



WITH THE 88TH DIVISION,
ITALY



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DIVISION COMMANDER
MAJ. GEN. PAUL W. KENDALL



PAST COMMANDER
MAJ. GEN. JOHN E. SLOAN



HEADQUARTERS
88TH INFANTRY DIVISION

TO THE OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN OF
THE 88TH DIVISION:

This is your book, your history. You made the record, from Gruber to Brenner Pass. You fought through the mountains and hill towns, down ancient highways in the long valleys, against a fierce, experienced enemy. You knew the men who fought and died, or were wounded and did not return. This history is more than a collection of words and facts. It is the life story of a fighting infantry division, a life which will not end until the last battle is won.

You have served with distinction beside some of the finest divisions in the French, British, and American Armies. You have attacked and beaten some of the toughest divisions in the German Army, over terrain previously considered impassable. You have achieved a standard of victory almost unequalled in the history of a great Army—the Fifth Army.

This history belongs to you and to the engineer, signal, artillery, armored and other units from Corps and Army who have so ably supported our advances. It is a story of magnificent achievement over terrible obstacles, and the future will add more glory to our record.

With pride and gratitude this book is dedicated to you, the fighting men who beat the enemy and took the ground. May God protect you and lead you on.

Paul W. Kendall

PAUL W. KENDALL,
Major General, U. S. Army,
Commanding

" WE WERE THERE "

This is a story of thousands of men — of clerks and salesmen and bakers and students and gas station attendants — of men from every walk of life who suddenly were called upon to drop their peaceful pursuits and go off to war.

This is the story those men wrote with their hearts and minds and courage — and many, with their lives — as they walked and ached and fought across more mountains than they ever thought existed.

This is the collective story of those men, told as the story of the division they made — the collective story of the soldiers whom the Germans came to fear as the 88th moved irresistibly forward despite all the entrenched enemy could do to stop them.

This is a story, which, unfortunately, can not go into as much detail as those brave men deserve — it is a story which has yet to be finished — a story which does not yet have a happy ending.

This, then, is the story of the battle record, in Italy, of the 88th Infantry Division — of the soldiers the Germans called "The Blue Devils."

They wrote it — this is just the record.

A PROMISE

A plea and a pledge were made one dusty afternoon on a sunny Oklahoma plain high in the Cookson Hills.

In a brief address to several hundred soldiers gathered about the main flagpole at Camp Gruber, Capt. John S. Quigley of Des Moines, Iowa, President of the 88th Division Veterans Association, challenged the new soldiers to "take up the job we didn't get done" in World War I.

That was the plea.

And this was the pledge, from Maj. Gen. John E. Sloan of Greenville, S. C.: "The glory of the colors never will be sullied, as long as one man of the 88th still lives."

It was 15 July 1942, Activation Day for the new or World War II edition of the 88th Infantry Division. The site was Camp Gruber, 18 miles up the mountain road from Muskogee, Okla., a huge, new cantonment built to house the citizen recruits who would pour in from all sections of the United States they would train to defend.

In the minds of a few of those men present that day were memories of another day 25 years in the past — a day in early 1917 at Camp Dodge, Iowa, when the first 88th Division was born.

Spanning the years, they recalled that first activation, those training days when recruits struggled to become soldiers, when more than 45,000 replacements were funneled out to France and when officers and cadre-men despaired of steering the Division sail overseas as a unit.

They remembered those sudden marching orders, the convoys breasting the broad Atlantic, the landings in France and the day in October, 1918, when the first units of the 88th went into the line in the relatively quiet sector of Haute-Alsace.

There were memories of mud and pain and death — of trench raids and artillery barrages and clashes in the fog and the nightmare that was No Man's Land — of the Armistice and the long months following it in France before the happy trip home to America in late 1919.

There were some who remembered the beginnings of the veterans organization known as The American Legion and of the role Maj. Eric Fisher, Asst. G-2 of the 88th Division, played in its founding. And others who recalled the "peace years" when the 88th existed only as a "paper outfit" with headquarters in Minneapolis, Minn., until the guns of Europe for the second time in a generation awoke America to the need for arming against an aggressor who threatened the world.

The winds of Mars had fanned the dim 88th embers to fitful flame some months before. The War Department had decided to reactivate the Division and had appointed Maj. Gen. Sloan, a veteran of 31 years in the Coast and Field Artillery, to command the new outfit. Assigned to assist him were Brig. Gen. Stonewall Jackson of Plattsburg, N.Y., as Assistant Division Commander, and Brig. Gen. Guy O. Kurtz of Alhambra, Calif., as Division Artillery Commander.

While the General and special staffs were training at staff and command schools, Brig. Gen. Jackson journeyed to Fort Bragg, N.C., and there

personally selected and interviewed an enlisted cadre from the crack 9th Infantry Division. Other cadresmen came from the Infantry Replacement Training Centers at Camp Wheeler, Ga., and Camp Wolters, Tex., laced with a sprinkling of National Guard and Reserve Officers.

Converging on Camp Gruber, the officer and enlisted cadre underwent special training there, set up regimental and battalion headquarters and made preparations to receive the thousands of draftees then still enjoying their last few days and weeks as civilians.

There were but a few hundred men in the formation called for official flag raising ceremonies at Division Headquarters on 4 July, 1942, when Maj. Gen. Sloan hoisted the national colors. The ranks were swelled somewhat on 15 July at formal activation ceremonies when new members and a handful of civilian and soldier veterans of the old 88th watched their regimental standards catch the faint breeze.

Lt. Col. Martin H. Burckes of Waltham, Mass., Adjutant General, read the official orders of activation, and Chaplain Alpha E. Kenna of Fort Leavenworth, Kan., 88th Division chaplain during World War I, asked God in his invocation to "enable these men to do a better job than we were able to do."

Graying Captain Quigley reviewed the war and Armistice years as he hurled his challenge to "finish the job." Maj. Gen. Sloan accepted "the torch passed on to us by the men of the old 88th" and promised that their faith would be sustained, their record maintained and the glory of her colors un-

sullied "as long as one man of the 88th still lives."

There were dry throats and high hopes that day of activation as the 173rd Field Artillery Band from Camp Livingston, La., struck up the "National Anthem."

The new 88th was born. Its growing pains were yet to come.

"SWEATING IT OUT"

Tired, dirty, confused but still able to muster a laugh or a wisecrack, the draftees began pouring off the troop trains from the East in the days immediately following activation. Of the first thousands, the majority came from the New England-Middle Atlantic States — later increments included men from all sections of the States.

Processed and speedily assigned to units of the Division, the men "sweated through" the weeks of basic training and then began the real work of becoming soldiers. From the new battlefields of North Africa came combat officers to pass on battle experience and life-saving tips.

The training was long, and hard, but there was time for rest and relaxation in nearby Muskogee and Tulsa, which soon became the "happy hunting grounds" of this new generation of adopted braves. Names like Bishop's, Huber, Mayo, Cain's became as old landmarks to 88th men who played, at times, as hard as they worked and who won editorial praise from the Muskogee "Daily Phoenix" for their conduct while on pass or leave in town.

Shift of the first general officer came in late February of 1943 when Brig. Gen. Jackson was transferred to command the 84th Infantry Division at Camp Howze, Tex., and promoted to Major General. Col. Paul W. Kendall, DSC, Chief of Staff of the XV Corps, succeeded him and received his appointment to Brigadier General on 21 March.

The weeks rolled on — the first cadre from the 88th departed for Camp Mackall, N.C., where it activated the 11th Airborne Division — on 18 April, President Roosevelt visited Camp Gruber for retreat ceremonies, then watched the 88th pass in review, the first time, he told Maj. Gen. Sloan, that he ever had seen a full infantry division in review — in May, two record-smashing floods called out 313th Engineer and 313th Medical Battalion units for rescue and evacuation work with the soldiers snatching more than 1,200 civilians from flood waters along the Arkansas and Grand River bottoms.

"Muskogee and Eastern Oklahoma Day" on 29 May, featuring a division review and day-long displays and demonstrations of military equipment, was the 88th's formal farewell to Oklahoma with Maj. Gen. Sloan telling the crowded stands that "the show is mainly for you people out here who have been entertaining us for such a long time and who have made us feel more than welcome in our new, but temporary home."

Ordered to Louisiana for maneuvers with the Third Army, the 88th stacked up against such major units as the 31st Infantry Division, 95th Infantry Division and the 11th Armored Division as it mock-battled its way through central and



western Louisiana and the east central part of Texas from 28 June to 22 August.

For its standout performance, the 88th drew Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Tex., as its new station. And suddenly, the Division was "hot," with rumors becoming fact on 25 October when an advance party departed for Camp Patrick Henry, Va., and overseas.

From the staging area on 2 November, 1943, an advance party of 10 officers, led by Brig. Gen. Kendall, left by plane for North Africa. The group landed at Dakar on 8 November, General Kendall being the first member of the new 88th to set foot on foreign soil. Three days later, Division Headquarters overseas was established at 18 Boulevard Clemenceau, Oran.

With General Kendall in the advance party were

Maj. Frank J. Wallis, Division Artillery; Major James E. Henderson, 349th Infantry Regiment; Maj. James A. Stach, Asst. AC of S, G-4; Major James H. Green, 313th Engineer Battalion; Major Elmore D. Beggs, Asst. AC of S, G-3; Capt. Frederick V. Harris, G-3 Office; Capt. Louis A. Collier, 350th Infantry Regiment; Capt. John A. Mavrakos, 351st Infantry Regiment, and 1st Lt. Carlos M. Teran, 313th Medical Battalion.

Meanwhile, as preparations were being made in North Africa to receive the Division, members of the five increments were funneling through the East Coast staging area, fresh from the "up and down" physical and packed into the ships for the slow voyage across the Atlantic. It was nothing like the movies, that trip overseas, and many a soldier, hanging weakly over a rail, cursed the day he ever saw the army.

Stacked five high in the holds of the lumbering ships, scrambling for two meals a day and then fighting to keep them down, without recreation facilities and restricted to below decks from sunset to sunrise, the men did anything but enjoy the trip. KP, instead of a task, became a prized assignment since on many boats it was the only way a man could be certain of getting enough to eat. Six-strippers pulled their rank on lesser grades to make the KP list.

Sickness which broke out at the staging area hospitalized approximately 500 officer and enlisted personnel. This group was the last to come over, under Warrant Officer Henry J. Foner. All crossings were made without incident and not a man of the Division was lost to due to enemy action.

First enlisted men staggered ashore at Casablanca, French Morocco, on 21 November, bivouaced for a few days at Camp Don B. Passage and then headed by "40 and 8" boxcars — but without the horses — for Oran. Plans to close in the Division at the Oran straging area were changed with the arrival of Maj. Gen. Sloan and the units were routed to a larger training area near Magenta, Algeria, where the 88th put the finishing touches to the long months of preparation.

"We're going," said Maj. Gen. Sloan, "not only to Rome and Berlin, but all the way around to Tokyo. We'll fight our way around the world and prove that the 88th is the best division in the entire Army. This coming year of 1944 will see new history made — we are lucky to be in on the making."

THE FIRST

For some of the Division, training days ended with the old year.

An advance party of officers and men left the Magenta-Bedeau area on 26 December for Italy, under command of Brig. Gen. Kendall, to serve as observers with the 3rd, 34th and 36th U.S. Infantry Divisions and the 5th, 46th and 56th British Divisions, Fifth Army. On the night of 3-4 January, 1944, the first representatives of the new 88th went into the line with the Fifth Army, and on that basis, the 88th was in action at last.

The first Division battle casualty came even before the observer groups had completed final moves to the front. On the afternoon of 3 January, on his first day in a combat zone, Sgt. William A. Streuli of Paterson, N.J., was killed by enemy air bombardment two miles west of Venafro. A member of the Division since its activation and chief of a gun section in Battery "B," 339th Field Artillery, Streuli was reporting for observer duty with the 185th Field Artillery, 34th Division, when German planes bombed the area.

Brig. Gen. Kendall, holder of several "firsts," made another "first" the hard way when he won the Silver Star for "gallantry in action" despite a wound while accompanying assault elements of the 143rd Infantry, 36th Division, during the Rapido River crossing on the night of 20-21 January. Presented by Maj. Gen. Fred L. Walker, the "Texas" Division Commander, the award was the first won by a member of the 88th in World War II.

On 1 February, the Division once again was on the move and this time on the last water lap of its journey from training camp to combat zone and action. In three increments, the 88th came to Italy, bivouacked one night at Naples and then moved by units to an area generally southeast of the village of Piedmonte d'Alife.

In transit since 25 October, 1943, the 88th was once more assembled and complete as a division when the last units pitched pup tents in their respective areas on 21 February, 1944, and members of the various observer groups reported back to their outfits. After four months, the Division had arrived

in its first combat zone — 14,261 officers and men had been ferried more than 8,000 miles across half of two continents and two oceans without the loss of a single man, in transit, through enemy action.

And more, had scored a notable "first" by becoming the first of the new or all-Selective Service infantry divisions to come overseas in World War II.

"THIS IS IT!"

Within sound of the guns at the front, bivouac areas and pup tents buzzed with speculation as to when the Division was scheduled to move up.

But if the enlisted men speculated and wondered, high officers did also, for plans and orders for employment of the 88th were, in those first days, contradictory and confusing. Attached to II Corps on 23 February, the 88th went on with its training but grew impatient for some definite word.

No one exactly relished the idea of going into the lines for the first time. But all of them wondered, and some of the men spoke like Pvt. Frank Cacciatore who admitted "I'm nervous — sure I am — we've waited an awful long time for this."

Or like Cpl. George R. Benson who said "this waiting is killing — and that's no baloney."

Or Sgt. Joe Judd, who was "very happy to go to the front and take a chance on the things I have in mind. I am happy to have an opportunity to do something. The Germans are as rotten as

they come — I hate them."

But most of the waiting, and wondering, dough-boys felt like Sgt. Delphia E. Garris and agreed with him that "It's just something that has got to be done. We have got to lick those bastards in order to get out of the Army."

No heroics — no movie talk — just plain words from average guys who were going up for the first time.

First indication of possible action came with orders to send the 351st Combat Team to the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead, then under attack by some 10 Nazi divisions. The 351st got as far as Naples, was outfitted, equipped and set to go when orders were changed and the regiment moved back to its old area.

Since employment seemed a distant thing, plans were made to indoctrinate the men by attaching infantry battalions to the 34th and 36th Divisions



Col. R. J. McBride, Chief of Staff, (center) hears reports from Lt. Col. G. E. Walker, G-2 (left) and Lt. Col. J. R. Davidson, G-3, Lt. Col. Peter L. Tomé, G-4 and Lt. Col. F. W. La Motte, G-1. Staff changes since assigned Lt. Col. E. D. Beggs of G-2 and

in the Cassino sector. Before these plans could be completed, however, the 34th and 36th began pulling back for rest and reorganization, and II Corps followed to the rear within a few days.

Their sectors were taken over by a New Zealand Corps on the left and a French Corps on the right. The French were spread too thin, and, seizing the opportunity for battle training, Maj. Gen. Sloan arranged for the 2nd Battalion of the 351st to go into the lines in the Cassino sector.

The battalion, under command of Lt. Col. Raymond E. Kendall of Manchester, N.H., plus 1st Platoon, Company "C", 313th Engineers, Company "C" and one platoon of Company "D," 313th Medics, took up positions on Hill 706 on 27 February. Relief of the 141st Infantry, 36th Division, was begun at 0300 hours with Company "F" the first unit to move in, followed by Company "G" and Company "E."

The relief was completed by 0830 hours that same day and the 2nd Battalion, 351st Infantry Regiment, became the first organization of the 88th to be committed to combat in World War II, exactly one year, seven months and 12 days after activation.

To the 913th Field Artillery Battalion, Lt. Col. Franklin P. Miller of Carmel, Calif., commanding, went the honor of firing the shot which boomed the entrance of the 88th Division Artillery into this war. Ordered to support the French Corps in defense of Castellone and the New Zealand Corps in operations against Cassino, the 913th relieved the 131st Field Artillery, 36th Division, at 2213 hours, 27 February.

Through luck of the draw, Battery "C" was

the first to adjust and the selected check point for registration was the southeast corner of the Abbey at Montecassino, blasted for the first time a few days previously by the Air Corps. Data was computed, and with Lt. Col. Miller yanking the lanyard of No. 2: howitzer, the first shell was on its way for a direct hit at 0727 hours, 28 February.

"I'd been waiting 15 years to fire that shot," said Lt. Col. Miller.

During its first two days in the sector, the 913th pumped more than 2,000 rounds after that first shot. Propaganda shells were interspersed with high explosives and the Krauts got script and shrapnel. The 2nd Battalion, 351st, confined its activity to heavy patrolling and holding actions.

Though barely begun, further unit indoctrination plans came to an abrupt end on 27 February when orders came for the Division to move to the western flank of the main Fifth Army line to relieve the 5th British Division in the Minturno sector.

By combat teams, the Division began its movement as outlined in Field Order No. 4 on 29 February — the forward command group establishing Division Headquarters and forward CP in the village of Carano and the Rear Echelon occupying the village of Casanova.

At 1500 hours, 5 March, command of the sector passed from the 5th British to the 88th Division, the only American division in line along the entire southern Fifth Army front at the time, and the *first all-Selective Service infantry division to enter combat on any front in World War II.*

With its left flank anchored on the Gulf of Gaeta

below Scauri, the 88th held a 10,000 yard bridgehead front over the Garigliano River rising from the seacoast to the heights of Damiano, near German-held Castelforte. The 350th took over the left flank, the 351st the center zone and the 349th the right flank.

So efficiently was the relief effected that all who witnessed it were "amazed at the business-like manner in which the units took over their respective sectors." And so many were the comments that Brig. Gen. L. L. Lemnitzer, Deputy Chief of Staff, Allied Central Mediterranean Force, wrote a letter of commendation to Maj. Gen. Sloan.

Main action along the Fifth Army front at that time was the drive for Cassino, but despite fierce ground attacks by New Zealanders and steady plastering by MAAF bombers, that Nazi bastion held. Primary mission of the 88th in its bridgehead was a holding and harassing action, and though artillery fire was heavy and constant, ground troops engaged in patrolling and feeling out the enemy. It was not done without cost. By the end of March, the first month, the casualties totaled 99 dead, 252 wounded and 36 missing.

In an effort to obtain information about the new American outfit, the Nazis slipped spies in among the refugees who left Gaeta. 2nd Lt. Harry W. Riback and his section captured 13 German spies attempting to make their way behind our lines during the first two months.

Artillery batteries, in position across the front, after a direct hit on one gun of the 338th the first day in action, proceeded to build deluxe dugouts—some of them a cross between a pirate's den and



a museum, with castles at Minturno and Tufo furnishing the equipment. Units in the line set up rest camps in buildings close to the front—company barbers cut hair in OP's—and the Recon Troop and Engineers played football near their villas across the Garigliano with "Sally of Berlin" warning almost nightly that someday she'd break up the game with a couple of rounds of "heavy stuff."

Pvt. Leo Witwer of Columbus, Ohio, achieved passing fame when he got lost delivering a message to the 349th CP and wandered up the main street of Castelforte. Rescued by an English officer who had crept in on recon mission, Witwer's only comment after return to his outfit was that "Ma will be pretty sore if she hears about this."

It was a quiet sector, but men died there. And other men became heroes.

There was Pvt. John Flores of Los Angeles, Calif., and the 349th, who heard a "funny noise" in a house during a daylight patrol. Investigating, Flores rounded up a German officer and 14 enlisted men—nearly fainted when he later discovered his rifle had been locked all during the performance.

There were Lt. Jasper D. Parks of Oklahoma City, Okla., and Sgt. W.A. Trapp of Wagoner, Okla., both of the 350th, who rescued two soldiers after the men, wounded, had spent six torturous days and nights in a wrecked building in No Man's Land.

There was the three-man patrol from 1st Battalion, 349th, which went out at 0300 hours one day on a 24-hour mission to spot Kraut gun emplacements. Shortly after taking shelter in a house the radioman reported: "The Germans have occupied two floors below us." That was the last message received.

Two DSC's were won during this "quiet war."

The first went to 2nd Lt. John T. Lamb of Erwin, Tenn., and the 351st, for his performance as a patrol leader on 30 March near Tufo when, despite a wound, he silenced a Jerry outpost, flushed 15 Germans from a house, killed seven, carried a wounded patrol member to safety and then provided covering fire while the rest of his men made it back to friendly lines.

The second DSC went to 2nd Lt. John A. Liebenstein of Monona, Iowa, and Company "K," 349th. Ordered to take German prisoners for information purposes, Lieutenant Liebenstein and his men—Cpl. Allen L. Marsh of Covina, Calif.; Pfc. Ralph C. Wells of Sevierville, Tenn., and Pfc.

Sidney L. Collins of Maquoketa, Iowa — crept to within a short distance of German lines on Mt. Ceracoli.

Assaulting a machine gun position, Liebenstein's gun jammed but he nevertheless reached into the emplacement and dragged out a Kraut. On his way back, the officer hit the trip wire of a German "booby trap." Wounded, he ordered his men to leave him as the Germans sent mortar and artillery fire crashing into the draw. When medics returned to the spot later with a litter, Lieutenant Liebenstein was missing.

In mid-March, the 339th Infantry Regiment of the 85th Infantry Division came across from North Africa, landed at Naples during a sneak Nazi harbor and dock raid and was attached to the 88th. Moving immediately to the front, this regiment went into the line on 17 March and relieved the 349th which moved back to a rest area in the vicinity of Casanova.

During the rest period, a switch in regimental commanders was made. Assigned to take over the 349th was Col. Joseph B. Crawford of Humboldt, Kan., thrice-wounded veteran of North Africa, Sicily, Salerno and Anzio, and winner of the DSC and Silver Star for bravery in action. Tagged with the nickname of "Krautkiller" by the Germans for his exploits while serving on the beachhead with the 3rd Division, Colonel Crawford was like a shot in the arm to the 349th.

While holding its own on the main front, the 88th also took part in the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead battle, with 88th Quartermaster Company personnel trucking supplies and equipment to troops on the "pool table" via boat from Naples.

return to the States ended one of the Army's most unique father-son relationships. Colonel Lynch's son, 1st Lt. Charles P. Lynch, Jr., remained with the 350th, commanding the same company his father had served with during World War I.

A frequent visitor to the Division, Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, Fifth Army Commander, spoke to more than 5,500 troops in a rear area on 3 May when he made formal presentation to the 88th's first DSC winner, Lieutenant Lamb. Welcoming the 88th to the Fifth Army and praising Maj. Gen. Sloan, who once had been his instructor in tactics, Lt. Gen. Clark told the men they were ready to go places and "I promise you it will be soon."

Little more than a week later, Field Order No. 6, complete except for date and time of D-Day and H-Hour, went out to the units. Commanders learned that II Corps was to attack with divisions abreast — 88th on the right, 85th on the coast — with the ultimate objective of cutting the Itri-Pico road west of Itri. Abandoning its circus layout near Carano, the Division CP moved up into a quarry south of

Minturno — farthest forward CP of any division in the line.

Up in the lines, the doughboy, with nothing ahead of him but the enemy, simply sat tight and sweated it out — surveyed the seemingly impassable mountains over which he'd soon have to fight and climb, gave his rifle an extra check and got ready to start climbing.

The war correspondents checked in with G-2 for a last briefing, then fanned out to positions along the line. Frederick Faust, sometimes known as "Max Brand," correspondent for *Harpers* who had been living with the 351st for weeks gathering background for a book, requested and obtained permission to accompany assault units in the attack. He gave as his reason: "The only way I can get the feelings and reactions of men in battle is to go into battle myself." Refusing a rifle, Faust accepted a club made by members of the 2nd Platoon of Company "L."

Finally, everything was set — there was nothing more to do but wait. The 88th was ready.

THE KICK-OFF

It was a quiet, lazy spring day — the date was 11 May, but it was no different from any other day on that front.

Scarlet fields of poppies nodded and bobbed in a faint breeze — smoke pots at the Minturno Bridge drifted their haze across the valley — an incoming shell punctuated the stillness now and then with a muttering crash.

South of Minturno, the "Vampire Platoon" — so named because they'd bivouacked in a cemetery,



sleeping by day and gliding about the front by night — made last checks of their equipment, slept a little, wrote letters or talked idly about the job ahead of them.

Daylight faded, and dancing stars winked across a clear sky. A dog howled somewhere, its cry echoing over the silent valley. Forsythia drenched the night air with a nostalgic perfume. The minutes crept on — it was 2230 hours. And then — 2245 — 2255.

It was 2300 hours—H—Hour of D—Day.

A solid, leaping sheet of flame shattered the darkness as the greatest concentration of Allied artillery since El Alamein roared sudden death into German lines. From coast to coast along that long dormant front, uncounted tons of steel spat from the throats of hellishly-roaring American, English, French, Canadian and Polish guns.

And silently, quickly, from their sangers and dugouts, the men of the 88th took their first few steps on what was to be a long and bloody and bitter trail — began doing the job for which they had been trained so well, began making battle history.

Stunned at first by the ferocity of the barrage, the Germans nevertheless were swift to react and poured a murderous hail of mortar and small arms fire down the slopes at the advancing doughboys, battering at their sector of the Gustav Line.

There was no stopping that initial surge, and in less than 51 minutes Mt. Damiano (Hill 413), key to the defenses of Castelforte and a height Lt. Gen. Clark had once boasted could be taken whenever the 88th desired, had fallen to the 350th Infantry Regiment.



"Flame shattered the darkness"

Capture of Damiano, or Cianelli, passed almost unnoticed in news dispatches at the time, but it was described later as one of the most outstanding operations in the initial assault on the Gustav Line. Its seizure covered the flank of the French Corps on the right and enabled the French to crack through the bottleneck that was Castelforte.

As the 350th mopped up on Damiano, the 351st butted against the stone wall that was Santa Maria Infante — pivotal point in the Gustav Line and the first real testing ground for the 88th.

With tanks, which knocked out 21 German machine guns in the first few hours, the 351st jumped off for Santa Maria with the 2nd Battalion in the lead. A hell of small arms, machine gun and mortar fire caught the doughboys as they started up the rocky slopes. Company "E" led the assault on the

right, Company "F" on the left and Company "G" was held in reserve. Early on 12 May, Company "F" overcame resistance from Hill 130 and continued its advance up the terrain feature known as "the tits," on line with Company "E." Its commander wounded, Company "E" was held up on the "spur." When his radio was knocked out by shell fire, Lt. Col. Raymond E. Kendall, Bn. CO, moved up to determine the cause of the delay and assumed command of Company "E" on arrival. Spotting two machine guns, Lt. Col. Kendall led a platoon in an attack on one of the pillboxes.

This gun was knocked out, and Lt. Col. Kendall then swung the company to the right under heavy mortar and machine gun fire. Moving up to the right of "the tits," the outfit was stopped again by machine guns firing from the flanks and front. Again Lt. Col. Kendall took off — this time with a squad from the 2nd platoon, and started for the gun which was firing from a position in a stone house to the right. First building up all the fire power possible, and joining in the fire fight himself with a carbine, bazooka, BAR and M-1 with anti-tank grenades, Lt. Col. Kendall then led the final assault on the building. As he pulled the pin on a hand grenade, he was hit by machine gun fire from the left flank, receiving mortal wounds.

An artillery liaison officer, 1st Lt. Pat G. Combs of the 913th, reorganized the company after the death of Lt. Col. Kendall and personally led the doughboys as they attacked and silenced three machine guns. He then ordered part of the unit to dig in while he and the remainder drove forward to capture the "spur."

Company "E" then pushed on into Santa Maria, but was driven back by a strong counterattack. Company "F" forged ahead on the left and reached a position near Tame. Supporting tanks were unable to get through because of mines and Nazi SP guns.

At 0515 hours, 12 May, the 3rd Battalion, commanded by youthful Maj. Charles P. Furr of Rock Hill, S.C., was ordered to pass through the 2nd to keep the attack moving. The 3rd jumped off at 0730 hours for Hill 172, was held up for a time by fire from Hill 103, but continued the advance.

Another German counterattack forced Company "E" to withdraw, and Company "F" quickly was isolated and surrounded. Attempts to reach it failed.

Going forward to check on the supply situation, Capt. Charles E. Heitman, Jr., Fort Myers, Fla., found "E" and "G" practically disorganized, badly cut up and with "E" minus its commander. Taking over "E," Captain Heitman outlined a plan of attack with 1st Lt. Theodore W. Noon, Jr., of Belmont, Mass., Company "G" commander, who insisted on sticking despite wounds. To complete coordination with the 85th Division on the left, the attack was delayed until 1700 hours, 13 May.

When "E" and "G" kicked off at 1700 hours, Lieutenant Noon had recovered sufficiently to lead his men. Hours later, and then only on direct orders, did he turn himself in for treatment. Captain Heitman, with the 1st platoon of "E," moved up on two machine guns. In a struggle which lasted almost two hours, he killed four grenade-throwing Jerries and knocked out two guns before being wounded.

Late on the 13th, with no word having been received from Company "F" in 24 hours, Colonel Champeny ordered a new "F" to be formed from the remaining companies of the 2nd Battalion.

The 1st Battalion, ordered to attack at 1600 hours, was taken over by Colonel Champeny when the battalion commander was separated from the outfit while on reconnaissance. And stern, graying Colonel Champeny proved himself to his men as they lay pinned down under a barrage. Standing erect, apparently unmindful of the shells falling in

his vicinity, the Colonel calmly directed operations — shouted words of encouragement to his bewildered doughboys.

"It was magnificent," said Larry Newman, International News Service correspondent. "We wanted to lay down and stay there — but with the 'old man' standing up like a rock, you couldn't lay down. You were ashamed to. Something about him just brought you right up to your feet. The guys saw him too — they figured if the 'old man' could do it, so could they. And when the time came, they got up off the ground and started on again to Santa Maria."

Early on the 14th, the 1st Battalion took Hill 109 after considerable resistance which included traversing an extensive mine-field and beating off a strong enemy counterattack. Its flank wide open through failure of the 338th Infantry to take Hill 131 on schedule, the battalion left the regimental zone and took 131 itself.

With opposition now in its final stages, the 2nd Battalion moved on Santa Maria from the right and the 3rd Battalion drove up the Minturno-Santa Maria road. The town was occupied by 1000 hours and engineers followed on the heels of the infantry, clearing rubble from the streets with bulldozers.

On arrival of the 351st in force, the mystery of missing Company "F" was solved when Pfc. Frank Cimini of Northampton, Mass., and two other men emerged from a culvert in the vicinity of Tame where they'd been forced to hide more than two days to avoid capture.

Company "F," in the first attack, advanced so rapidly it soon was far out in front of the regimental

— To Santa Maria —



lines. Cut off when the Krauts counterattacked and forced "E" to withdraw, the men of "F," though surrounded, held out for more than 30 hours, Cimini related. Finally, the Krauts resorted to an old trick — but it worked. Several Krauts stumbled down the hill towards the company lines, hands in the air and yelling "Kamerad." As the men of "F" rose to capture them, other Germans closed in from the rear and flanks. Five officers and 50 enlisted men were taken — only three escaped to live and tell the story.

In the first days of the push, the 88th Recon Troop made its bid for glory with capture of Mt. Cerri by a 13-man patrol. During the months of the "quiet war," Recon patrols up the Ausente Valley always had met fire and resistance from Cerri, and 2nd Lt. Laurence "Cookie" Bowers of Grand Island, Neb., swore that some day he'd "get the Krauts on that damned hill."

Shortly after 0200 hours, 14 May, Lieutenant Bowers and his little group of dismounted cavalymen "busted through" Kraut defenses to the top of the hill, originally listed as a 350th battalion objective. When the 350th chugged up at dawn, the patrol turned over the newly-won ground to the doughboys and went back to their outfit.

Action in the 350th sector had been much more favorable. The advance was swift and resistance was quickly overcome. By morning of the 12th, Hill 316 and Mt. Ceracoli were taken, and at 1320 hours Brig. Gen. Kendall, who was directing operations of all units in the Damiano area, reported that Ventosa had fallen, thus completing action in the first phase by the 350th.

One of the highlights came when an entire German battalion was caught in its assembly area by a TOT barrage from the 337th, 338th, 339th and 913th Field Artillery Battalions — observers later said there was no describing the scene of death and destruction at the impact area.

The 349th, held back as a reserve striking force, sent its 1st Battalion to occupy its 1st Phase positions. These positions, involving a limited advance, were occupied by 0030 hours, 12 May and the regiment awaited further orders. On the afternoon of the 14th, the 1st Battalion jumped off for Mt. Bracchi — occupied it with Companies "A" and "B" by nightfall.

But with Santa Maria fallen, the German Gustav Line was smashed — the Nazis, fighting desperately for time, began a general withdrawal. German



Santa Maria Infante

351st, took Mt. Passasera and wiped out a German pack artillery train in the process. Continuing its drive to the northeast, the regiment moved to cut off the Germans withdrawing from Spigno on 15 May, then under direct assault by the 350th.

By 0830 hours on the 15th Spigno fell to the 1st Battalion, 350th, with Brig. Gen. Kendall accompanying the troops into town, where they met a patrol from 1st Battalion, 351st, in just a few minutes before. After the fall of Spigno, the 350th became division reserve and the 351st continued its attack to the west, captured San Angelo and on the 17th had occupied Mt. Ruazzo.

The 349th Combat Team, attached to the 85th Division on 15 May, assisted the 85th in its drive on Castellonorata.

Punching across the mountains, the 351st stabbed to within 800 yards east of the Itri-Pico road before it was stopped by heavy enemy tank, SP and machine gun fire. Casualties were high and ammo and water ran low. Because of the terrain, artillery could not displace far enough forward to take the enemy tanks and guns under fire.

Artillery Cubs dropped medical supplies, radios, rations and maps to the 351st, forced to set up on Mt. Peretta and reorganize. Corps artillery finally got the range and silenced the Kraut tanks — later the 601st Pack Artillery arrived and went into position to support the regiment.

Detached from the 85th on 18 May, the 349th was ordered to drive for Itri — at 1500 hours, 19 May, the 1st Battalion moved into the wrecked town behind General Sloan, clearing the buildings and streets of snipers and rearguards left behind to

harass the Yanks. The advance of the 349th was so swift that 313th Engineers, hacking out a supply road from Marinola to Itri, were only half finished when word came to drop the project. Previously, the engineers had cut jeep trails through rugged country from Spigno to Marinola and from Gaanello to Route 6.

Recovered from pneumonia which had hospitalized him for weeks, Brig. Gen. Guy O. Kurtz returned on the 19th to assume command of the division artillery. And arrived in time to learn of the 338th's "firing from the hip" technique.

Displacing forward on the road about one mile east of Itri, the 338th was warned that the battalion Air OP had picked up considerable activity on the west side of Itri. Immediately, Battery "B", Capt. John G. Tillman, commanding, dropped



Pack mules supply the roadhike

trails on two guns and started to fire through a fire direction center established on the hood of a jeep. Other batteries went into position, on both sides of the road and remained in their improvised setup until late next morning, their fire accounting for one Jerry tank, a 170-mm. gun and more than two-score Jerries.

In general, the artillery situation in this phase became rather hectic — not at all as outlined in the manual. The doughboys, with a full head of steam, were chasing the Krauts so rapidly it was difficult for artillery to keep the enemy in range. Outfits would displace, set up in a new area, find that the doughfeet again had outdistanced them.

The Krauts, disorganized, wandered in small groups all over the hills, bypassed by the infantry. Artillery batteries met sniper fire many times and cannoneers became expert at patrol work — on several occasions new areas first had to be combed and cleared of snipers before the guns could go into position.

Forward observers frequently found themselves doubling in brass and leading infantry companies and platoons. Air OP's flew missions, not only to spot targets, but to dump food, supplies and maps to advanced infantry elements far ahead of their ration trains. No longer could artillery be classed as "rear echelon."

Because of the mountainous terrain, pack mules were used extensively for supply purposes and despite several ambushes and sudden enemy raids, the Division's 1,400 mules and more than 400 Italians and soldier "mule-skinners" slogged doggedly across the peaks with their precious loads.

"Sally of Berlin," on the air almost constantly as the 88th battled up the peninsula, grew increasingly annoyed at the doughboys and as her harassed countrymen lost more and more ground she aired a plaintive complaint that the 88th soldiers were "a bunch of bloodthirsty cutthroats" and "did not fight like gentlemen." Later the hysterical voice added a couple of hearty cuss words as descriptive adjectives; finally stuck to calling them "Blue Devils."

Brig. Gen. Kendall again took off frontwards — this time on horseback, startling doughboys and war correspondents alike as he galloped after, and along with, the infantrymen. He shocked the Recon Troop at one spot when he told a platoon leader to pretend his scout cars "were tanks."

Below Fondi he joined combat engineers in a fire-fight with ambushing Krauts — later took personal affront at a Kraut sniper who fired at him. Stalking the sniper, Brig. Gen. Kendall bagged him and dragged three more "supermen" out of a nearby house before he calmed down. His front-line prowling became almost legendary and the doughboys grew accustomed to seeing his one star with them, or up ahead with the advance patrols.

Scauri, Gaeta and Formia fell — and the 85th drove for Terracina. On the right flank of the 88th, 10,000 Goums — held back until Castelforte and surrounding heights fell — poured through the hills in delirious pursuit of the Nazis, shooting them by day and by night slipping quietly among them for a little knife-work.

Slugging north from Itri, leading elements of the 349th with Maj. Gen. Sloan in the foreground, were fighting in the southern outskirts of Fondi —

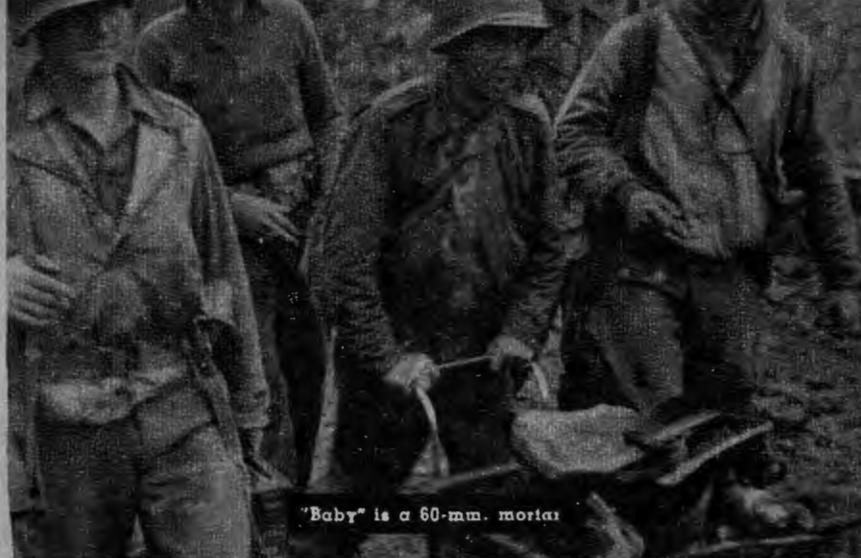
key point in the Hitler Line — on the afternoon of 20 May, the 350th following closely in its wake. With capture of Fondi at 2200 hours, the 349th drove on for Mt. Passignano, took it and assembled in that area on the morning of the 21st.

The 350th, moving through Fondi, attacked at dawn 21 May to the northwest, the 1st and 2nd Battalions being committed in the drive against Mt. Casareccio and Mt. Martino, both of which were taken late on the 21st. The 351st jumped off on 20 May from its assembly area near Mt. Grande and by the morning of the 21st had seized Mt. Valletonda.

German planes were active in this phase and on the 24th, the 788th Ordnance Company was bombed and strafed heavily, resulting in death of three men and wounds to 14 others. The night before, the Division Rear Echelon at Casanova suffered its first casualty when seven bombs were dropped on the outskirts of town — fragments ripping through a tent killed one member of the APO staff.

Opening of the beachhead drive on 23 May was joyful news to tired doughboys of the 88th — junction of the southern Fifth Army front with the beachhead on 25 May was a terrific morale booster. Though not officially in on the junction, the 88th was represented unofficially when Capt. James A. Flanagan, Asst. G-2; Lt. Milton A. Blum, G-2 Office, and Lt. Wolfgang Lehmann; PW interrogator, took off in a jeep piloted by Sgt. Egar Clark; correspondent for *The Stars and Stripes*.

On the former beachhead, the quartet had tea (?) with the commanding general of the 5th British Division — the outfit the 88th relieved when it



"Baby" is a 60-mm. mortar

first went into the Minturno sector — then made the return trip to the CP where they explained their absence to the Chief of Staff and relayed congratulatory messages from the 5th.

After regrouping in the Monsicardi-Delmonte area, the 349th continued its advance northwest, taking Mt. Rotondo, and later, Mt. Alto and Mt. Della Salere—the 350th meanwhile jumping off for Roccasecca dei Volsci.

In the drive for Roccasecca, the 2nd Battalion ran into stiff resistance in the valley south of San Boggio—the Krauts pouring in heavy fire from the hills on both sides. On the 24th, the 1st Battalion occupied Roccasecca dei Volsci—10 miles ahead of Fifth Army lines—and the 3rd garrisoned the high ground overlooking the town.

On 27 May, 2nd Battalion, 349th, was advanc-

ing northwest towards its objective of Mt. San Martino and as security, sent Company "E," its leading element, to establish a road block on the road running north from Maenza, a small town to the west of the battalion objective. Company "F," commanded by 1st Lt. Paul R. Behnke, encountered a German Panzer Company retreating from the town and the gleeful "Krautkillers" shot up three enemy half-tracks, 10 cycles and two jeeps before running out of ammunition—"F" held its position during the night and made contact with the battalion next day.

Ordered to clear the Amaseno River Line, the 88th had accomplished the task late on the 28th, was attached to IV Corps and shortly thereafter, its front pinched out by the French and the beachhead forces, the Division prepared to move on the 31st

to the new II Corps sector in the vicinity of Anzio.

Released by Army censors for identification in news dispatches, the 88th was praised for its "magnificent record" by newspapers throughout the United States—the *New York Times* summing up the tributes with its own accolade that "the blue cloverleaf shoulder patch has become a badge of honor to be worn proudly" by all who are, or were, members of the 88th.

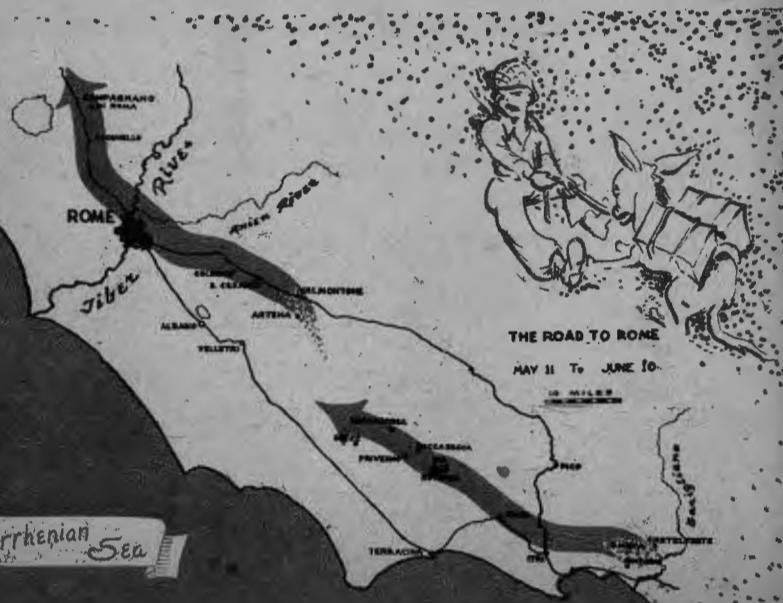
ALL ROADS AND CLAIMS

If the battle for Rome was tough—and it was—the battle to determine identity of first troops in Rome was, in its way, tougher—and still is.

They're still arguing it but as far as the 88th is concerned, *there's no argument*. The 88th will not claim "first in" but will simply state the facts here and let the story stand by itself.

Bivouacked in the former beachhead area, the doughboys' half-hopes for a rest were ended with news that the Army had turned and was driving directly for the Eternal City. And from Maj. Gen. Geoffrey M. Keyes, II Corps Commander, came word to the 88th that it had been honored by a new assignment in the final drive for Rome—and that the Corps Commander was confident it would be the first in.

On 2 June, having moved back into the line with the 3rd Division on the right and the 85th on the left, the 88th attacked to the northwest to capture the eastern entrance to Rome on Highway 6 and



cut off and destroy the retreating enemy. The 340th Infantry, minus one battalion, was attached to the 3rd Division for this operation and the remaining battalion was sent with the Howze Task Force. The 351st was directed to attack northwest, protect division flanks and maintain contact with the neighboring division and with the 350th until that unit advanced abreast of the 351st. In support of the 351st was the 752nd Tank Battalion.

Widening an initial narrow sector, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 351st cleared the towns of Carchitta and San Cesareo and at 1630 on the 2nd, cut Highway 6. After reorganizing, they established road blocks on Highway 6 and parallel routes.

In the assault on San Cesareo, the 1st Platoon of Company "G," which was acting as advance guard for the 2nd Battalion, ran into enemy resistance. During the action, a tow-haired youngster from Virginia had a field day when he made seven bazooka rockets count for as many German vehicles and upwards of 60 Nazis.

The youngster was Pfc. Asa Farmer of Isom, Va., who was at the head of his platoon column when the fleeing Nazi vehicles were spotted. He'd never fired his bazooka in combat before but when someone yelled "let 'em have it," he swung into action, scored a direct hit with his first shot. After that, targets loomed in quick succession at the road block—calmly and accurately. Farmer and his bazooka paced the platoon. When it was all over, a tally revealed that Farmer himself had knocked out two half-tracks, a light tank and four German jeeps—the platoon as a unit bagged 22 Kraut conveyances before sundown.

Another Virginian, 1st Sgt. Paul N. Eddy of Crewe, Va., distinguished himself near Monte Proziocattini when he killed five and captured eight of the vaunted Hermann Goering Division, put three enemy machine guns out of commission and neutralized an enemy mortar and crew, thereby enabling his company to advance.

Enemy air braved the skies over rear areas in futile attempts to cut supply lines and block reinforcements as Nazi foot-soldiers struggled to get away. The 313th Medical Battalion clearing station was a target for six bombs and several strafing runs the night of 1-2 June; a direct hit on an admission tent killed nine, wounded others.

Moving now astride Highway 6 on a 3,000 yard front, the 351st drove for vital bridges over the Aniene River. The town of Colonna was partially bypassed by the 3rd Battalion and the regimental staff, with a portion of the I and R platoon, officially captured the town—were treated to a preview of a Rome welcome when civilians broke out hidden stores of wine for the dusty and tired men of the "Spearhead" Regiment.

At Colonna, eight Division MP's who "wanted action" took off with Lt. Walter R. Glass of Dexter, Kan., on a combat patrol—bagged 18 Germans before calling it a day. With Lieutenant Glass on his round-up were Cpl. William A. Stewart of Oklahoma City, Okla.; Pvt. Ronald Ware, Navasota, Tex.; Sgt. Sidney Gabin, Bayonne, N. J.; Sgt. Carmine Romano, The Bronx, N. Y.; Pvt. Jesse Brown, Memphis, Tenn.; Pvt. Xenophon Simitacolos, Canton, O.; Pvt. Robert Mahaffey, Rudolph, O., and Pvt. Emanuel Holtzman, N. Y.

"Blue Devils" smash into Rome



Securing the bridges over the Aniene River, the 351st was ordered to halt in place. Dawn's light on the 4th disclosed the unscarred buildings of Rome some 4,000 yards away—the regiment was impatient to close the gap.

Now began the final foot-race. The 350th had been directed to overtake the 351st, pass through it and continue the attack. Loath to be overtaken. Colonel Champeny had pressed on — not exactly disobeying orders, he nevertheless saw to it that his doughboys hit a pace fast enough to out-distance the 350th. Early on the 4th, the 351st was ordered by Maj. Gen. Sloan to push forward at once with one motorized battalion along Highway 101, enter Rome, and seize important bridges over the Tiber River.

Before the take off, however, word came that a six-man patrol from the 3rd Platoon, 88th Reconnaissance Troop, had entered Rome at 0730 hours on Highway 6. This patrol later was credited, officially, by Fifth Army as being the first Allied troop element to enter Rome. This is its story.

The 3rd Platoon had fought its way to within two miles of Rome. There it halted and the patrol was dispatched to reconnoiter the road ahead. Shortly before 0730 hours the lone jeep, moving forward cautiously, passed the "Roma" city limits sign and proceeded for about a kilometer and a half to a small railroad station from which point a Kraut machine gun opened up on the patrol.

Sensing the immediate danger and because their orders called for it, the patrol retraced its route and Staff Sgt. John T. Reilley of Watervliet, N.Y., reported to his platoon leader that he'd been in Rome. Cpl. Cassie W. Kuemin of Detroit, Mich.; T-5 Roy T. Cutler of Moweaqua, Ill.; Pfc. John E. Cottrell of Rochester, N.Y.; Pfc. Matthew J. Fitzpatrick of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Pfc. Michael J. Regan of North Bellmore, Long Island, N.Y., confirmed Reilley's report and "damned the Kraut machine gun which had spoiled everything."

At 1500 hours the 3rd Platoon, attached to the 1st Special Service Force, moved into Rome and raced through the city to secure certain bridges over the Tiber River.

Back at Division CP, staff officers turned hand-springs — Maj. Gen. Sloan beamed proudly. His men had "made it — and first."

But the struggle was not yet over. Moving up Highway 101, paced by a Recon platoon, the regi-

mental I and R platoon and Company "C," motorized, the 351st ran into considerable German resistance from a strong point about one mile east of the city, just north of the suburb of Centocelle.

Detrucking, the doughboys deployed and took up the challenge. In the ensuing action, 1st Lt. Trevlyn L. McClure, I and R platoon leader from Greensboro, N.C., was wounded several times but continued to lead his men until caught and killed by cross-firing enemy machine guns. Less than 24 hours before, McClure had led his platoon in routing 50 Germans from a strong-point — killing 16, wounding six and capturing four — and shortly after had captured an enemy tank and an ammo truck, exploits for which a DSC, posthumous, was awarded.

Overcoming the last-ditch resistance, the 1st Battalion, plus several TD's and three tanks, swept on into Rome — *arrived in the city at 1530 hours and reported itself as the first infantry, in force, to make it.*

Toiling along up Highway 6, a motorized battalion of the 350th, one battery of the 338th Field, one company of the 313th Engineers and a provisional battery of six 105-mm. self-propelled guns from the 752nd Tank Battalion, all under command of Lt. Col. Walter E. Bare Jr., Muskogee, Okla., battered its way through Jerry rear guards and crossed city limits on the Via Palestrina shortly before 1730 hours. Once in, it was joined by Italian Partisan troops who aided the doughboys in cleaning out snipers from buildings along the way.

The welcome was tremendous — like nothing the doughboys ever had expected or experienced.

In the suburbs, civilians poured out of their homes to greet the first troops — milled about the vehicles, ignored the sniper and return fire which whizzed about their heads, cheered when a German tank was hit, groaned when a Yank jeep went out of action, cried, whistled, smiled, shouted, danced, sang, tossed flowers, poured wine and champagne and finally by their sheer exuberance succeeded in doing what the Germans hadn't been able to do since the kick-off — temporarily stopped the "Blue Devils' cold in their tracks as they welcomed "the liberators."

It was fantastic — it was unbelievable — but it was Rome, that first night.

Artillery units were fired on by Kraut small arms and machine guns — Battery "B" of the 339th was pinned down while moving into position outside of



Cheers for "the liberators"

Rome; Division Artillery Headquarters found itself in the midst of a firefight; and surprised cannoneers of the 913th rounded up 15 Kraut PW's. The "red legs" were a defiant, proud lot as they hauled their guns into new firing positions in the city.

The 913th was the first artillery battalion to fire from Rome after occupying positions in the Villa Borghese early on 5 June, followed shortly by the 338th, the 339th and the 337th. Division Artillery Advance CP moved to the Villa Borghese at 0800 on the 5th but later that day Brig. Gen. Kurtz moved the CP to the Ministry of War Finance Building near the Milvio Bridge.

Division Headquarters and the CP of the 349th Infantry also set up in the building — Kraut artillery tossed a barrage at the area in mid-afternoon, scored hits on a jeep and an apartment house across the street.

Stripped to the waist, and center of an admiring circle of signorinas, artillerymen were never in better form as they pumped shells at enemy columns and vehicles across the Tiber fleeing north along Highway 2. The Romans cheered every round, youngsters fought for still-smoking shell cases as souvenirs, wary parents eyed their daughters who, in turn, eyed the artillerymen, who — well, there still was a war on.

Weary doughboys plodded through crowd-jammed Rome streets, slept on sidewalks and in doorways during short breaks, secured their bridge and road objectives and pressed on over the river and up Highway 2 after an enemy they were unable to catch or to make stand and fight. The 349th, held in place south of Rome after being pinched out by

the French, rode and marched through Rome on the 5th, detrucked and deployed across the river to take up the pursuit again.

There were some who neither rode nor marched through Rome — they were the men who died on the outskirts, in the suburbs and in the center of Rome itself from rearguard enemy sniper fire and who lay crumpled and twisted in the pathetic shapes the newly-dead assume. Over their silent heads, the delirious welcome celebration roared on unabated.

Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, Fifth Army Commander, officially entered the city on the morning of the 5th. Accompanied by Maj. Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther, Fifth Army Chief of Staff, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey M. Keyes, II Corps Commander, and Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott Jr., VI Corps Commander, Lt. Gen. Clark's appearance touched off the celebration again as the party toured city streets.

News of the invasion of France on the 6th was the climax — the first flash brought smiles to the faces of exhausted doughboys and a new jag to an already happiness-saturated Rome.

Still pressing, the 88th Division was relieved on 10 June, culminating an offensive advance of 109 airline miles in 31 days from Minturno, including the rapid dash through Rome and across the Tiber from the vicinity of Roccamassina to the vicinity of Bassanelio, a distance of 56 miles in eight days.

After a total of 100 straight days in the line, the "Blue Devils" put down their guns, capped their mythical horns and headed back over the long trail they had won — headed for Lake Albano, and rest.

Sec. of War Henry L. Stimson, Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark and Maj. Gen. John E. Sloan inspect the 31st of Tarquinia.



VOLTERRA TO THE ARNO

There was rest at Albano — individual and unit honors — and passes to Rome for the doughboys who had obtained only a brief glimpse of the capital they had helped to liberate after a lightning stab through the mountains, taken for the first time in all history by an attack from the south.

And taken with relatively light casualties, according to a G-1 report which listed 134 officers and 1,844 enlisted men as killed, wounded or missing in action. The report indicated that German losses had been much heavier, based on the PW total which credited the 88th with bagging 30 officers and 1,942 enlisted men, members of more than six German divisions which had failed to stop the 88th's drive.

Temporarily abandoning their tasks as MP's, members of the band after two brief days of rehearsal swung back into action with music for dances, parades, concerts and other ceremonies. The Red Cross Tent Club, favorite of the Division since it first set up at Casanova in early May, rejoined the 88th and before month's end had served more than 42,000 men across the snack bar.

When the Division was alerted on the 23rd and moved to Tarquinia, some 60 miles north of Rome, to keep pace with the Fifth Army sweeping on far to the north, the Tent Club stayed with its adopted "Blue Devils," made the jump with the help of the 313th Engineers and was back in operation

with the loss of only half a day.

While the press in the United States still sang its praises, the 88th collected additional honors — a Distinguished Service Medal to Maj. Gen. Sloan from General George C. Marshall during a tour of the battle areas, and 114 awards, decorations and commendations presented by Maj. Gen. Sloan to members of his command at a Division ceremony on 28 June, the first since the opening of the offensive.

Turning the month into July, training and reorganization programs were stepped up as the old, reliable rumors began making the rounds and the Division cleared for more action. On the 5th and 6th, the 349th and 350th Combat Teams moved up to the front, the 351st remaining.

Next day, Sec. of War Henry L. Stimson and Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark made formal inspection of the 351st as it stood at attention on the Tarquinia airfield — Mr. Stimson praised the dough-boys for what they had done in their first days of combat and told them "The thrill of victory is in the air."

Relieving the 1st Armored Division, and attached now to IV Corps, the 88th prepared for its drive to the Arno River. Volterra, stronghold of the ancient Etruscans and a German prize, was the first main objective. Assigned to take it were the 349th and 350th, with the 351st held in reserve. Plans called for the 349th to flank the mountain city on the east, the 350th on the west, with both outfits scheduled to cut in behind the city and seize high ground to the north.

With division artillery pounding zone targets



and the 337th dropping smoke west and southeast of Volterra, the regiments jumped off at 0500 hours on the 8th over gently rolling terrain with poor cover. Enemy machine guns and 20-mm. ack-ack guns, fired at point-blank range, gave the 349th a bitter day-long battle before the "Krautkillers" took the approach town of Roncolla. By 2200 hours both regiments had reached their objectives and the 349th sent patrols to block entrances to Volterra, once the site of Kraut OP's which commanded a 15-mile view.

Hitting for Laiatico, the 351st encountered stubborn opposition - checked several strong German counterattacks, and by dawn of the 11th found its 1st Battalion pinned down in the open on the west slopes of the Laiatico hill mass, under direct observation and heavy enemy artillery fire. On the 12th,

all battalions reorganized and prepared to follow new attack orders. Brig. Gen. Kendall arrived at the 351st CP about 2100 hours with orders for the 2nd Battalion to attack from the west, 3rd from the east with the 1st to be held as potential relief.

The attack was launched on time—the 3rd drove forward in column of companies under command of Capt. Harold B. Ayers of New Orleans, La., executive officer who had taken over when the battalion commander was wounded and evacuated. Following about 100 yards behind its support artillery, the 3rd knifed into the enemy defensive positions along the ridge running east from Laiatico, penetrating as far as the CP of the 1st Battalion, 1060th Grenadier Regiment. Killing the German CO by grenades tossed into his headquarters, the men of the 3rd rounded up more than 420 live Jerries and killed over 250 before they resumed their advance up the ridge.

In the meantime, the 2nd Battalion had taken Hills 212 and 166 and reached the northern part of town by daylight. With break of day, both units were caught in fierce artillery barrages—despite them, the 2nd continued to push on about 800 yards beyond Laiatico when orders came to dig in. At 2400 hours the attack was resumed and both the 2nd and 3rd took the ridge running north and south from Laiatico by 0300 hours on the 13th.

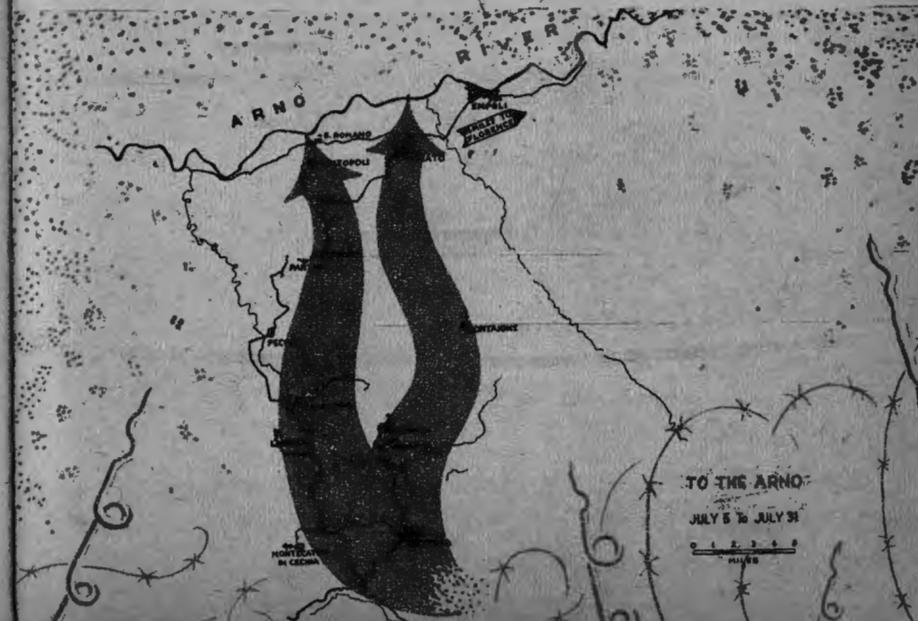
For its outstanding performance at Laiatico, the 3rd Battalion later received a War Department Distinguished Unit Citation, the first unit in the Division to win such an award.

Attempting to exploit its capture of Laiatico, the 351st was checked by stiff opposition—the 350th

stood off a tank and infantry attack as the 339th Field destroyed four enemy gun batteries during the encounter. On the 13th, the 349th and 350th, abreast, were able to move forward to limited objectives meeting only scattered resistance—later in the day their progress was slowed.

And a new name was born in the 349th as a symbol for a hell on earth—the name of "Bloody Ridge."

Taking Hill 186 late on the 13th with relative ease, the 2nd Battalion moved toward one of its bloodiest and most decisive fights of the campaign. Although the Kraut had not met the attack on Hill 186 with any sizable resistance, he was well prepared to stand off a strong assault on Hills 184 and 188, near Villamagna. The approaches to the objectives were heavily mined and the enemy gain-



ed precious time because of this.

Under direct enemy observation all the way, Company "E" led the pre-dawn attack on the left knob and took it after withstanding murderous machine gun fire. Company "G" also felt the full fury of the Kraut main line as it assaulted the right knob, but by dawn had worked its way to the top aided by heavy fire from Company "H" machine guns. On the crest, "G", riddled by casualties, still had enough left to throw back a strong Kraut attack. The battle was won. Company "F" moved up with "G" and the hill was secured against further attacks.

That was "Bloody Ridge" — it's a name, and a place, that never will be forgotten by the regiment.

Scouting the area about Villamagna, the 3rd Platoon of the Recon Troop took the town itself at 1222 hours on the 13th—later an Army G-3 report credited the 3rd with capture of Villamagna, adding that it was "*taken by the same unit which was first in Rome.*" At 0030 hours on the 14th, the 3rd Battalion, 349th, occupied and secured Villamagna as directed by the Division.

Belvedere and adjacent high ground fell to the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 351st, and all units continued their advance, with the 351st moving through Monte Foscili early on the 16th. The advance picked up speed during the morning with indications pointing to an enemy withdrawal during the night. The back of the Kraut resistance in the sector apparently had been broken and all units were directed to push forward swiftly to maintain contact.

By morning of the 17th the situation maps

disclosed that the 351st had captured Partino and was continuing north, the 349th was driving for Palaia and the 350th had taken the high ground in the vicinity of La Fornace and maintained its northward thrust. Shortly after daybreak however, the enemy began fighting back with renewed strength, increasing his use of tanks and covering the entire front with mortar and artillery concentrations.

Division plans to drive on to the Arno were changed and the units were directed to seize commanding terrain in their particular zones and maintain aggressive patrolling to the river. At 1900 hours, the 349th took Palaia and the heights to the north.

During the battle for the heights, 1st Lt. Kenneth W. Gray of Fayetteville, W. Va., personally knocked out an ambushing Kraut machine gun, then led his company as advance scout, reorganizing the unit twice under deadly fire to beat off savage counterattacks before he fell wounded—an exploit for which he was awarded a DSC.

At 0100 hours on the 18th, the 1st Battalion, 351st, attached to Task Force Ramey, captured Montaione. Enemy opposition diminished during the night with artillery reported "practically ceased." On the 19th, all units dug in, established all around security and pushed combat patrols to the Arno to learn that the enemy apparently had succeeded in getting his main body across the muddy stream.

Three days of quiet preceded one of the 349th's roughest small unit battles. Driving for San Miniato, one officer and 40 enlisted men of Company

"G" took cover from small arms fire in a house about 1000 yards east of San Miniato—counter-attacks raged along the regimental front.

Attacked by Krauts in near-battalion strength, the small group bottled up in the house at Calenzano hurled back eight enemy attacks, during one of which the suicidal Krauts tried, and failed, to blow in the door with dynamite. Capt. James L. Lyons, Battalion Executive Officer, who was with the embattled unit, called for direct artillery fire and the 337th Field dumped 3,500 rounds in, near and on the house during the struggle.

At noon the 337th ran out of ammunition but shells continued to pour into the Nazi ranks as the 913th, one battery from the 339th and a 6-gun SP group from the 760th Tank Battalion all fired for Company "G" and the gallant little group holding out in the house. The attacking Germans pressed in relentlessly until the rumble of tanks was heard and Company "I" broke through to relieve the "Krautkillers," at that point down to a mere handful of ammunition and two anti-tank grenades.

Company "G" moved into San Miniato that night, found that the enemy had withdrawn after salting the rubble-strewn streets and houses with mines and booby-traps. San Romano and Buore, a small town to the north, were cleared and occupied by the 351st on the 25th. Activity from then on was limited to aggressive patrolling to the river and limited recon patrolling across the Arno with both the 350th and 349th outposting the rail line along the south bank.

Relieved by the 91st Infantry Division, regiments



Digging the Kraut out of his hole

of the 88th pulled back to the vicinity of Villamagna for a period of specialized training in river crossing operations. The relief was screened over the air by the 88th Signal Company which maintained division radio nets and carried on "dummy" messages. Artillery units remained in position and pumped shells across the river.

During these last 23 days in the line, the 88th had met a different kind of Kraut—met a German who had stopped running, a German who clung tenaciously to every foot of ground and fought vicious delaying actions when his planned lines of

defense had been pierced, a German who was supported by heretofore unseen masses of heavy and long range artillery. Beset at all times by mines and booby traps which infested the roads and fields, the "Blue Devils" had cracked through four German defense lines, driven the enemy from Volterra to the north side of the Arno River.

The reverse side of the ledger showed that the Division had suffered a higher casualty toll in the 25-mile push than in the entire stretch from Minturno to above Rome, G-1 figures listing 142 officers and 2,257 enlisted men killed, wounded and missing during the operation.

Training, rest, rumors—and almost daily changes in plans for the expected assault on the Arno marked the month of August. With the fall of Florence, it was clear at long last that the frontal attack across the river would not have to be made—the 88th licked its wounds and prepared for whatever else was in prospect.

Triple award ceremonies on the 6th gave convincing proof that the rest could not last forever. Presiding at regimental ceremonies, Brig. Generals Kurtz and Kendall reviewed Division accomplishments to date and Maj. Gen. Sloan, speaking to several thousand at special religious and memorial services told Special Troops that "complete destruction of the Boche is our objective, not how many mountains and rivers we cross."

A change which affected the entire Division, came on the 9th when Maj. Gen. Sloan relinquished command of the outfit he had built from a handful of raw recruits and entered the hospital at Leghorn to undergo treatment for an annoying and puzzling

'kin condition which had bothered him for more than a month. It was with much regret that word was received later that Maj. Gen. Sloan was enroute to the States.

Brig. Gen. Kendall was designated by Fifth Army as the new Commanding General of the 88th. Named Assistant Division Commander was Brig. Gen. Rufus T. Ramey.

Late in the month, the 350th was sent to Leghorn as IV Corps reserve and shortly after, the 349th moved to the vicinity of Florence to back up the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Japanese-American, which had been attached to the 88th in mid-August. The 351st remained in the Division area near Volterra.

By month's end, it was apparent that the 88th was due for action again — the regiments were pulled back and the Division bivouacked in the Scandicci area southwest of Florence. Training continued and since the possibility existed that the 88th might go into the line in any one of three different sectors, staff officers made daily trips to the 34th, 85th and 91st to keep abreast of the situation.

Time was running out — another D-Day and H-Hour were approaching.



"BATTLE MOUNTAIN"

"Victory is in the air and the Army Commander has entrusted you with the decisive role in this operation... Time is working against you since approaching unfavorable weather may be the bell that will save him (the enemy) and leave you with nothing better than a draw... Tear in and make this the final round."

With those words, the II Corps Commander, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey M. Keyes, in his Order of the Day on 6 September, set the mental stage for the drive to Bologna, the drive which was to prove the bloodiest and the most difficult of all the 88th's operations in combat.

Placed in Corps reserve, the 88th was not committed in the initial attack but held itself ready to pass through wherever it might be most needed. With the 34th, 85th and 91st slashing forward magnificently through bitter German resistance and over terrain generally regarded as "impassable," it was not until the 17th that the 88th was alerted and warned it probably would go in before another 48 hours had passed.

Moving up, the "Blue Devils" concentrated in the San Piero area north of the Sieve River and prepared to go in on the Corps right flank, on the right of the 85th and passing through units of that division. The 349th and 350th went into assault positions during the night of 20-21 September and kicked off against the Gothic Line at 0500 hours

on the 21st - the 351st being held in reserve.

Comparatively light resistance, encountered in the first few hours when the 349th took Mt. Frena by a surprising flanking movement, stiffened as the day and advance progressed. Early on the 22nd, the 1st Battalion, 350th, command post was raided and Lt. Col. Walter E. Bare, Jr., and all of his staff except the S-2 were taken prisoner along with operations maps and journals. This occurrence did not materially hamper the advance, however, and other favorable gains were made during the morning.

By 1700 hours on the 23rd, the 349th had taken Mt. La Fine, a commanding terrain feature, and beaten off three Kraut counterattacks — one of which was of two-battalion strength which had been forming in a valley until smashed by accurate and heavy 337th and corps artillery concentrations.

At 1900 hours, the 351st jumped off in the center sector of the Division and soon the three regiments were moving abreast, the 350th and 351st making the main effort with the 349th garrisoning La Fine. Next day, enemy opposition increased and when the 3rd Battalion, 350th, moved from its position on Mt. Della Croce and attacked toward Mt. Acuto, some 1,200 yards away, the battalion was counterattacked fiercely. It beat off the first, shortly after a second, and moved ahead through the night — by 0830 hours of the 25th scaled Acuto, stood off two more attacks and secured the strategic height.

In the assault, Capt. Thomas L. Cussans of Flint, Mich., battalion operations officer, took command of a company which had become disorganized when



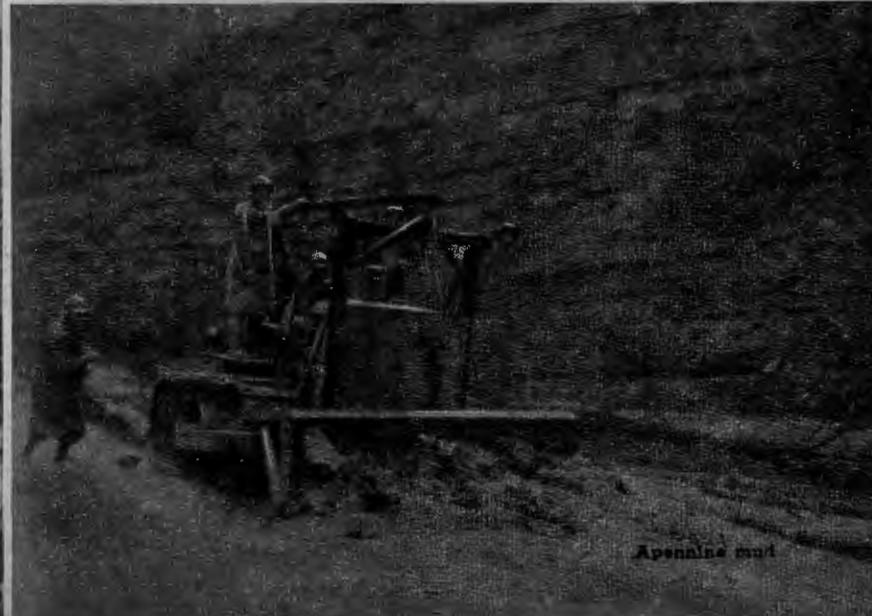
Apennine mud

its commander was killed and the unit suffered heavy casualties. Nailing the first three Germans who rushed him, Cussans rallied the company, led it in a charge up the height in the face of heavy enemy machine gun and pistol fire, a charge which broke through tight lines and routed German defenders and a charge for which he later was awarded the DSC.

The 88th's drive by now had become a bitter, hill to hill slugging match with the Krauts defending every mud puddle and striking back again and again, inflicting heavy casualties on our troops. Failure of units on the Division right flank to match the 88th's progress enabled the Krauts to pour artillery at the "Blue Devils" and necessitated employment of every last reserve and the use of various attached units as flank guards.

Fog, rain and mud blocked observation, washed away at morale and hampered supply trains — engineers basted new trails and routes across mountains and strove mightily to keep open what few, inadequate routes there were. Often under fire, 88th Signal Company men performed "near miracles" in keeping communication lines open and in full operation — the 88th Quartermaster Company and 788th Ordnance Company, half buried in mud, somehow managed to keep supplies and ammunition moving up to the men who needed them.

Early on the 25th it became apparent that Mt. Pratolungo, Mt. Carnevale and Mt. Battaglia would have to be captured before any further advances could be made. The 349th immediately took off for Pratolungo and had the height before darkness that same day. Throughout the 26th, slight advances



Apennine mud

were made and on the 27th, the 351st, hitting the town from the east, west and south, captured Castel del Rio.

New objectives for the 351st were designated as Mt. Guasteto and Mt. Capello — the latter developing into one of the four bitterest battles of the entire drive for the Po Valley.

The battle for Capello, which lasted two days, was a struggle between German soldiers who would not withdraw and American troops who would not be stopped. The attack was launched at 0845 hours and by 1335 hours the 2nd Battalion had reached a draw 800 yards southwest of Capello. Fighting raged here for several hours, grew so fierce that the 1st Battalion, less one company, was sent to their aid, moving to the right and hitting in on the Germans from the flank. During the night, forward elements inched ahead and reached a point about 50 yards from the summit by dawn.

Attacking by deployed squads with three machine guns on the flank of each, the Germans held here; stopped the men of the 1st. The 2nd also was tied down and as casualties mounted, the headquarters company was pulled in as riflemen. All morning the two battalions hammered away in the face of heavy mortar and small arms — at 1250 hours came first encouraging news from Lt. Col. Yeager that "we are proceeding slowly." For three more hours the fighting raged undiminished until at 1536 hours came the message: "Mt. Capello taken by 1st and 2nd Battalions."

During the final hours on Capello, Staff Sgt. Sam McGowan of Beaufort, S.C., won a DSC when he volunteered to lead a platoon in breaking up a Ger-

man counterattack which was forming about a house on the forward slope. With fixed bayonets, the platoon charged a group of about 100 Germans, McGowan knocking out two machine guns on the way, killing three and capturing six Krauts. Forcing one of the PW's to load a captured gun, McGowan turned it on the enemy in a draw to the rear of the house, killed 12 and scattered the rest. Wounded in the leg, he nevertheless continued on with the platoon for the mopping-up and refused to be evacuated until he'd organized the newly-won position for all around defense.

That was Capello, won with bayonet and blood and guts.

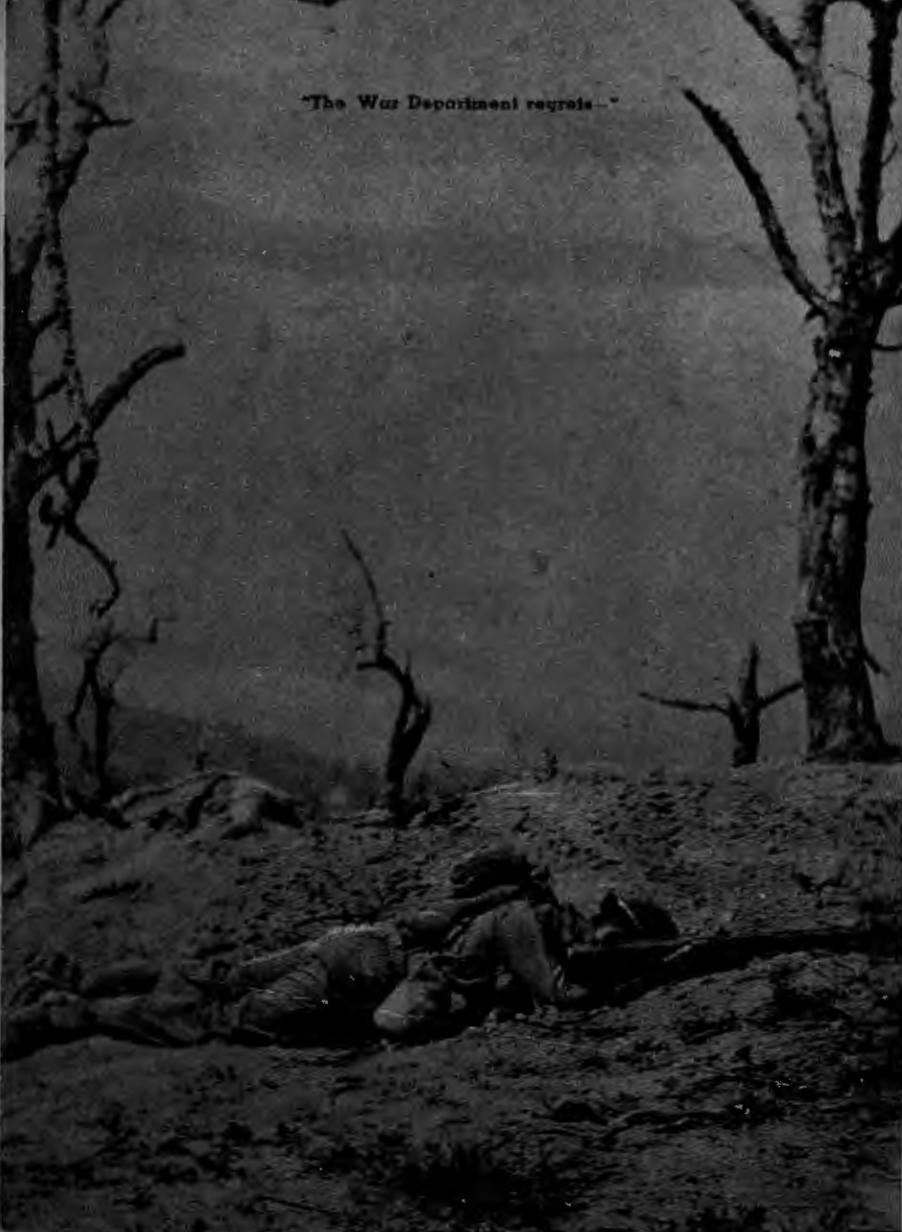
And there was Mt. Battaglia, occupied almost without opposition by the 350th and held during seven days and nights of German counterattacks in an epic stand which ranks with any in the Division and Fifth Army history.

In the Italian language, "battaglia" means "battle." To the 350th it meant that, and more — it meant close-quarter fighting, with the enemy no more than 50 yards away. It meant rain and mud and fog and constant shelling. It meant seven days and nights that blended one into another to form one continuous hell.

To the Fifth Army, Mt. Battaglia, a dominating height 11 miles from the Po Valley, meant an objective of the greatest military importance. It meant the same thing to the German High Command, but Kesselring was a trifle slow in getting his troops to the spot.

The 350th received its orders to take Battaglia on 25 September when the regiment had just won

"The War Department regrets—"



A daybreak attack on the 30th temporarily drove the "Blue Devils" from the castle. After sending down for more grenades, flamethrowers, blankets, ammunition and dry socks, the men of the 35th made their way back up again to the castle and crest of "Battle Mountain." Capt. Thomas L. Cussans personally directed the defense on this day. Moving over the entire line, he shouted encouragement to the men and pointed out targets—directed 60-mm. mortar fire which fell only 25 to 30 yards ahead of his own troops but effectively broke up one of the counterattacks.

On the fifth day of the defense of the hill, the enemy again attacked in the dense fog behind a heavy artillery concentration. Mud clogged automatic weapons but the attack was beaten off by the use of rifle fire, grenades and supporting artillery from the 338th. Litter bearers worked night and day to evacuate the casualties—despite the difficulties, pack mule trains toiled up the trails under shell fire to bring needed supplies.

Tech. Sgt. Manuel V. Mendoza of Mesa, Ariz., single-handedly broke up a German counterattack when he knelt on the crest of the hill, fired a machine gun from the hip and cut down 30 Krauts out of a charging group of about 200. For this feat, he was later awarded the DSC.

On the night of 2 October, the first of the tired, drenched and muddy men of the 35th came down off "Battle Mountain." At midnight two days later, the last company was relieved. As a unit, the regiment had suffered 50 percent casualties—reported every company commander, but one, killed or wounded in the gallant defense.

In a hospital, blinded, lay Sgt. Leo H. Beddow of Detroit, Mich., awarded a DSC for his heroism in dashing into the castle CP and wiping out a group of Germans which had penetrated into the building. Beddow killed them all, stood off others who attempted to enter and finally gave way when he was wounded and blinded by a mortar shell burst.

From "Battle Mountain," the 350th took its nickname. And for its stand there, the 2nd Battalion was awarded a War Department Distinguished Unit Citation.

Moving into Castel Del Rio, the Division CP itself took a pounding from German artillery which resulted in the death of four enlisted men and wounds to one officer and six enlisted men. Among the dead was Sgt. John T. Lowenthal of Lafayette, Ind., a soldier of German extraction who had enlisted to fight the Nazis for the liberty and freedom he had found in America.

Continuous and driving rains swelled streams to river size and the 313th Engineers doubled their tremendous efforts to keep open the lines of supply—in several places strung high lines over washouts and flash floods by means of which supplies and ammo were sent to forward troops.

Switching its direction of attack from northeast to north, the 88th threatened Highway 9, the vital German road from Rimini to Bologna, and the Germans reacted to this threat by throwing in no less than nine divisions against the "Blue Devils" at various times in a vain effort to halt the slow, but steady, advance. Among the enemy units committed were two of his best—the 1st Parachute

Division and the 90th Light Division. And Italian Fascist troops also discovered, the hard way, that they couldn't stop the "Blue Devils."

Struggling along towards its key objective of Mt. Grande, the 349th dug the Krauts out of the tiny village of Belvedere; when the fight was over they were paid the supreme tribute by a captured German officer who said that "in nine years of service I have fought in Poland, Russia and Italy—never have I seen such spirit. I would be the proudest man in the world if I could command a unit such as the one which took Belvedere."

Driving on, the 349th took Sassaleone, cut the Sassaleone-Castel Del Rio road and despite intense opposition advanced north of Falchetto, after consolidating its positions on the Falchetto hill mass. In the push to Sassaleone, 1st Lt. Richard P. Walker of Coleman Falls, Va., won a DSC, awarded posthumously, when he put four German machine guns out of action—was killed a short time after as he led his platoon against the battalion objective.

By 0630 hours on the 10th, the 351st had passed through the 349th and slugged its way into Gesso, despite constant counterattacks in which the enemy used flamethrowers, but later withdrew. Late on the 11th, after severe artillery barrages, the 3rd Battalion went back into Gesso—this time stayed, routing out German flamethrowers from the church and bagging more than 140 Krauts in all. That same day, the 350th managed to overcome stubborn resistance and succeeded in capturing most of Mt. Della Tombe, later was relieved by part of the 351st.

The 349th, shortly after taking over from 1st Battalion, 351st, on Della Tombe, continued its attack but was unable to advance beyond the crest of the mountain. Severe fighting ensued and resistance mounted. The enemy, funneling replacements to his line outfits and with an excellent supply of ammo and food, was determined to check this drive and avoid a breakthrough into the Po Valley at this point.

Artillery was stepped up throughout the Division area as the Germans harassed supply lines and rear areas — located at Belvedere, the Division Rear Echelon got a taste of what the front-line doughboy endured as routine. Firing from the right flank in the vicinity of the Tossignano gun area, enemy artillery dumped shells in and near the town almost daily for a week — "rear" suffered no casualties in its first time under fire but gained a deeper appreciation for the line troops.

On the 17th, the "Krautkillers" took San Clemente, established a road block east of the town and placed troops on Hill 435 to the northeast. Since the enemy made every possible attempt to stop the advance from this point, it became apparent that Mt. Grande was the key to the entire enemy defensive line.

Time was growing short. If Mt. Grande was to be taken at all it would have to be done before the Germans had an opportunity to reinforce it with fresh troops and organize for a last-ditch stand. On the night of 19 October, the 1st and 2nd Battalions, 349th, were poised to attack—the preliminary objectives already occupied.

The 1st Battalion objective was Mt. Cerrere, the

2nd had the mission of driving through Del Chin, across Di Sotto, Di Sopra and to the crest of Grande. The operation had to be completed by dawn to succeed. It meant calling on the last ounce of strength and guts of each doughboy. Each man knew that the long weeks of bloody fighting across rugged mountains in rain and mud — on a front which they had come to think was a "forgotten front" by everyone but the Germans — would be capped with failure if Grande was not taken.

The 1st Battalion mission, to seize Mt. Cerrere, was of vital importance to the entire plan. Cerrere, 1,000 yards southeast of Grande, was a prime point on the exposed right flank. To hold Grande alone would be impossible, laying the troops open to fire from the right rear and to the possibility of being completely cut off.

At 2220 hours, 19 October, the 1st Battalion pushed off with Company "A," commanded by Lt. John Ernser, in the lead. Leaving Hill 450, the troops struggled through deep mud, advancing slowly in the darkness and a driving rain. Climbing

No Winter sport

up the rocky slope, Lieutenant Ernser led his men to the crest of the mountain, meeting no resistance and encountering only light artillery fire. A large building on the highest point was surrounded and 11 Krauts were taken there. Companies "B" and "C" moved to the hilltop, joined "A," and Mt. Cerrere was organized for defense.

Meanwhile, 2nd Battalion was driving through the night to reach Grande before dawn. At 2130 hours, Company "G," commanded by 1st Lt. Robert Kelly, jumped off for Del Chin, took it without resistance. Di Sotto was occupied next and halfway to Di Sopra the company drew fire from Krauts dug in around a large house. Deploying his lead platoon, Kelly paced the men in a smashing assault — killed four, wounded three, captured six and drove off the remnants of a full company.

Less than an hour later the Germans hit back. Pfc. Frederick Gilland cut down five with his BAR before his position was overrun. With his tommygun blazing, Sgt. Erwin Baker rounded a corner of the building, pulled up short as a dozen Germans came at him. With his back to the wall he killed four — fire from the house dropped three more and the Krauts broke. Stumbling back down the hillside, they left 15 dead and wounded behind them.

Pushing on to the north, Company "G" occupied Hill 581. At 0300 hours, Companies "F" and "E" passed over Hill 581, started up the slopes of Grande. A devastating artillery preparation softened the objective as our troops advanced and heavy concentrations were dumped on possible Kraut reinforcement routes.

With the first gray light of dawn, 2nd Lt. Frank Parker with the 1st Platoon of Company "F" reached the highest point—the top of Mt. Grande. The rest of Company "F" moved up, occupied the northern part of the hill while Company "E" dug in on the reverse slope. Less than 30 minutes later, the Krauts attacked but were beaten off — the "Krautkillers" were on the knob to stay.

At 1100 on the 20th, the 350th reported it had captured Mt. Cuccoli to complete the seizure of the entire Mt. Grande hill mass, most strategic height along the entire Fifth Army front at the time, commanding on a clear day a view of the Po Valley about 4 miles away, and Highway 9 to Bologna.

To the 349th went commendations from Maj. Gen. Keyes and Brig. Gen. Kendall — to the regimental CP went Lt. Gen. Clark with congratulations to Colonel Crawford and the 349th for the taking of Grande, and reminders of the grave necessity of keeping it.

On the 22nd, near Mt. Dogano, pint-sized Pfc. MacDonald Coleman of San Francisco, Calif., and the 349th, staged a one-man war and killed six, wounded one and captured 15 of a group of Germans attempting to prevent the establishment of a road block.

The attack meanwhile, rolled on, with Farnetto falling to the 350th and Frasinetto to the 349th. The stone wall came at Vedriano where, with "stand and die" orders, the Germans beat off every attempt by the 351st to take the town. A full enemy regiment defended the town; heavy reinforcements quickly were brought up. Vedriano, the closest point to the Po Valley yet assaulted by any unit of the

Fifth Army, remained in enemy hands.

Ordered by Corps to hold up, the 88th dug in and waited for further orders which would send it battling downgrade to the plain it had fought so fiercely to reach.

New orders did come but they were for relief and rest, and the Division moved to a rest camp, where the "Blue Devils" rediscovered civilian comforts and luxuries they thought had, ceased to exist.

There were changes in command, chief of which sent Brig. Gen. Guy O. Kurtz to command of Fifth Army artillery. Brig. Gen. Thomas E. Lewis, former Fifth Army artillery head, succeeded Brig. Gen. Kurtz. From the 34th Division came Brig. Gen. Harry B. Sherman to replace Brig. Gen. Ramey as Assistant Division Commander. In the 349th, Col. Percy E. LeStourgeon was named to succeed Colonel Crawford, rotated to the United States.

There were commendations and congratulations for the 88th, summed up best by Brig. Gen. Kendall, Division Commander, who said *"the capture of Mt. Battaglia by the 350th, Mt. Capello and Gesso by the 351st and Mt. Grande and Mt. Cerrere by the 349th, may well be considered as outstanding feats of the Italian campaign. Perhaps more*



noteworthy than the actual capture of these features was the will of our troops to hold them against some of the fiercest counterattacks yet encountered."

Christmas in the line was a bleak one — "peace on earth" was a bit hard to believe, but the dough-boys looked to the new year with hope.

"FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE"

The beginning of the new year saw old battles remembered — and honored.

On the 17th of January, General Mark W. Clark, 15th Army Group Commander, and Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., Fifth Army Commander, visited the 88th in a rear rest area to present new honors.

Top award went to 2nd Lt. Charles W. Shea of The Bronx, N.Y., and the 350th, who was presented a Congressional Medal of Honor — the first member of the Division to win such an award for his performance in his first 40 minutes of combat action on Mt. Damiano in the first hours of the May 1944 offensive when he had personally knocked out three enemy machine guns, killed two Germans, wounded two more, and captured six.

For its four-day battle at Laiatico during the July push to the Arno River, the 3rd Battalion, 351st Infantry Regiment, was awarded a War Department Distinguished Unit Citation. A second Distinguished Unit Citation went to the 2nd Battalion, 350th Infantry Regiment, for its stand on Mt. Battaglia.



Citation streamers from General Mark W. Clark,
15th Army Group Commander

To Maj. Erwin B. Jones, 350th; Tech Sgt. Manuel Mendoza, 350th, and Capt. John J. King, 349th, went Distinguished Service Crosses for their performance in combat during the drive through the Apennines.

On the 7th of February, Brig. Gen. Kendall pinned a second star to his collar upon notification of his promotion to Major General on the 4th of January.

New changes in command put Col. James C. Fry in as Assistant Division Commander upon the transfer of Brig. Gen. Sherman back to the 34th Division. Lt. Col. Avery M. Cochran replaced Colonel Fry as the 350th Regimental Commander. Col. Franklin P. Miller assumed command of the 351st when Colonel Champeny was ordered to the States for a new assignment.

Opening of a Division Rest Center, considered a model of its kind, afforded combat-weary "Blue Devils" a comfortable haven for rest and relaxation before returning to their duties with their units in the Winter Line.

On the 13th of February, General of the Army George C. Marshall visited the "Blue Devils." After lunch with Maj. Gen. Kendall and the official party at the forward CP, General Marshall reviewed the 2nd Battalion of the 350th, congratulating the men for the War Department Citation awarded previously.

Up in the line itself, doughboys bitterly wondered how the "experts" had managed to conclude that the entire German Army was in the process of withdrawing from Italy. There were patrol clashes, ambush raids, artillery fire — all the usual dirty and unpleasant and dangerous incidents which made up the front line soldiers' daily routine. And plenty of Germans on the other side.

It could be called a "quiet war" — there were many who compared it to the months of static warfare along the Garigliano front. Without headlines or fanfare, men were wounded there, died there.

On its first battle anniversary, March 5, its rounding out of 12 months in combat, the 88th knew it no longer was a young division — "a new outfit." Its men had long since forgotten that they had been called "draftees," had comprised the first all-Selective Service infantry division to go into combat on any front in this war.

During these past 12 months, the entire Division had piled up 280 days in combat with the artillery

units chalking up 334 days. Individual honors won in this period included two Medals of Honor, one Distinguished Service Medal, 22 Distinguished Service Crosses, 50 Legions of Merit, 321 Silver Stars and clusters, 1,313 Bronze Stars and clusters, seven Soldier's Medals, and more than 12,000 Combat Infantryman Badges.

It had left its youth at Santa Maria Infante, Cianelli, Mt. Bracchi, Itri, Fondi, Rome, Laiatico, "Bloody Ridge," Volterra, San Miniato, Mt. Acuto, Gesso, Mt. Capello, Mt. Grande, Mt. Battaglia and a score of other mountains, towns and villages — on every crag and peak in its sector of the Apennines — had met and conquered more than 32 different battalions of the German Army in the pre-Bologna drive — had scrawled its cloverleaf across mile after mile of mud and blood and battle.

Overall casualty lists showed 11,285 names — with 2,137 of these men killed in action, 8,248 wounded, 521 missing in action and 379 captured during the year. In return the "Blue Devils" bagged 5,745 prisoners and destroyed three German divisions, partially destroyed three more, and badly mauled three others.

It knew, as it held in the Winter Line, that its battle path still had many more miles to be trod — that its "Blue Devils" still had more hells to go through on the long road home.



"CEASE FIRING"

Spring came early to the Apennines, and with it came all the old familiar signs of another push, the one which had been promised at Yalta and which had been described as "the last big heave."

Pulled out early in March for special training and hardening, the 88th worked down to a fighter's edge. On the 31st, in a full division review at the Florence airport, the 88th demonstrated its readiness to the top commanders who came to see it perform. Immediately after the ceremony, the 88th was "blacked out" — all identifying marks were painted off vehicles and equipment, insignia vanished from uniforms and units were shuttled and scattered the breadth of Italy.

By 11 April, the 88th once more was together as a unit and moved secretly into positions west of Highway 65. On the Eighth Army and IV Corps fronts, the drive already had begun but the "Blue Devils" still had a few days of grace left. The Division's first objective was the Monterumici Hill mass, the toughest nut in the entire Corps sector and the key to the entire enemy defense line before Bologna.

Its importance to the Germans was emphasized by Maj. Gen. Schricker, commander of the enemy 8th Mountain Division, who told his troops that "Monterumici at this time is the most vital sector of the entire division. I have no doubt that the enemy will make every effort to take possession of the Monterumici feature in order to obtain a basis for



Major Gen. Paul W. Kendall briefs his unit commanders, Col. Percy E. Le Stranison, 349th; Col. James C. Egan, 350th, and Col. E. P. Miller, 351st. Colonel Fry (left) was named Assistant Division Commander, with Col. A.M. Cochran taking over the 350th.

a large scale attack."

Preceded by massive air and artillery bombardments, the 88th jumped off for Monterumici at 2230 hours, 15 April, spearheading the 1945 Spring offensive and the end of the Italian campaign with a drive which smashed the enemy from the Apennines to the Alps.

The Krauts fought desperately to hold Monterumici. But there was no holding the "Blue Devils". With the 349th on the left and the 350th on the right, the doughboys inched forward despite some of the bitterest resistance ever encountered in the Italian campaign. The 349th took Furcoli — a PW from the enemy 65th Division G-2 office later said that loss of this rubble town marked the breakthrough, the doom of Bologna and the beginning of the end — while the 350th swung

wide to reach the crest of Monterumici and the forward slopes of Mt. Adone.

Sudden orders switched the 349th and 351st to the Highway 64 sector; the 350th was attached to the 91st Division and swung north and west to rejoin the rest of its parent unit as the 88th mopped up pockets of resistance, bypassed by flank units, and burst down out of the mountains to cut Highway 9 a few miles west of Bologna.

Into the Po Valley at last, after punching through half the mountains in Italy, the "Blue Devils" made good all advance notices as they ripped and tore through elements of 17 different German units falling back in confusion before the fury of the Yank attack. With the 351st "Spearhead" Regiment duplicating its role of the previous years drive through Rome, towns fell in quick succession to



the 88th steamroller as it cut over to Highway 12 and pummeled the Krauts back to the Po River.

Making remarkably fast time, infantrymen trooped through San Giovanni, Crevalcore, San Felice—here capturing two bridges intact over the Panaro River—Poggio Rusco, Villa Poma and Revere, the latter town on the south bank of the Po. Getting excellent assistance from armored units and close-support Allied planes, the 88th had bagged more than 15,000 prisoners—more than 9,000 taken by the 349th alone—by the time the river was reached.

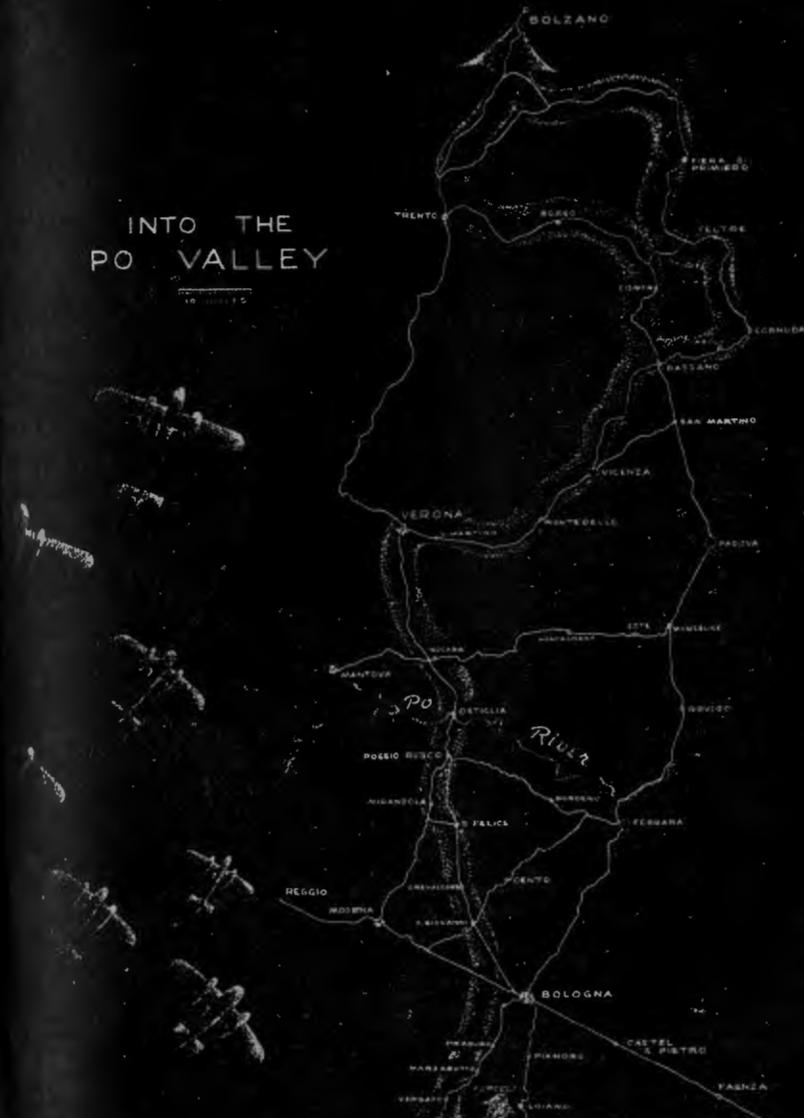
Prize catch was Maj. Gen. Von Schellwitz, 305th Infantry Division commander, taken along with most of his headquarters staff by the 349th as it Drove through Magnacavallo. His division all but wiped out, General Von Schellwitz paid the "Blue Devils" one of their brightest compliments when he told interrogators that "as soon as I saw where the 88th Division was being committed I realized where the main effort would be—they have always spearheaded Fifth Army drives."

Discarding tactics and rule books, doughboys of the 88th swarmed across the Po River barrier in the face of machine gun and SP fire, by bridge, some swimming the stream, others crossing in amphibious assault craft. Ahead to the north lay the twin Army objectives of Verona and Vicenza.

Starting with the dawn from captured Ostiglia, the 3rd Battalion, 351st, made a record 35-mile march to Verona and entered the city shortly after dark after chopping through 1st and 4th Para Division strong points along Highway 12.

Capture of Verona by the 88th split the German

INTO THE PO VALLEY



forces in the Po Valley and cut off the main escape route through the Brenner Pass. An officer PW of the 4th Para Division, amazed at the speed of the 88th's drive, said "I considered it absolutely impossible for you people to reach Verona in such a short space of time — how do you do it?"

The footsore doughboys had no time to tell him, or to celebrate their achievement; the 88th swung east along Highway 11, a move that spelled disaster for the Krauts as the Yanks piled across the Adige River.

Something new was added to tactics in Italy when a "bicycle battalion" of the 350th Infantry — the 2nd Battalion — peddled from Nogara to San Martino to make the most novel "liberation" ever recorded in the Italian campaign. The novelty was short-lived however, for higher headquarters ordered the bikes returned and the doughboys were back in their element — picking 'em up and laying 'em down.

In a 24-hour dash along Highway 11, troops of the 1st Battalion, 350th, rode armor of the 752nd Tank Battalion and the 805th Tank Destroyer Battalion to take Vicenza, another Fifth Army objective and a key communications center. Bitter house-to-house fighting raged here before the city fell and this lightning move east trapped thousands of Germans from more than six divisions.

As had happened twice previously in the offensive, Maj. Gen. Kendall's forward CP convoyed into the city while a tank battle raged. Sniper fire continued for several hours and headquarters personnel helped round up the Kraut marksmen.

The "Blue Devils" swift dash from Verona to



YANK Photo by Sgt. Werner Wolf

Vicenza knifed through the Adige Line on which the Germans had counted to delay Allied forces before the Alps. The 88th had moved so fast that the Krauts were unable to withdraw to their Adige Line positions and hundreds of emplacements — with guns in place and pointed south — were unoccupied and far to the rear of the spearheading 88th.

Artillery units of the Division were hard-pressed to keep pace with the rush of the infantry. The "redlegs" kept so far forward that the cannoners were taking a good percentage of the PW's. At one point, the 337th Field captured the bulk of a German artillery battalion.

Surrender of entire enemy units to the "Blue Devils" was not uncommon. Among outfits taken intact were three German field hospitals, an ordnance dump, an engineer bridge dump, a battalion of Georgians and a full company of Czechoslovakian troops, the latter unit surrendering formally to the Division Commander after it had been trapped and surrounded by 1st Lt. Ralph Decker's hard-driving "Ranger" Platoon of the 351st.

Even Division Rear got in the ball game with a "task force" led by Capt. John E. Boothe of Washington, D.C., accepting surrender of 66 Krauts, 30 Fascists and the Lightning Battalion of the Italian Fascist 10th Flotilla, for a total bag of 322 at then un-liberated Schio. The "fluid front" as described in the official communique set a new high in understatement.

Mopping up from Vicenza, the 88th rolled over Bassano, beat off counter-attacks to take Cornuda and then pressed on into the Italian Alps up Hig-

way 47 to Borgo and Fiera di Primiero. The "Blue Devils" were there, and still pressing, when word reached the Division on 2 May that the war in Italy was over, that the German Armies they had been battling for so long had "surrendered unconditionally." Received at Division CP in the late afternoon, the "cease firing" and "halt in place" orders were sent to the troops by liaison officers.

There was joy at news of the end, but it was a quiet joy — a joy that was expressed in calm fashion as a feeling of intense relief and deep gratitude swept the lines. "What can you say about a thing like this?", reflected one soldier. "It's too big. All you can do is say 'Thanks God' for He's the only One Who can understand how a guy really feels now."

Some of the men just sat and stared at each other in the strange silence, taking turns saying in a dazed voice "It's over - it's over!", but neither one actually listening and each busy with his own thoughts for which there were no words. "All I know is that my men won't get shot at anymore and that's all I give a damn about!", said one junior officer.

Despite the official news, scattered fighting continued in the 351st and 349th sectors and normal security precautions were maintained during that first night of peace. First word of the war's end had been brought to the 351st by German officers coming into regimental lines early in the afternoon but as there was no confirmation from higher headquarters, the enemy statements were not believed. On the 3rd and 4th, German divisions opposing the 88th — the 1st and 4th Para and the 278th Infantry — put down their arms.



Meanwhile, the 349th Infantry, motorized, took off for the Brenner Pass. Moving more than 60 miles through the beaten enemy, *advance patrols of the 349th were the first elements of the Allied Armies in Italy to make junction with forces moving south from Germany.* At 1051 hours, 4 May, the European and Mediterranean fronts became one unbroken line when the 349th made contact with patrols from the 103rd Division, VI Corps, Seventh Army, a few miles south of the Brenner Pass.

The 88th had scored another, and perhaps its most notable, first. The history-making event was recorded on the spot by Division and Seventh Army radio correspondents and the story of the junction was broadcast to the United States and the world over the NBC "Army Hour."

It had been a glorious 16 days — a smashing and

triumphant finish to almost 14 months of combat. From the jumpoff against cave-studded Monterumici on the heights south of Bologna, the 88th had cracked through the final mountain defense line and raced more than 305 miles in 16 days, destroyed six Nazi divisions, bagged 35,000 prisoners, wrung "unconditional surrender" from the battered Krauts high in the Alps and then went on to make the linkup with SHAEF forces.

The story of that triumphant victory march — told here in bare outline because of space and time limitations — will rank in Division and Army history with the proudest tales of "Blue Devil" veterans who hunted and drove the German from Cassino to the Brenner Pass. And brought, from a vanquished foe, tributes which were all the sweeter since most of their valorous deeds were cloaked during the push.

Speaking for the men who should know, better than any, of the 88th's fighting ability, captured Maj. Gen. Schulz of the 1st Para Division, the pride of the Wehrmacht, told interrogators that "the 88th division is the best division we have ever fought against — we fought you on Mt. Battaglia, Mt. Grande and in this action now completed."

The Italian and European campaigns were finished. And the men of the 88th knew, as they waited for further orders, that they'd done their part — and magnificently — in winning a war.

Whatever lay ahead, the men of the 88th knew that thus far they had kept the pledge.

The torch burned undimmed - the colors were unsullied.

BEARDED ANGEL



One of the real unsung — and too little publicized — heroes of this war is the aidman. Up where the lead is flying, unarmed and with his Red Cross armband frequently used as a target by enemy snipers who recognize no rules of war or humanity, the aidman moves along with the doughboy, treating and caring for his wounds under fire. Respected and admired by the men he serves, the aidman "has more guts than any guy I know," said one doughboy. "No matter how hot it gets, he's right there with us — and I know if I get hit, he's right beside me to take care of me. He gets all the hell we get, but none of the credit."

WOTAN'S CALL

When Wotan Drew His Fiery Sword
And Ringed the World in Flame,
He Called on the Blue of the Cloverleaf
And the 88th by Name:

Called on the Country Hamlet —
In the Glittering Cities Great —
Till Khaki Figures Formed the
Blue Devil's Eighty-Eight.

Speak Gently of Comrades Sleeping
Out of This Raw Welter of Pain:
Blurred White Crosses Marching
With us in the Sun and the Rain.

Rededicated to Kill and to Hate —
It's the Blue Devil Eighty-Eight.

*Pfc. Frank Kennetgof,
Hq. Co., 349th Infantry*

