips were available to Milan, Genoa, Lake Como, Stressa and Lake Maggiore. Many redlegs had the opportunity to spend time on the world famous Riviera—some at Alassio on the Italian Riviera and some at Cannes and Nice on the French Riviera. A lucky few (for a few dollars extra) journeyed into Switzerland. As someone aptly put it, it was a life that could be afforded only by millionaires and soldiers.

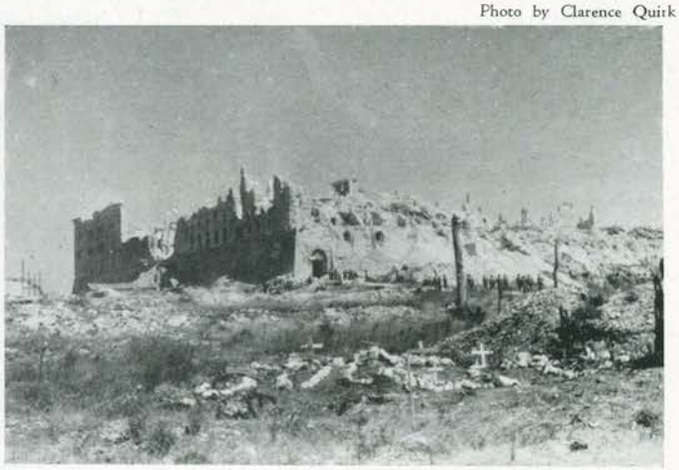
Single day trips were organized that took cannoneers up into Austria. They visited the city of Klagenfurt and rubber necked through the Brenner Pass and the Italian and Austrian brand of Alps. The sights would make mighty good conversational ammunition to impress the folks back home.

Throughout July, the 91st Division sat pat in the area that stretched between Cormons and Gorizia. The situation was non-tactical although some road blocks and bridge guards were maintained in addition to the regular guard. Training for Category II troops continued with emphasis placed on Gunner's Examinations, physical training, and athletics. The educational program continued on an "off-duty" basis.

Under the heading of Fun, each battalion produced its own musical show which it presented for its own amusement, then hit the road and gave performances for the other battalions. The countryside was scoured for musical instruments and a

A historic battlefield. The Abbey atop Monte Cassino when visited by 91st sightseers.

Photo by Clarence Quirk



Div-Arty dance band was organized that wasn't half-bad. As if once wasn't enough, another barbershop quartet contest was organized within the division. Although the Blendaires were disqualified (their previous wins placed them in an almost professional category), the artillery still kept the music laurels in its ranks when the foursome from the 347th Field Artillery Battalion coppcd first prize.

In the climax of the division's athletic program, the 348th's softball team, Division Artillery champions, finished in a tie for first place with the second battalion of the 362nd Infantry. In a three-game play-off, the infantry team squeaked through to win. The rabid rooters the artillery supplied for the 348th team would have made Ebbets Field crowds seem like disinterested bystanders.

Thoughts of home compounded daily. The 10th Mountain Division, an outfit occupying an adjacent area to the 91st, took off and headed for a port that would mean shipping out for home. Batteries of the 346th and 347th temporarily held down posts va-

Colonel Harry Ketcham, Div-Arty Executive Officer; Lieutenant-Colonel James Sanden, Div-Arty S-3; and Captain Roblee McCarthy, Div-Arty S-2.

Photo by Clarence Quirk

Div-Arty Headquarters Battery lining up to board the LaCrosse Victory in Naples harbor.

cated by the 10th Mountain until units from the 34th Division moved in to fill the gap. With the 10th Mountain gone, 91sters figured they might be next. Further preparations for a move bolstered this belief.

By the end of July, all radio equipment was turned in to Signal dumps. Most army exits were made with considerable fanfare and the 91st Division's was no exception. In a division review before Lieutenant General Truscott, commander of the Fifth Army, battalions of the 361st and 363rd Infantry Regiments were presented Presidential Citations for actions at Livergnano and Monticelli. Earlier in a series of their own separate ceremonies, the battalions of the Division Artillery had been presented with their three battle streamers, symbolic of the three campaigns the division had fought.

Finally came the long awaited orders. The 91st Division was to retrace its steps and move down

Looking out to sea from Naples

Photo by Joe Breidinger

Photo by Joe Breidinger

A view of the Naples harbor with the faint outline of Vesuvius in the background.

Photo by Clarence Quirk

Archbishop Spellman visits the Italian Theater

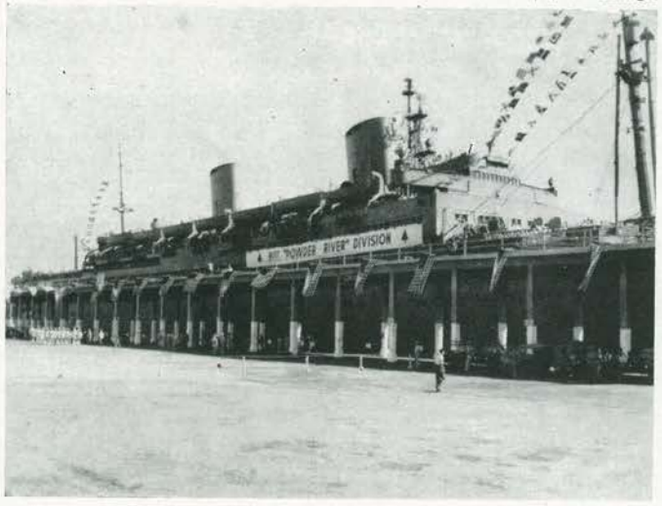
Italy to a staging area just outside of the port of Naples where it was to make final preparations for sailing to the United States. The trip from Gorizia to Naples was to take three days. This was a marked contrast to the year it had taken the division to come from Naples to Gorizia.

The artillery gave up its howitzers and stripped down to the personal belongings of each man and what basic administrative equipment it needed. The trip to the Volturno Redeployment Training Area just outside Naples was made by truck and by train. Some units jammed onto convoys of trucks, while others crowded into the pitiful little "40 and 8" box cars of the Italian railroads. Either way you took it, it amounted to a jolting, jarring, slam-bang ride. Griping, however, was merely perfunctory. Each bump in the road and every turn of flattened wheels brought them closer to home.

It was the second week in August before all outfits had closed into the Volturno area. After that, things went fast—but not fast enough for the redlegs.

Loading aboard the Mount Vernon in Naples harbor, September 1, 1945.

Photo by Joe Breidinger



While waiting for their boats, the men continued the training that pointed to further action in the Pacific. Then came the best news of all. The Japanese had surrendered! Category II or no Category II, the army would have one hell of a time to find an "active" theater of war to which to send the 91st. Latrine strategists figured the 91st would go home to stay. No one cared to argue the negative to that question.

Actually, the 91st was in an enviable position. Primed with low-point men and pointed for the Pacific war, it had been rushed to port for an early shipment through the United States. Then, while the division was in the act of loading on board ships, the Pacific war ended. So many preparations for shipping the division had been completed that there was no point in postponing or cancelling the sailing schedule. Yet, the division was virtually certain to stay in the United States once it got there. And here it was, sailing for home while many outfits loaded with high-point men cooled their heels in occupation jobs and sweated out later boats.

August was to be the last month all members of the 91st Division Artillery were together. The latter part of the month was spent in boxing and crating. Finally, on the 30th of August the three light battalions and the Div-Arty Headquarters Battery filed aboard the Victory Ship, the SS *La-Cross Victory*. A day later, the 348th Field Artillery Battalion joined other division troops aboard the SS *Mount Vernon*. The two ships sailed individually just as soon as they were loaded.

Gradually the city of Naples, sparkling in the sunlight, diminished until Italy was just a dark line on the horizon. Somehow, leaving was sad. True, these men were turning their backs to a terrible war and their faces towards home and peace. Yet, that fading strip of land represented more than a year in the lives of these artillerymen. It had not

all been bad. There had been many moments of fun and happiness. That year had been full of the gratifying feeling that comes when you're enjoying the comradeship of proven friends. All of these things were fading with the land. Then too, there were the dead. They were a part of Italy now and a parting glance at the dark line on the horizon brought vivid memories of them. Italy was more than just a boot-shaped peninsula on a map or a rocky, bloody battlefield. It represented a complex montage of experiences in the memories of these men whose willingness to see it disappear was just slightly tinged wih sorrow.

The chief difference between the voyage home and the trip that brought these soldiers overseas was the absence of a convoy on the return journey. No longer was there an enemy lurking on the seas to destroy ships. Vessels once more traveled independently and moved swiftly over the shortest course to their destinations. The *LaCrosse Victory* made the trip in just ten days. The *Mount Vernon*, a faster ship, made it in nine—both boats landing in U. S. ports on September 10th.

Morale on any ship going home is a factor that causes no worry. These two ships were no exceptions. The spirits of the men were as bright as the

Feasting their eyes on American soil—entering Boston Harbor
Photo by Clarence Quirk

Photo by Clarence Quirk
The welcoming tugboat in Boston Harbor

weather. The anticipation of going home almost left no time for getting seasick.

There were movies, plenty of books, and still more sunbathing. The recently organized dance band of the Division Artillery supplied a show one evening. Then the battalion band of the 346th bounced up with another show the next. Would-be disc jockeys from the Div-Arty headquarters confiscated the *LaCrosse Victory's* public address system and gave out occasionally with platters and patter. Games of chance were not uncommon. Post-war plans were spilled and worked over in almost every conversation.

Then somebody sighted land. Colonels and corporals alike were as excited as bobbysoxers at a personal appearance of Frank Sinatra. Rank, age, and experience somehow got lost in the shuffle. Everybody was a homesick boy who just caught sight of his own front door.

The ports seemed to be dolled up for the occasion. Large letters spelling out "Welcome Home" were arranged on hillsides. Similar signs appeared atop large buildings. Other boats in the harbor blew welcoming blasts on their whistles as the 91sters glided by. Anticipating such an occasion, the 91st troops broke out two huge signs reading "91st Powder River Division" which were lashed on each side of the ship.

This scene occurred almost simultaneously in Boston and Hampton Roads. The *LaCrosse Victory* landed at the former, the *Mount Vernon* at the latter.

No one ever accused the army of making any notable displays of efficiency. Nevertheless, the machinery that had been set up for handling debarking troops left little to be desired. The men wanted to get home by the fastest and shortest means and the army came as close to this objective as the complexities of the problem permitted.

Even before the ship docked, things began to happen. A tugboat, plastered with "Welcome Home"

signs and decoration, scurried out to meet the ship as it entered the harbor. The tug pulled abreast of the ship and through powerful speaker began to exude welcoming messages. On board the tug were a band, various singers and performers, and a whole deckload of very attractive WACs.

Cartoons have been drawn showing a well constructed female causing a troop transport to list dangerously to the side to which she put in her appearance. Such cartoons exaggerate the truth only slightly. Every able-bodied man on ship had some vantage point on the side along which the tug with its shapely cargo was steaming and the ship tipped accordingly.

After a few selections from the band and the performers, the WACs took over the microphone and cooed greetings. Then they pointed out some of the principal sights in the harbor and announced at what pier the boat would land. They also announced, somewhat pointedly, that they would be on the pier waiting when the ship did dock.

There was a short wait after the ship tied up and the men lined up. At the end of the gangplank, a special "Welcome Home" archway was placed and at the very foot of the gangplank for every man to step on as he left the ship was a little square of earth marked "American Soil."

Morale is said to be made up of a lot of little things.

As the men filed off the ship, they found the WACs were waiting. One was assigned to each column and led it away to nearby railroad tracks for loading onto trains which shuttled their passengers to the army's portside camp. For those who landed in Boston, it was Camp Myles Standish. At Hampton Roads, the 348th returned to the familiar sights of Camp Patrick Henry. Red Cross workers waylaid the columns of men as they loaded on these trains to present them with cold bottles of milk—something that was unavailable overseas.

Arriving at the camp, the men were marched to an amphitheater where they were told about the system by which they would be sent to their homes. The Division Artillery, battalions, batteries no longer counted. Each man was an individual to be shipped to his own home town. The shipping was to be done by train. While waiting for his particular train, each man was assigned a bunk in a barracks and shown the mess hall where he could get his chow.

There were telephone centers where long distance calls could be placed. A big, fancy post exchange had a glittering display of hard-to-get items. There were clubs and beer and dances. And, best of all, the natives spoke *English!*

In the big railroad yards, trains were pulling out almost every hour. Men heading for simliar parts of the country were lumped together in one trainload and the train chuffed off. All those who had more than one night to spend on the train were given pullman berths. Considering the destination, no one minded sitting up just one night in a chair car. Inside of 48 hours after debarkation, all 91sters were rolling over the countryside heading for home.

The trains actually headed for strategically located army "Reception Centers." These centers, spotted all over the nation, took the men off their trains, supplied them with orders for 30 days' "temporary duty" and gave them cash to buy a ride home. Presumably, at the end of the 30 days, each man was to return to the reception center which would then route him to the camp where the 91st Division was regrouping for whatever job was given it.

As it turned out, the 30 days vacation was lengthened to 45 days. Meanwhile the "critical score" of the army's discharge point system dropped sufficiently to permit discharging most of the men when they returned from the end of their 45-day "recuperation furlough." The artillerymen became civilians once more.

About November 1st, scattered remnants of the Division Artillery began reporting in at Camp Rucker, Alabama. This was the reassembly station for the 91st Division and, as those who came there learned, this was to be its last resting place. The 91st Division was to be inactivated.

Throughout most of the month of November, administrative odds and ends were untangled and disposed of. All remaining personnel in the Division Artillery were either discharged or transferred. All property and records were turned in.

Then, without flourish or fanfare, the 91st Division Artillery ceased to exist on November 27, 1945.

There was only a handful of men left to observe its passing, but in the minds of thousands of former members scattered all over the country vivid memories would live on. Memories of wiremen crawling through shell fire to lay their needed lines. Memories of radio men; of truck drivers and mechanics; of survey teams and cooks and clerks; of fire detection teams, the metro section, and message center staffs; of Fifth Section crews, ammunition handlers, supply men, and switchboard operators; of observation post crews, and the unforgettable medics whose work began when everyone else hit the dirt; then lastly, of the cannoneers, themselves, who, in keeping their howitzers shooting, were the end result of the efforts of all others in the artillery outfit.

Yes, the 91st Division Artillery was no more. But the combinations of numbers in 916, 346, 347, and 348 would reoccur all through life in street addresses, telephone numbers, bookkeeping figures, everywhere. And when those who were once a part of the Division Artillery see them, they will pause and remember.

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