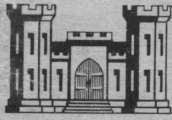


Mr. William Rate  
119 Stover Rd.  
Rochester, NY 14624-4451



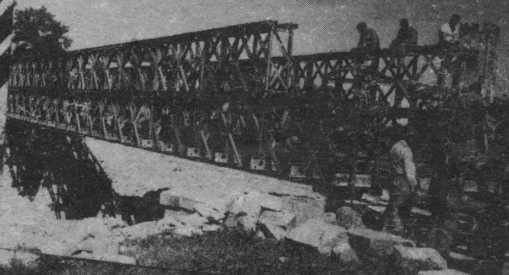
# The BATTALIONS

*Leaning-pier  
Bailey - Castel di Castro*



*Causeway over Arno  
near Pisa*

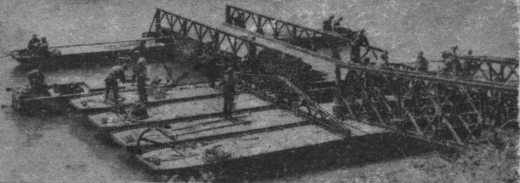
*Erpenbach Bridge on Lucca-Pisa Road*



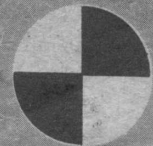
*Well-ditching in Sereh  
S.E. Italy*

*Floating Bailey - Capua*

*Water point  
in Tuscany*



## HISTORY OF THE 1108th ENGINEER COMBAT GROUP



# THE COMMANDERS



*ANDERSSON*



*CLARK*



*COLONNA*



*GOODPASTER*



*POLICH*



*SWIFT*



*JONES*





## THOSE WHO ARE STILL THERE

	BATTALION	
Pfc. Vincent J. Angiolino	235th	* Mignano
S/Sgt. Jack Beaty	235th	Abetia
Cpl. Earl E. Bosley	235th	Mt. Belvedere
1st. Sgt. Donald F. Buckley	48th	Mt. Porchia
S/Sgt. William C. Cannon	235th	San Pietro
Pvt. Dominick T. Caridi	235th	Cassino
Sgt. Eugene Carter	235th	Mt. Belvedere
T/5 Martin H. Certain	235th	Cassino
Sgt. Joseph E. Charlebois	235th	Abetia
Pfc. Dominic M. Cirillo	235th	Cassino
Lt. Kenneth H. Eickmeyer	235th	Mignano
Sgt. Alvin W. Erpenbach	235th	Pisa
Pfc. Donald R. Evanson	235th	Cassino
Pvt. Michael J. Francisco	235th	Cassino
Pvt. Edwin A. Gehm	235th	Cassino
Cpl. Benjamin F. Gray	235th	Cassino
Pfc. Joseph J. Harkins	235th	Mignano
T/5 Frederick S. Holmes	235th	Cassino
Pvt. James L. Johnson	235th	Cassino
Pvt. John G. Lammers Jr.	235th	Selve
T/5 Joseph Levia	235th	Casaglia
Lt. William J. Long	235th	Mt. Porchia
Pfc. Eugene B. McGee	235th	Abetia
T/5 Morris H. Mercer	235th	Cassino
Pfc. Mariot W. Middaugh	235th	Ponte a Moriano
Pfc. Christopher Nelson	48th	Mt. Porchia
Pvt. Jess W. Patterson	235th	Mt. Belvedere
Pvt. Louis H. Pfaff	235th	Cassino
T/5 Ben Santjer	48th	Mt. Porchia
Cpl. Thomas Shaw	235th	Mignano
Cpl. Keith Shofner	48th	Mt. Trocchio
Pvt. Donald C. Sims	235th	Cassino
T/5 Fred Sinning	235th	Mignano
T/4 Ted E. Smith	235th	Mt. Belvedere
Sgt. James L. Spalding	235th	Mt. Porchia
Sgt. Joseph C. Specker	48th	Mt. Porchia
Capt. Thomas V. Thompson	235th	Mt. Porchia
T/5 George T. Williamson Jr.	235th	Abetia

\*Place names represent towns or prominent terrain features nearest the spot where the man fell.



PART I

C A S S I N O

The 48th Engineer Combat Regiment was activated by War Department order July 25, 1942, at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. The commanding officer was COLONEL AUBREY H. BOND, and the bulk of the organization's officer personnel was approximately one-quarter reservist and three-quarters OCS graduates from Fort Belvoir, Virginia. The original cadre of 7 officers and 125 NCO's came from the 20th Engineer Combat Regiment, Camp Blanding, Fla.

In April, 1943, under the command of COLONEL KINGSLEY S. ANDERSSON the regiment left for Louisiana to participate in Third Army maneuvers and by redesignation on April 7 became the 1108th Engineer Combat Group, its organic battalions being labeled the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion and the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion respectively.

Bivouac at St Denis du Sig, Algeria



The entire organization returned to its home station in June to prepare for overseas movement. Processed at Camp Miles Standish, Massachusetts, it sailed from Staten Island August 21, 1943, and arrived at the Port of Oran, Africa, September 3, 1943. After an African training period of one month at St. Denis du Sig, with emphasis on Bailey bridging and enemy mine warfare, Group Headquarters and the 48th Battalion sailed for Italy, disembarking at Ragnoli in the Bay of Naples October 10. Equipment was assembled and transported first to Avellino, then to Caserta, and it was in the latter city that the battalions were united once again under Group command, the 235th having arrived in Italy October 28.

After a brief attachment to VI Corps, the unit was assigned to II Corps, Fifth Army, on November 1, 1943. The organizational commanders were:

1108th Engineer Combat Group	---	COL KINGSLEY S. ANDERSSON
48th Engineer Combat Battalion	---	LT-COL ANDREW J. GOODPASTER
235th Engineer Combat Battalion	---	MAJOR FRANK J. POLICH

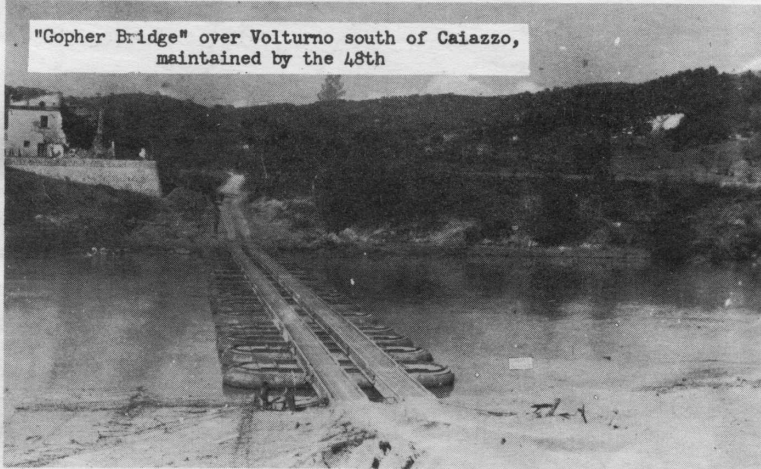
The strength of each battalion was approximately 32 officers and 640 enlisted men.

The Italian rains were beginning in earnest as the Group and its components entered into an association with II Corps that was to last until the fall of Rome and be marked by difficult and dangerous engineer work.



The combat baptism of the unit was first experienced by a platoon from each battalion attached for mine clearance work to the engineers of the 34th and 45th Divisions, then operating in the vicinity of Venafrò. The platoons maintained roads, installed culverts, cleared mines for Divisional traffic. They swept mountain trails for the Rangers to the towns of Ceppagna and Filignano, and also removed German antipersonnel mines and laid American AP mines when necessary. The first battle casualties of the 48th were sustained at this time when Pfc James A. Anderson and Pfc Michael J. Milkovich were wounded by enemy shellfire at Venafrò. For this work in removing enemy mines under fire Lt John H. Drinkwater of the 235th was awarded the Silver Star. The lessons learned by both platoons in these two weeks of frontline duty were later incorporated into a course in mine warfare given by the Group to officers and enlisted men of the First Special Service Force immediately prior to that organization's initial attacks on Mt. La Difensa and Mt. Maggiore.

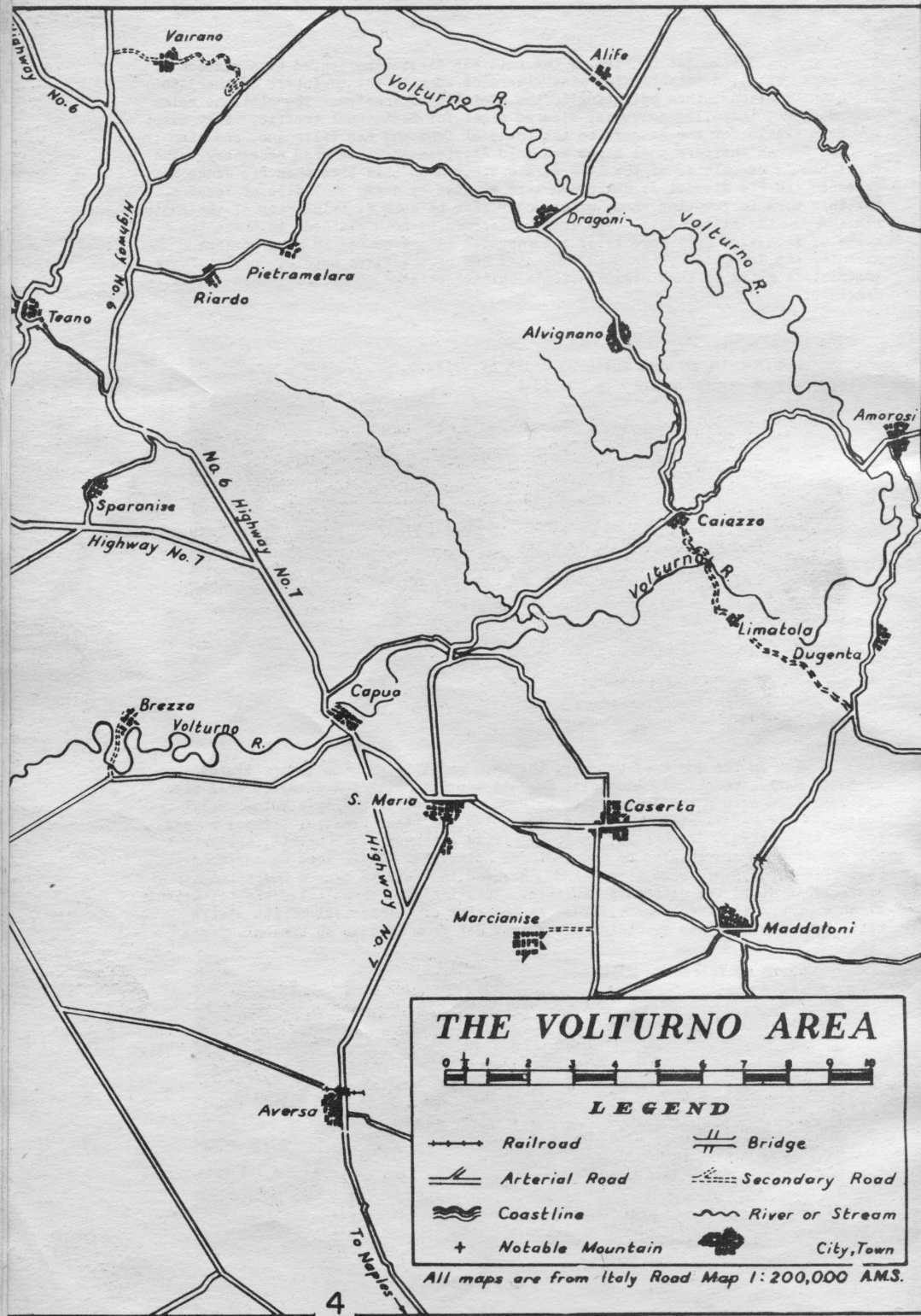
"Gopher Bridge" over Volturno south of Caiazzo,  
maintained by the 48th



In the month of October, the 48th maintained roads in the vicinity of Santa Maria, Maddaloni, Limatola, Dugenta and Amorosi. The enemy at this time had retreated across the Volturno to Caiazzo, and the Fifth Army's main supply route was the Maddaloni-Amorosi road, including two steel treadway bridges across the river. At 1030 October 23, while repairing a bypass near Dugenta, the 1st platoon of 48/C was strafed by two captured Spitfires. There were no engineer casualties, but 3 men were killed and 3 wounded in the area near a Quartermaster truck adjacent to the platoon's vehicles. This incident constituted the battalion's first exposure to direct enemy fire. At the time of the arrival of its sister battalion, the 48th was maintaining the Army MSR from Caiazzo to Dragoni.

Quarry at Vairano - 235th

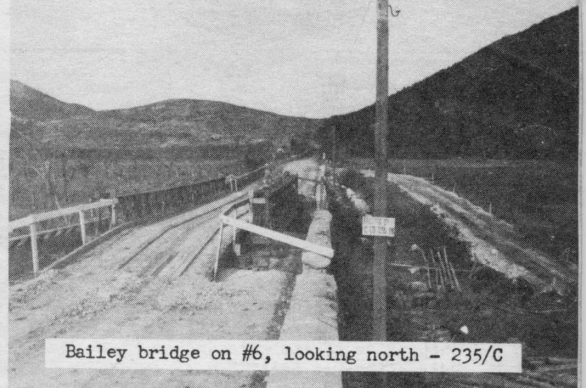




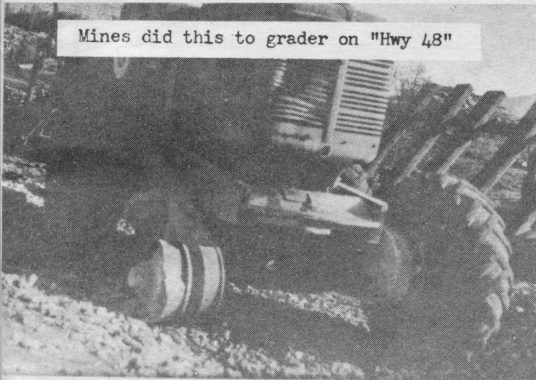




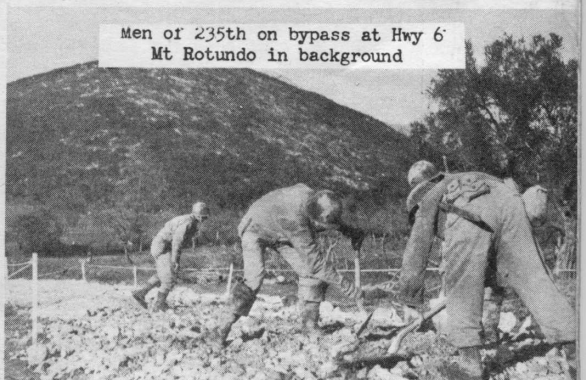
The first Bailey - by 48/C  
at Colli, 4 Dec 43



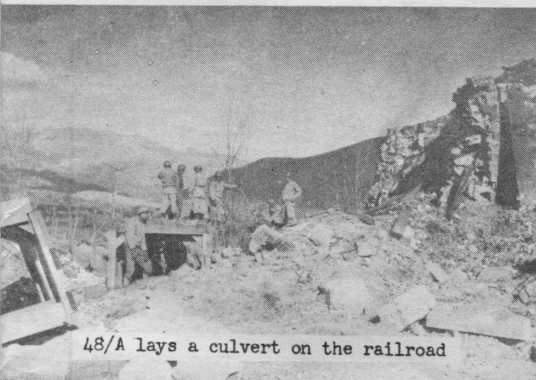
Bailey bridge on #6, looking north - 235/C



Mines did this to grader on "Hwy 48"



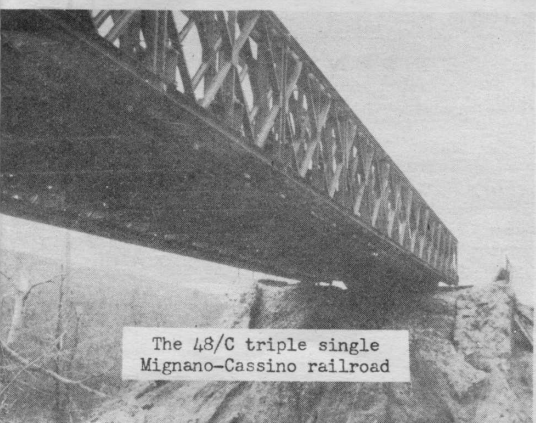
Men of 235th on bypass at Hwy 6  
Mt Rotundo in background



48/A lays a culvert on the railroad



Mignano bypass - 235th



The 48/C triple single  
Mignano-Cassino railroad



Looking at Mt Cairo from Rotundo tank road

3 DECEMBER 1943 CAMPAGNOLA ITALY  
TELEPHONE MESSAGE FROM II CORPS TO 1108 ENGR GROUP: ASSUME MAINTENANCE OF ALL II CORPS ROADS EXCEPT TUORA-CONCA ROAD.

The organization was now on the threshold of its participation in the winter-long siege of Cassino. It was soon apparent that the sine qua non of a winter campaign in Italy, as far as engineers were concerned, was rock and plenty of it. The 235th began at this time the operation of two quarries, one at Vairano and one on Highway 6 at the Presenzano road junction. In early December the latter pit was producing 200 to 400 truckloads of rock daily, which was used on all Corps and Divisional road nets. This pit was unique in that it was probably the busiest enterprise of its kind in the Fifth Army throughout the winter. The Battalion Reconnaissance Section was assigned as a permanent blasting unit to feed the demands of a rock-crusher, a shovel and two bulldozers. The quarry functioned 22 hours a day (allowing 2 hours for servicing equipment) and was lit at night by giant torches after the fashion of a Roman festival in Caesar's time. Its importance was indicated by the fact that it attracted considerable attention from German aircraft and from 170 mm guns shooting from far up the Liri Valley.

14 DECEMBER 1943 ASSIGNMENT THRU 1108 ENGR GROUP  
PHONE MESSAGE FROM COL GALLAGHER (II CORPS ENGR) TO CO 48TH ENGR BN  
MAKE RAILROAD FROM MIGNANO TO FRONT OF MT LUNGO PASSABLE TO TWO-WAY CLASS 40 VEHICLE TRAFFIC WITHOUT DELAY. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THIS ROAD WILL BE NEEDED IN SIX DAYS.

This was the most difficult task yet undertaken by the battalion. This stretch of railroad, running into Cassino along a high embankment in a rough parallel to Highway 6, was at all times under direct enemy observation and heavy fire. The total distance called for was 6 miles and there were 13 distinct demolitions along the way, including 3 blown bridges, the shortest of which had been 115 feet. The road was flanked in 3 places by S-mines, trip wire and Tellermine fields, and on the bed itself the rails had been severed by explosive and the wooden cross-ties sliced in half by the enemy's ingenious railroad "hook" drawn by a locomotive.

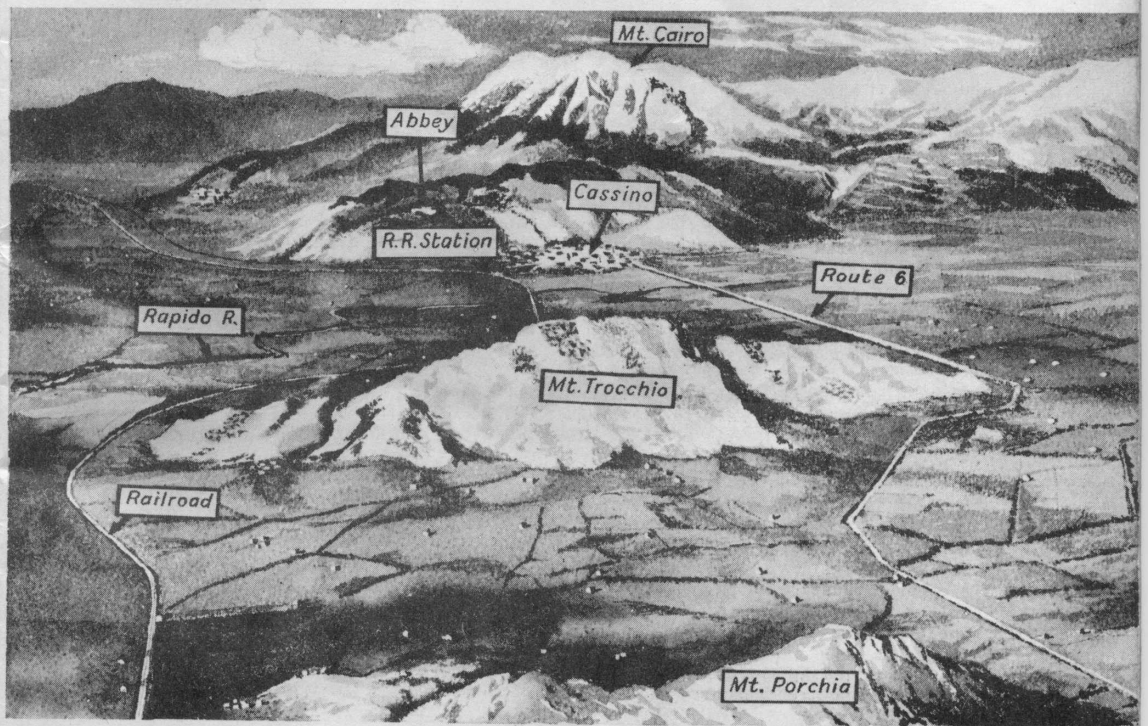
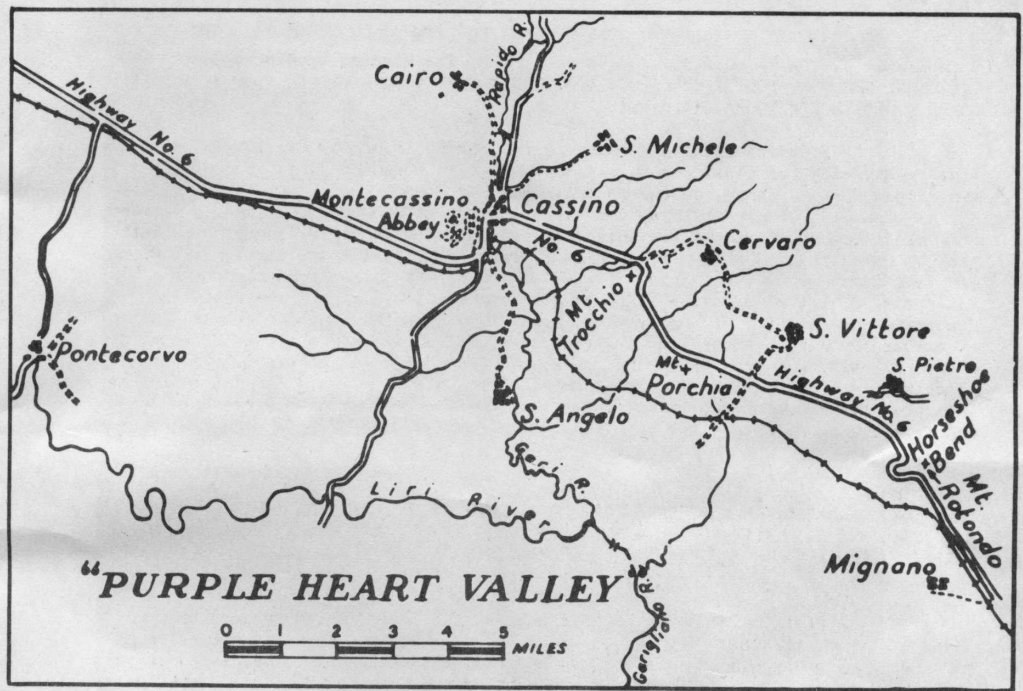
At a heavy cost in manpower and equipment the thoroughfare was opened well within the allotted time. During its construction over 300 recorded rounds of very close, accurate artillery fire were received. Direct hits were sustained on 2 of the 3 Bailey bridges erected. The final 2000 yards of roadway were cleared and developed in spite of small arms and mortar fire in addition to intense artillery fire on men and bulldozers. When completed, "Highway 48" provided an avenue of approach for men and supplies to the areas in front and to the west of Cassino, and was an arterial route of paramount importance in the ill-fated crossing of the Rapido at San Angelo by the 36th Division in January.

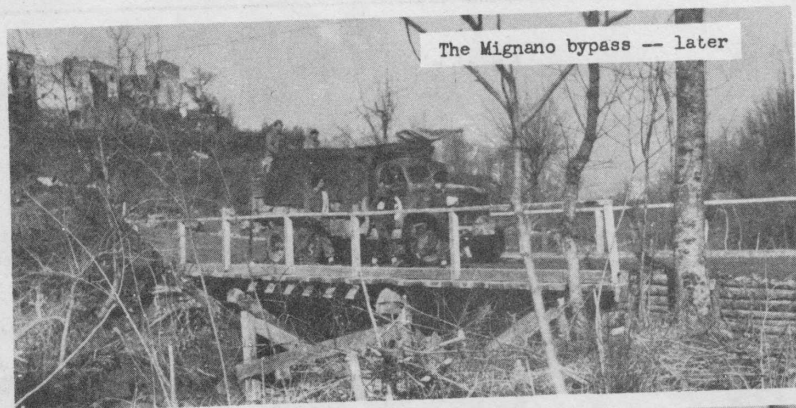
These were also the days when the little town of San Pietro, clinging to the hillside east of the highway and heavily defended, was a costly thorn in the side of the advancing Fifth Army Divisions. The German gunners had unobstructed vision across the valley to the highway. Mount Rotundo, taken after a stiff fight, afforded the only immediate screen for our approaching armor, and it was around the exposed right side of this hill that the 235th was asked to build a tank road. The route was to carry tanks over a low saddle east of the hill so that they could get a measure of defilade while firing directly into the defenses of the town. But there was very little defilade for the engineers who built the road before the tanks could get there. The men of the 235th put everything they had into the job. The enemy, looking down from the heights of San Pietro, could see the corduroy being laid, the gravel being dumped, the exhaust flash of the bulldozers at night, and he rained steel into the saddle with nerve-shattering accuracy. But the road was in, the armor got up there, and soon afterwards San Pietro fell.

15 DECEMBER VIC MIGNANO ITALY  
II CORPS OPERATIONS ORDER FROM 15 DEC---20 DEC: COMPLETE BYPASS FROM MIGNANO TO ROUTE SIX.

The 235th was assigned this work and opened the short but important stretch of roadway for two-way traffic on December 23. All available dump trucks and heavy equipment were pressed into service on this job and improvement of the bypass was continued until February 1944 despite shellings, dive bombings and heavy





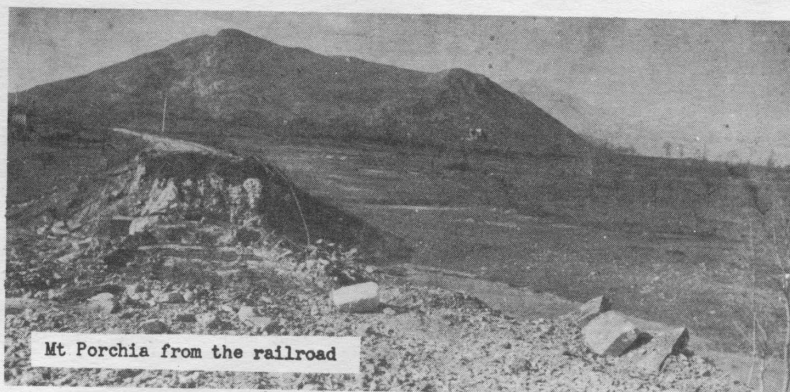


traffic (Mignano bypass was MSR of 142nd Infantry, 36th Division). The bypass was built through a stream bed in a ravine heavily-laden with friendly artillery firing continuously. The resultant counterbattery fire made the engineer work highly dangerous but no casualties were suffered until January 8 when the village of Mignano was bombed. Company "B" had 2 officers and 3 enlisted men killed; "A" Company had 20 enlisted men wounded, one killed. It was believed that an enemy agent in the town had used a hidden radio transmitter to pinpoint the location of the 235/B CP.

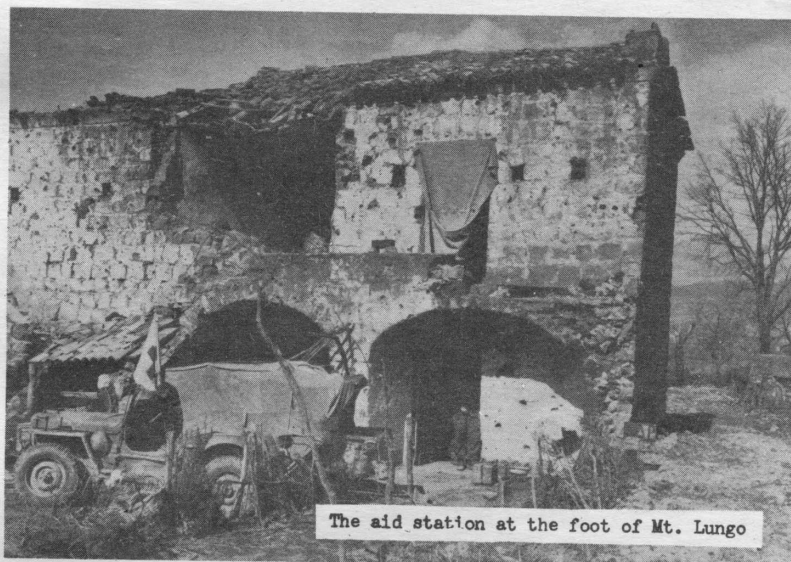
23 DECEMBER: JOURNAL ENTRY: S/SGT WILLIAM C CANNON, 235/A, KILLED IN ACTION: PFC HAROLD W RAGOTSKI WOUNDED IN LEFT FEMUR: PVT C D MURRELL LACERATION OF RIGHT FEMUR, BY EXPLODING ENEMY MORTAR SHELL .7 MILES SW OF SAN PIETRO ITALY.

These were the first action casualties in the battalion. The 1st Platoon of "A" Company had been clearing mines 20 feet each side of the roadway along Highway 6. Lt Raymond H. Agee had his men thinly scattered over some 500 yards of marginal land beside the road. At 1145 mortar shells fired from the edge of the German-held village of San Vittore landed with crunching accuracy among the mine-sweepers. Just north of Horseshoe Bend the road to Cassino straightens out and runs up the valley in plain view of the mountainside towns on the right. On the left, at the beginning of the straightaway, there is today a cemetery of New Zealand graves. It was at this spot, just being cleared then, that S/Sgt Cannon was cut down by a large mortar fragment that pierced his back. They laid him on the lowered wind-shield of the lieutenant's jeep and took him back around the bend.





Mt Porchia from the railroad



The aid station at the foot of Mt. Lungo

Mount Porchia rises like a huge fist out of the flat plain between Highway 6 and the railroad, halfway from Mignano to Cassino. Except for Mount Trocchio further north, it is the highest terrain in the valley before the ramparts of the besieged city. On the opening days of the new year of 1944, the 34th Division was in the mountains to the right looking north; the British X Corps was west of the railroad thoroughfare, and in the center, astraddle the only two roads into Cassino, the 1st Armored had massed Task Force Allen and its attachments. The Germans were on Porchia and they could see everything below them; their OP's brought down punishing fire on all Allied installations in the valley. The mission of engineer support to TFA in the latter's drive for Porchia fell to the 1108th Engineer Combat Group. Between the 4th and the 9th of January the units of the Group acted as combat engineers, armored engineers and as infantry. The mission entailed opening and maintaining main axial supply routes in the task force zone of action. On the right the 235th had to eliminate the obstacles of two blown bridges on Highway 6 to allow the armor to move forward in attack. These obstacles were overcome under intense enemy small arms, machine-gun, mortar and artillery fire. Twice it was necessary for the engineers to attack and neutralize an enemy strongpoint in order to accomplish their main mission----to get the tanks rolling. On the left flank the 48th was busy at its task of converting the railroad bed into a two-lane highway. But as the attack progressed a gap developed in the Porchia sector and the 6th Armored Infantry was being badly cut up.....

6 JANUARY 1315: PHONE CALL FROM C/S, TFA, TO CAPT BOWSHER, S-3, 1108 ENGR GROUP: ONE BATTALION OF ENGINEERS WILL HAVE TO GO INTO RESERVE AS INFANTRY BECAUSE ALL THE RESERVES HAVE BEEN COMMITTED. HAVE THEM ASSEMBLE AT OBSTACLE #13 READY FOR ACTION.

ACTION TAKEN: FIELD MSG SENT TO LT-COL GOODPASTER, CO 48TH BN.

1615: PHONE CALL FROM C/S TFA, TO CAPT BOWSHER 1108 ENGR GP: CG, TFA, ORDERS THE 48TH ENGR BN ATTACHED TO THE 6TH ARMORED INF REGT TO ASSIST IN CONSOLIDATING MOUNT PORCHIA.

1930: CO 48TH ENGR BN REPORTED TO CO 1108 ENGR GP THAT 48TH ENGR BN IS NOT BEING USED AS A BN BUT COMPANIES HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO 6TH ARMORED INF, ONE TO EACH BN.

1940: PHONE CALL FROM CO 1108 ENGR GP TO CG TFA: PROTESTED AGAINST LOSS OF CONTROL BY BATTALION CO. CG TFA PREFERRED USE THIS WAY BECAUSE 48TH ENGR BN LACKED RADIOS AND MORTARS.

2000: PHONE CALL FROM C/S TFA TO CO 1108 ENGR GP: CG TFA SAYS HE IS SORRY HE MUST COMMIT THE 48TH ENGRS AS INFANTRY BECAUSE THEY ARE THE BEST DAMNED ENGINEERS HE HAS SEEN.

Companies A, B and C of the 48th stayed up on the mountain for 2 days and 3 nights and were in great measure responsible for repelling several counterattacks and finally consolidating the important feature. The fight was expensive and the line companies were ready for reorganization when it was over. But the gap in the left flank had been plugged and the enemy driven from the task force objective.

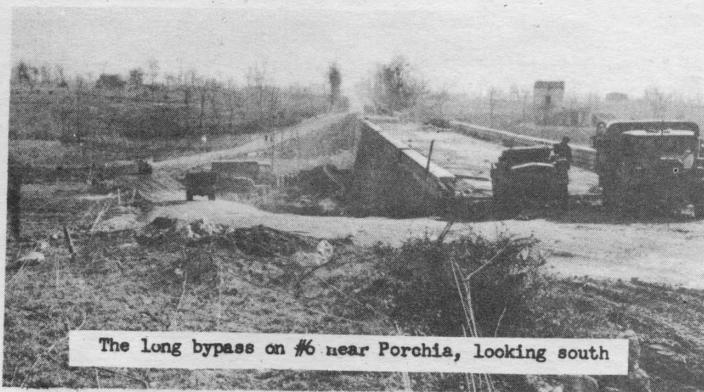
While the 48th was in as infantry, the 235th sent its men over to the railroad and carried on the vital engineer work in the face of heavy and continuous fire night and day. In Fifth Army General Orders 5 June 1944 both battalions were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for outstanding performance of duty in action. The list of awards earned by the enlisted men and officers of both battalions for the battle on and around Mount Porchia is a lengthy one and is included in the appendix to this history. Noted below are five outstanding ones:

SGT JOSEPH C. SPECKER, Company "C", 48th, Congressional Medal of Honor, posthumous.  
T/5 BEN SANTJER, Company "C", 48th, Distinguished Service Cross, posthumous.  
CAPT THOMAS V. THOMPSON, Company "B", 235th, Silver Star, posthumous.  
CAPT ORVILLE O. MUNSON, Company "A", 48th, Distinguished Service Cross.  
1ST LT HARRY M. THAMES, Company "C", 48th, Distinguished Service Cross.

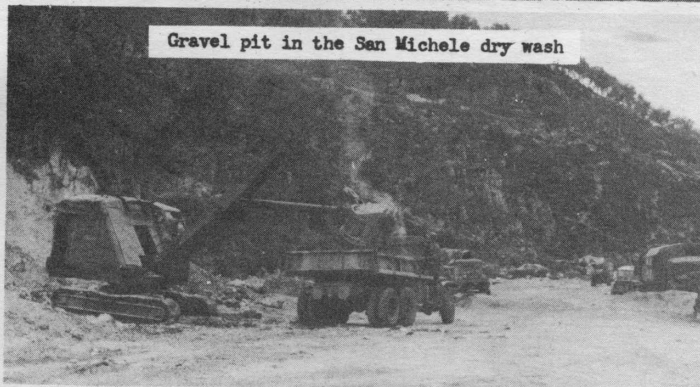
It is believed that the Medal of Honor awarded to Sgt Specker is the first such decoration to an engineer soldier in this war.

At ten o'clock on the morning of January 8, as he was ascending Mount Porchia to see to the condition of his dug-in companies, Lt-Col Goodpaster of the 48th was wounded in the right arm by mortar fragments and evacuated to a field hospital. During his absence (two weeks) Major Gerald P. McCarthy, Executive of the 1108th Group, assumed command of the Battalion, which rested for 3 days and then resumed work on the railroad, improving it and clearing it for traffic up to the western edge of Mount Trocchio. On 23 January, the 1108th assignment included the following roads: Knox Avenue, Highway 48 (railroad) from Mignano northward, and all approach roads to the San Angelo sector of the river west of the railroad bed; plus maintenance of the San Pietro--San Vittore--Cervaro roads east of the Via Casilina. These assignments were equally divided until the end of the month, at which time the 235th was alerted for its great task of building a tank road into Cassino. The 48th assumed responsibility for all roads mentioned above, and prepared to build a Bailey bridge across the Rapido River at Highway 6. Both units were now to undertake their share in the long final phase of the battle for Cassino.

The small hamlet of La Pastanella lies along both sides of the highway just south of the final open straightaway of two miles leading to the Rapido. On the north side of the settlement a narrow cart trail joining the right edge of the concrete runs through lightly-wooded countryside, past a small pink school-



The long bypass on #6 near Porchia, looking south



Gravel pit in the San Michele dry wash

house, over several streams, terminating finally at a juncture with a paved road running south along the Rapido from the town of S. Elia. This trail, five miles in length, was to be developed into a road of sufficient width and strength to carry the armor of several Allied battalions in an attack on the right flank of the Cassino defenses, the thrust hooking up through the town of Cairra to join with the effort of the French infantry high in the snow-capped mountains behind the monastery.

Using corduroy and matting, plus gravel from a battalion-operated quarry in a dry wash near San Michele, the companies of the 235th pushed the tank road with speed and energy. A standard prefabricated hexagonal culvert originated by the Battalion Maintenance Section really came into its own on this job. Steel-reinforced in 16-foot units, the culvert was first designed for use on "hot" jobs, but proved so successful it was adopted by Fifth Army as a standard engineer item. In an operation, it was loaded onto a truck for quick transportation to the site, then dumped and installed with a minimum of personnel exposed to fire. On at least one occasion under fire, it was necessary to lash one of these culverts to a T-2 and roll it into the obstructing gap, where it was of sufficient strength in the emergency to sustain the weight of passing tanks temporarily with no earth covering it at all.

Three and a half miles north of Cassino at the town of S. Elia, German engineers had blown the banks of the Rapido with such skill that the waters of the river were completely diverted from their normal course and flowed southeastward, inundating all the flatlands south of the river as far as the highway. This resulted in the isolation of some American units and gravely hindered the flow of supplies to forward troops attacking Cassino from the northeast.

It was the mission of the 235th Battalion to get tanks across the flooded and heavily mined areas and onto the hard surface road leading from Cairra to Cassino. On the night of 28 January, a convoy of heavily loaded dump trucks moved slowly through the blacked-out side from San Michele to the river depression.





Under 235th Battalion direction, the trucks carried corduroy mats, hexagonal culverts, sandbags and three companies of men from the 16th, 48th and 235th Engineers respectively. A corduroy road for tanks had to be built across 500 yards of soupy, water-soaked land. On a 75-metre hill known as the Sugar Loaf, some 900 yards ahead the enemy was strongly entrenched, so strongly that it cost 632 infantry casualties to take Sugar Loaf a short time later. It was imperative that the road be completed and personnel evacuated from the area before dawn, since the site was directly under German eyes. The job was done under great tension because of flares, enemy patrols and fire of all types. Several men were lightly wounded but the deep mud absorbed most of the shrapnel from exploding shells. At 0430 in the morning the engineers left and through the dawn mist the tanks began to move from defilade out onto the exposed corduroy. Six of them bogged down and were shelled by AT fire at point-blank range. Water was now flowing an inch over the corduroy and the attack stalled. From the enemy's point of view the road had failed and the armor had failed. It is probable that the German gunners exulted in their success that morning for they slammed round after round into the black and burning tanks that lay broken on the field below.

But the enemy engineers had overlooked one thing in their plan to use water as an obstacle. When they diverted the entire flow at the demolished bridge south of Sant' Elia, they left a bone-dry river bottom extending almost as far south in front of Cassino as the Barracks, a landmark of rubble very familiar to all who were there. The Commander of "C" Company of the 235th, Capt Walker Sorrell, conceived the idea that this defiladed avenue might be the answer to the problem of tank passage. With the sanction of Lt-Col Goodpaster, acting Group Commander, who had himself explored the route, Capt Sorrell took with him Lieutenants Jack A Witt, Victor J Vega and Edmond N Sovine and reconnoitered its entire length. Two overhead obstructions were blasted out by a demolition squad, and Capt Sorrell rode the leading reconnaissance tank over the selected route to assure the tank commander of

its feasibility. On 29 January the attack surged forward again, and 17 tanks poured through this gap to gain a foothold on the northern edge of Cassino and punch a damaging hole in the city's flank defenses.

31 JANUARY 1944: VERBAL MSG LT MUNSON 48TH ENGR BN TO CAPT BOWSHER 1108TH ENGR GP: JUST RETURNED FROM RECON OF BLOWN BRIDGE ON NUMBER 6 AT RAPIDO. WAS FIRED ON AND SHOWERED WITH GRENADES. JERRY HAS THE OTHER SIDE.

When Munson lay on his stomach on the lip of the blow and hung his head over the edge to examine its possibilities as a launching base for the Bailey bridge he was to build over 60 feet of fast-flowing water, he didn't see the machine pistol pointed at him from the opposite lip and looked up only in time to avoid the staccato burst by plunging forward into the river. The water was five feet deep and he stayed as long as possible under every inch of it that would hide him as he crawled and breast-stroked his way downstream to some sheltering weeds. The occupants of the unfriendly machine gun nest tried to blow him out with three stick grenades but he escaped through a drainage ditch.

The enemy was vitally concerned with the protection of this gap, for once bridged, it would provide the only direct vehicular route into the city. Several times the two nests on the far side of the blow were cleaned out but German paratroopers always filtered in again to hold the gap and disrupt any bridge reconnaissance. They successfully prevented a crossing here until the middle of March 1944.

During the month of January in the 48th Engr Battalion there were 6 enlisted men killed and 50 wounded, and 8 officers wounded; the 235th had 3 officers and 8 enlisted men killed and 4 officers and 44 enlisted men wounded.

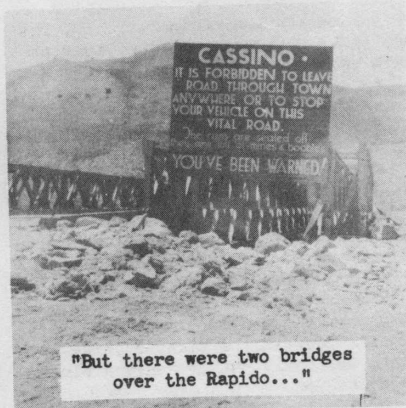
It was planned to launch another thrust at Cassino in February. The 48th had the mission of building a Bailey bridge and a bypass across the river at the highway and opening a route for tanks through the town. One company ("C") was attached to the 1st Tank Group for the entire operation, to perform engineer work in the Liri Valley around the bend on Highway 6 and south to San Angelo and Pignataro when the tank column had moved through the town. At this time the New Zealand and 34th Division infantry were fighting the bloody battle in the town proper.

Of late there had been a great deal of traffic up and down Highway 6 and the high bulk of Mount Trocchio was a useful screen for much activity. The plot of ground immediately south of it was a favorite spot for advance CP's, and here on the night of 2 February an enemy shell landed in the cluster of halftracks that housed the staff members of the 1st Tank Group and seriously injured for the second time the right arm of Lt-Col Goodpaster of the 48th, taking him from his battalion for the remainder of the campaign. Corporal Keith Shofner of Colonel Goodpaster's "C" Company was asleep on the same ground beside his jeep at the time. A large segment of the shell entered his stomach, killing him instantly. Major Henry J Winger of the 1108th Engr Group assumed command of the Battalion.

The February plan of attack was not executed. The 48th continued to maintain its road net, including the railroad bed, Highway 6, the Cervaro-San Michele--San Vittore road: the line companies and the H&S Engineer Service Section of the Battalion contributed personnel to the operation of a gravel pit in the San Michele dry wash. The battalion maintained an air beacon. All the work was intermittently shelled. Two enlisted men were killed and 16 wounded; 4 officers were wounded. It was a wet, cold, busy, typical engineer month.

In the 235th Battalion the situation was much the same...maintenance of the tank road down to the river, culvert construction, artillery jobs, ditch drainage. On the night of 1 February, 1st Lt Dallas R Lynch, Battalion Reconnaissance Officer, voluntarily penetrated several hundred yards into enemy territory in the vicinity of Cairra in search of an alternate tank crossing over the river. He was subjected to heavy mortar and machine-gun fire and found himself in an antipersonnel minefield close to enemy positions. He had cleared 200 feet of mines and had located the tank passage when he accidentally exploded a concrete picket mine whose fragments wounded him severely in the legs. With great presence of mind he would not allow himself to be evacuated by his men until the danger of an investigation by an enemy patrol had passed. Lt Lynch was hospitalized and did not return to his

"...an ocean of grey and white..."  
Cassino, March 15 1944



"But there were two bridges  
over the Rapido..."



The Continental Hotel - after

unit until June.

On 15 February the 235th Battalion was detached from II Corps and attached to the New Zealand Corps for operations only, that is, for the main effort against Cassino. In preparation for this, and in addition to regular road maintenance, the companies of the Battalion trained intensively in assault tactics, including use of flamethrowers and bazookas in attack on fortified positions. The Battalion CP during the month was in a ruined convent on the southern edge of San Vittore. One enlisted man was killed in action; one officer and 4 enlisted men were wounded.

The first two weeks of March were routine. Both battalions maintained the New Zealand Corps road net. Minefields were cleared, a Bailey bridge was maintained and then replaced by a culvert fill on Highway 6, nine artillery jobs were completed (dig 'em in and pull 'em out), and a quarry in the vicinity of Portella disgorged 3000 cubic yards of rock. On 3 March Lt-Col Frank J Polich was transferred to Headquarters NATOUSA and Major Gordon A Pope, Executive Officer, commanded the 235th for a brief period before going to the United States to attend the Command and General Staff School. On 11 March a transport plane from Washington landed at



Naples Airport, bringing the two men who were to command the battalions for a major part of the Italian campaign. LT COL DEAN E SWIFT was assigned to the 48th Engr Bn and LT COL ALLEN F CLARK JR joined the 235th Engr Bn. The new commanders could not have arrived at a more climactic moment.....

1945 14 MARCH 1944 MSG FROM NZ CORPS TO 1108 ENGR GROUP: DICKENS IS ON TOMORROW.

1950 14 MARCH 1944 FIELD MSG TO CO'S 48TH & 235TH ENGR BNS: DICKENS IS ON TOMORROW.

"Dickens" was the code word for the big day. All the air power in the Mediterranean Theater was to be unleashed against Cassino in an attempt to soften up one of the great holdouts of the war. A vicious bombing a month before had done the defenders no apparent harm, and now all along the front the war on the ground paused and cast its eyes upward. This was the Great Experiment. On the one hand the classic defense of commanding terrain, seemingly impregnable to ground attack. On the other, the greatest massed air onslaught of the war in direct tactical support of ground forces against one position. The proponents of both sides of the controversy should have been there. They could have set aside their pens, typewriters, graphs, photos, charts, figures and arguments. Today they would use only their eyes, their ears and their backs, propped against a rock on the Cervaro hillside.

Doughboys waited hopefully; artillerymen, ammunition piled high beside their pieces, anticipated their turn; engineers on the muddy roads laid down their tools and halted the dump trucks. Every ear in the valley was cocked to catch the sound. When it came it was like the drone of locusts from afar off, an uncertain murmur swelling gradually to a steady pulsing throb as from the south the specks began to appear, high and small against the March sky. First the mediums, B25's, in flights of a dozen or more. High above them the fighters flashed across the blue like quicksilver, trailing vapor. Now the bombers were over target and the flights turned left. Bellies open, the planes dropped their loads, then wheeled south once more and were gone, only to be replaced by another flight, and more, and more again. There was a good deal of the smoke of battle in the valley already, but the monastery and the town could still be seen before the first bombs struck, not afterward for a long while. After the mediums came the heavies, the Fortresses, and around and through them pierced the endless stream of dive bombers, each bearing a single deadly message. All morning the hill and the town across the river were livid with the bright orange of bursting explosive. The strike of the first bombs was visible, but those that followed merely slashed the billowing smoke with a brilliant knife, then settled back in the ocean of grey and white. There were, it was said, more than 3000 sorties that morning, and it was hard to believe that any living thing could survive such punishment and retain sanity. But there was more to come. The cannonade had not even begun.

Every field piece in the valley—American, British, New Zealand, French—ranging in caliber from 75's to 240's, joined in the greatest concentration of firepower on one target in the history of military action. For sheer intensity, the papers said, the barrage surpassed El Alamein, Sevastopol, Stalingrad. It was an artilleryman's dream. The target was in plain view, the range point blank, the calibration exact, the registration perfect. For over an hour they poured it on until the gunners dripped sweat in the chill air and the tubes had had all they could stand at one time. Monastery Hill seemed to jump with the terrible detonation and writhe as if under the blows of a massive club. Great holes appeared in the 16-foot-thick walls of the Abbey; its towers crumbled and huge chunks of masonry flew through the shrapnel-laden air. Every foot of the town and the great hill was pulverized until the houses and the buildings of what was once a pleasant community had passed from the earth leaving no recognizable trace. When the barrage ceased at noon the quiet of the grave hung over the place. The only smell was of cordite, that instant klaxon of danger and death known to every soldier's instinct.

The doughboys moved in again with everything they had. Surely there were no defenders left with any fight in them; surely it would be but a question of bodies and prisoners, perhaps very few of either.

Everyone was wrong. There were plenty of defenders, plenty of fight, plenty of guns, ammunition, OP's, perseverance and fanaticism. The machine pistols

and Spandaus hemstitched patterns up and down the draws to greet our infantry; the mortar crews again brought the Nebelwerfers from the sheltering caves; the 88's and the SP's were open again for business as if nothing had happened. The resistance, if anything, was more spirited than before. On the night of March 17, for example, in a CP and aid station in the bowels of a church on the southern edge of town, a New Zealand captain, haggard and grey after two nights and a day of incredible house-to-house, room-to-room fighting, said: "I started out with 150 blokes yesterday afternoon. I'm down to 47 now. One sniper got 34 of my men in a single day before we could reach him." All this is but an indication of the ferocity of the post-bombardment fighting.

1935 15 MARCH VERBAL MSG FROM CRE NZ CORPS TO MAJOR MCCARTHY 1108TH ENGR GROUP:  
"SEND SAMMY'S BOYS OUT WHEN THE LIGHT IS RIGHT."

ACTION TAKEN: MSG TO LT COL SWIFT 48TH ENGR BN: LIGHT IS RIGHT. BEGIN WORK NOW.

Company "A" of the 48th had long been awaiting this moment. The panel trucks were ready and waiting up the Highway. The lip of the 60-foot gap had been blown several days earlier and now they were to build, in jet darkness, one of the most important bridges of the Italian campaign. Captain Bill Munson had rehearsed his crews again and again. There were just enough men used to complete the job in rapid time. Like most things unpleasant in anticipation, it was not too difficult in actuality. There were no casualties. They got it up and got out of there in time to let the New Zealand tanks and tank dozers get across into the town where the rubble had all but obliterated the streets.

Two nights later, March 17, Company "B" of the 48th built a corduroy and gravel bypass to the right of the highway bridge, after first sweeping all mines from the immediate banks of the river. Then "A" Company constructed another Bailey bridge, this time in a resourceful and unusual manner. The levee of the river at this point being considerably higher than the working ground, it became necessary to crib up a foundation for the bridge abutments, lay the rollers upon it and build the bridge directly from the beds of panel and transom trucks. It was a success and there was now two-way traffic in and out of Cassino.

1230 16 MARCH MSG FROM CRE NZ CORPS TO 1108TH ENGR GROUP: "WELL DONE. WILL YOU CONVEY MY CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL RANKS WHO WORKED ON THE TASKS LAST NIGHT."

About 75 yards south of the river on Highway 6, a dirt road winds eastward to a walled cemetery and eventually terminates at the highway near La Pastanella. This road was of great value to bridge trains and tanks for it offered the only covered approach to the river directly in front of the city. A stray bomb on the morning of the 15th had gouged a crater 60 feet wide in this road between the Highway and the cemetery. The gap had to be bridged.

1430 21 MARCH PHONE CALL FROM CAPT HAMILTON, NZ CORPS, TO CAPT BOWSHER, 1108TH ENGR GROUP: WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO PUT IN BAILEY BRIDGE TONIGHT. IF IT GETS TOO HOT, PULL BACK.  
CAPT BOWSHER TO CAPT SORRELL, S-3, 235TH ENGR BN: CONSTRUCT BRIDGE TONIGHT.

At about midnight, everything was going well. The launching nose was under way and the panels were being affixed. Then all at once, with terrible accuracy, the shells began creeping up from the road's intersection with Highway 6. A burst of three tore into the bridge and the men in quick succession. "C" Company of the 235th was the victim of the worst single catastrophe yet experienced by either Battalion. As the engineers tried to pull their wounded from the smoking site, another group of enemy shells poured from Cassino down upon them. The slaughter was crippling and what remained of the company pulled back. The final casualty tabulation was: 9 killed, 17 wounded seriously enough for hospitalization. There were 44 Purple Hearts distributed in "C" Company for that night's work.

During the month of March, in the 235th, there were nine enlisted men killed and 43 wounded, and one officer wounded. The 48th had 2 enlisted men killed and 15 wounded, and 4 officers wounded.

But there were two bridges over the Rapido in front of Cassino.

By March 25 the entire organization had been relieved of attachment to the New Zealand Corps and ordered into a period of rest and training at Airola, in the vicinity of Benevento.

END OF PART ONE



Mignano Church  
Christmas morning 1943



The Group CP on Highway 6



## PART TWO

### MINTURNO TO THE APENNINES

The first ten days of April were a jumble of pleasant detail. Numerous shakedowns unearthed hundreds of pounds of excess baggage. Much of it had been useful up in 'Purple Heart Valley'---the extra vehicles, machine guns, 60mm mortars, tommy guns, pistols, blankets. But six months of unrelieved frontline duty had resulted in a heavy collection of "Better-save-it-can't-tell-when-we-might-need-it" material which was now jettisoned. Greatest single loss was the half-track, one of which had been in each line platoon. They had saved lives on more than one occasion.

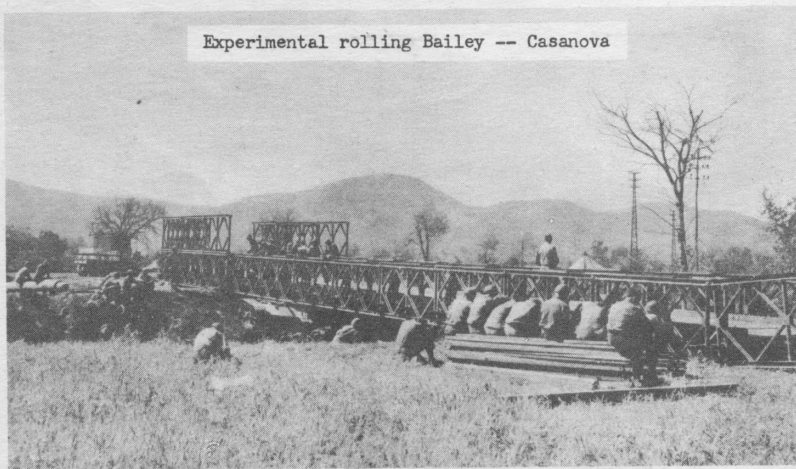
After the shakedowns and the cleaning of equipment, passes were issued. Red Cross donuts began to appear in quantities at Airola and USO shows were presented to wildly appreciative audiences. The safety valve of relaxation eased nerves long tautened by dangerous work. There were company parties and battalion parties; visits to Naples, Sorrento, Pompeii. It was good to be back for awhile.

Ten days of this and the organization moved northwest to a training site near the town of Casanova, south of Mount Massico. The rest of the month was consumed intensively in bridging and demolitions.

The training program was designed to incorporate lessons learned in combat with new methods of bridging, mine clearance and mountain movement. Speed of construction was rehearsed again and again. With emphasis on difficult sites and restricted areas, Bailey bridges were built with gin poles and on wheels. The idea of the latter was to develop an assault Bailey that could be built in the rear of the bridge site and then pushed forward on wheels or dollies by a bulldozer or truck. Several companies spent time on the Volturno River with the Armored Force treadway bridge and the floating Bailey; others experimented with "The Snake" and with primacord for gapping minefields. Much sweat and energy was expended carving jeep trails up the flanks of Mt. Massico, a phase of training that was to prove quite useful at an early date. The companies of the 48th assembled and operated an aerial tramway, the first of its kind seen in the Italian theater.

Gradually, the engineers worked their way up to heavy operations once more. A quarry was opened on the north side of Mt. Massico; malaria control in the Garigliano sector was taken over by the Group; corps roads were polished up; "Speedy Beach" was de-mined and prepared for a resort season that never opened.

Experimental rolling Bailey -- Casanova



The drive for Rome began on the night of May 11. The first blow was struck at Minturno. In the wake of the furious assault by the 85th and 88th Divisions and the French ghoums, under strong enemy counterfire, the men of the 235th worked relentlessly to maintain the approaches to the Garigliano bridges and to hold these bridges intact under the tremendous traffic and shelling and bombing. Then, as the II Corps forces swept into the hills beyond Santa Maria Infante and Castelforte, the demand for supply routes became acute.

To support the infantry attack, new roads had to be built to substitute for Highway 7, which the Germans were holding with fierce determination. In 40 hours, with TNT, shaped charges, mules, picks, machetes and bulldozers the 48th blasted a trail for 24-ton trucks almost to the summit of Mt. San Angelo, behind Spigno, only to be called off the job when new stretches of Highway 7 were snatched from the enemy.

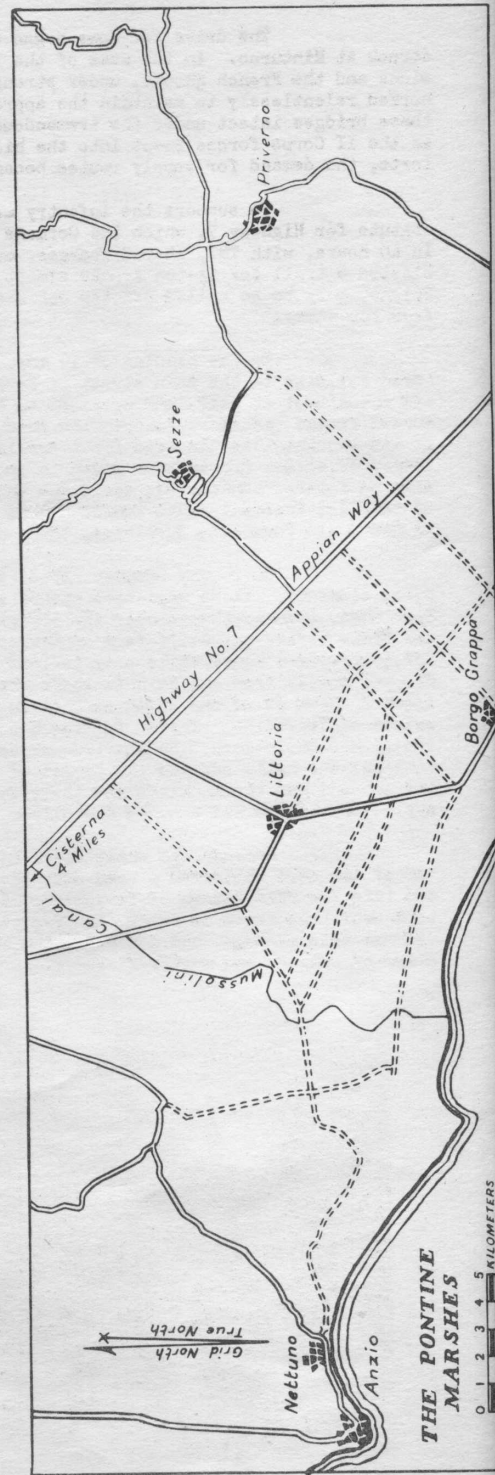
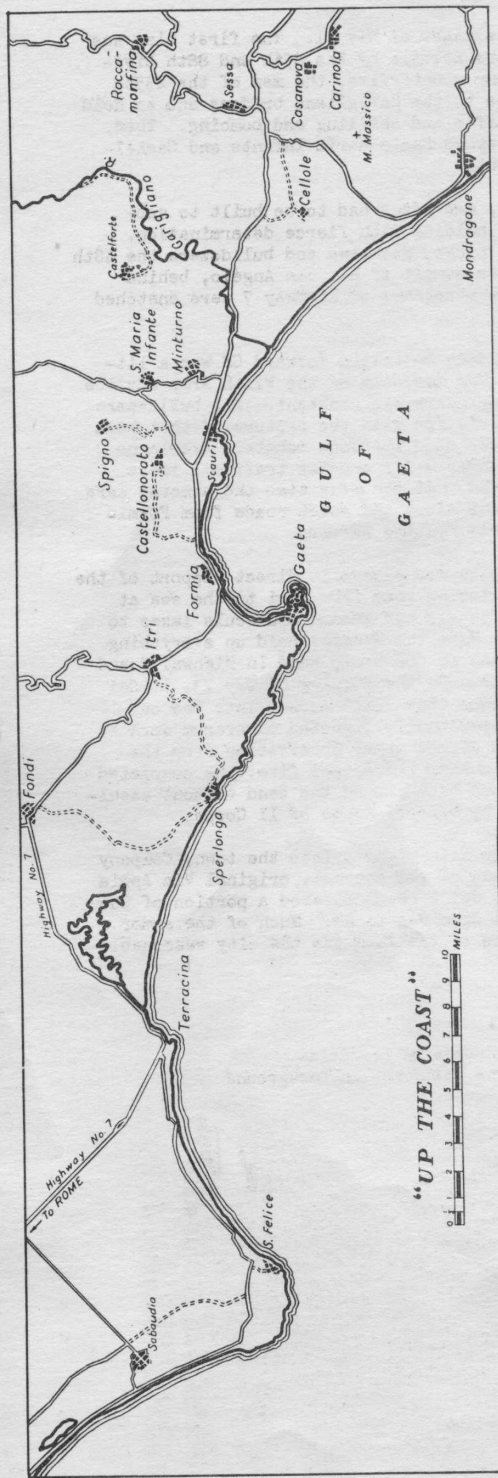
By the evening of 19 May, the 235th Battalion forward CP was a littered building in the main street of Formia. The momentum of the Fifth Army advance was now almost at peak, and pressure on the engineers was constant. All bulldozers worked around the clock to open the road to Itri, for with the capture of that town it was thought that the need for travelling over slow tortuous mountain trails no longer existed. Orders were given to open Highway 7 for two-way traffic. There were no forward boundaries; speed was the byword. At the same time the armored cars of the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron were to race along the coast roads from Formia to Gaeta and Formia to Sperlonga, then up to the Pontine Marshes.

On 20 May Company "B" of the 235th was placed in direct support of the recon elements. These engineers opened the twisting road from Itri to the sea at Sperlonga, then northward over the irrigation canals and around miniscule lakes to the flats before the cliff face at Terracina. Here the Germans held up everything for forty-eight hours while they trained AT guns on the sharp bend in Highway 7 and dropped mortar from the heights above the water. On the morning of May 23, Lt-Col Allen F Clark Jr of the 235th went on foot around this "hot" corner into the outskirts of Terracina. There, for two hours he personally directed clearance work by two of his bulldozers. He was thus exposed to direct enemy observation from the town and the hill, and was the target of much mortar and sniper fire. He completed the job and got the machines and their operators back around the bend without casualty. For this he was awarded the Silver Star by General Keyes of II Corps.

Because the enemy still held the main highway into the town, Company "A" of the 48th bulldozed a road over the stones of the ancient, original Via Appia and into the rear fringe of Terracina. Lt-Col Swift reconnoitered a portion of the town over this route on May 22 and reported it open for tanks. Much of the armor did use this passage, but not until the morning of the 24th was the city reasonably clear of snipers and mortar fire.



Engineers in Terracina  
note armored bulldozer in background





The Via Appia was now open through Terracina. Here on the threshold of the Pontine Marshes the Allied forces were poised for the last thrust to Rome, sixty miles away. Although the assignments had overlapped not infrequently, the general engineer picture since the jump-off at Minturno had been as follows: the 235th was the spearhead, probing arterial routes, exploiting the trails, seeking a quick one-way route for the armor: the 48th had improved the routes for two-way traffic, laid culverts, swept mines, hauled gravel. At Terracina both battalions operated side by side. The combination had worked smoothly, and was to continue to do so.

At this point, for engineer purposes, the forward area was split, the 48th receiving orders to open a beach route north, the 235th to continue along Highway 7. Lt-Col Dean Swift of the 48th ordered his 'A' Company to open an inland route through the Pontine Marshes paralleling #7. He sent his 'C' Company to find and open a beach route. 'B' Company had one platoon with the 91st Recon, relieving those elements of 'B' Company of the 235th who had been with this organization since the jump-off. The order to both battalions was "Keep going, but fast." There were to be no phase lines. At approximately 0830 24 May the work began on the northern edge of Terracina. Along the beach route the men of the 48th worked at breakneck speed. They spanned 3 canals, filled at least a score of craters, got their jeeps filled with flowers as they sped through newly liberated villages barely ninety minutes behind German demolition crews blowing the roads ahead of them, collected eight prisoners, opened 24 miles of road in 23 hours.

At 0731 on May 25th, Lt Francis X. Buckley and Pfc "Pancho" Savala of Co 'B' 48th Engineers, were walking past the sleeping hamlet of Borgo Grappa in the Pontine when they met a southbound, heavily-armed American patrol. The latter proved to be elements of the 36th Engineers who had fought their way out of encirclement at Anzio. Capt Ben Souza was leading the patrol. No matter how history may dress it up, the actual conversation on this momentous occasion went something like this:

SOUZA: "Where you going, Lieutenant?"

BUCKLEY: "We're engineers, trying to get to Anzio and latch onto some of that PX beer we hear they've got up there".

SOUZA: "Well, goddammit, if you're trying to get to Anzio, you've made it! We are the beachhead forces. We're the 36th Engineers. My name's Souza."

BUCKLEY: "Mine's Buckley. 48th Engineers. God, what a day for us gravel-shakers."

Within a short time the news of the meeting had gone up the line and there was great excitement on the highway north of Borgo Grappa. At approximately 0930 Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark came down from Anzio and Lt Buckley formally saluted, reported ("Lieutenant Buckley, Company B, 48th Engineer Battalion, sir."), and shook hands with the Fifth Army commander as the beachhead passed into history.



At noon, on this same day, officers and men of the 235th working Highway 7 met recon men of the 34th Division driving south from Cisterna. Behind these dramatic encounters which obliterated the beachhead as such, lay many prosaic jobs done with a speed and coordination rarely noticed by men other than engineers who know the problems.

26 MAY 1944 RADIO MSG FROM GEN KEYES II CORPS TO COL K S ANDERSSON AND CO'S OF 48TH AND 235TH ENGR BNS:

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR AGGRESSIVE RECONNAISSANCE TO ESTABLISH INITIAL CONTACT WITH BEACHHEAD ENGINEERS. ACCOMPLISHED FAR EARLIER THAN ANTICIPATED.

At Cisterna the Corps engineers moved to the right past Cori, up to Velletri and over onto Highway 6. Throughout the push thus far both battalions had worked under great pressure and yet at no time had the advance been held up by any engineer inadequacy. In fact, so headlong was the chase that it was the rule, rather than the exception, for our working parties to be some distance ahead of the forward infantry. This was due in great measure to the fact that the infantry had come through the mountains while the mobile engineers opened the roads in the level terrain. All this time our heavy equipment was taking a beating. The shortage of prime movers was critical and our bulldozers walked almost the entire distance from Minturno to Rome.

In the drive up to and across the Tiber, two companies of the 235th supported the Special Service Force (which had absorbed Task Force Howze). Colonel Andersson, Lt Col Clark and T/5 Howard Dartt penetrated as far as the outer gates of Rome with the leading tanks on the afternoon of June 3rd. At the urgent request of the CEF (French) on 5 June, 'A' Company of the 235th installed a 130-foot TS Class 24 Bailey bridge across a blow east and south of Rome. This was a difficult job, in that the far bank of the crater had not been secured. The officers and men of the company, under Capt Paul A Brose, used rifles, machine guns and 60mm mortars to knock out a German pocket and establish the bridgehead necessary before any work could be done.

Colonel Andersson, with Brigadier General Frederick of the SSF, was among the first to enter Rome on the night of June 4. He reconnoitered the Tiber River bridges and though twice wounded in a fire fight with German rear guard elements at the Margherita Bridge, was instrumental in killing 3 and capturing 9 enemy.

On 6 June, the Group moved into Rome and assumed responsibility for opening Highway 2, the Via Cassia. The units leap-frogged each other and the job was done within the battalions in the following manner: one company cleared mines and opened the road one-way, while a second company dressed it up for two-way Corps traffic. The third company, in reserve, did the miscellaneous battalion tasks. From Rome to Viterbo, the battalions opened 176 miles of road to two-way traffic, installed 38 culverts and 3 bridges (total 208'), built 11 bypasses. The dusty, sun-baked dirt roads with bypasses often through wheatfields required oiling or constant watering. Sundry engineer tasks included the moving and emplacing of 8 artillery and AA units, construction of 3 Cub landing strips, preparation of two dump sites, operation of 16 water points and an aerial beacon, 2 quarries, clearance of 10 minefields.

On 17 June the 48th left the Group to join Seventh Army for the invasion of Southern France. To replace it, the 23rd Artieri Battalion (Italian) was attached to us. But a full three months of training were necessary before the Italian engineers would be able to function at normal efficiency. And so, from mid-June to mid-September the load was all on the 235th.

On 23 June, the 235th moved to the vicinity of Grosseto and together with the 19th Engineer Regiment took over road maintenance for IV Corps. The battalion was ordered to open Route 1 (Via Aurelia) in close support of the 34th Division. Local materials were plentiful and the work proceeded rapidly until we reached a 290-foot bridge blow near the Piombino crossroads. Three D-7's and two R-4's were put to work building a fill across the gap. Three hex culverts, 4 sections long, were placed to take care of the water. After 18 hours of steady work the dip was open to two-way traffic. From Piombino to Cecina every culvert, every bridge over every canal was blown by the retreating Germans. At one point on Route 1 there were 12 demolitions within one mile.

Enemy resistance at Cecina held up the forward movement of the artillery for 3 days and allowed us sufficient time to catch up in our work. While on reconnaissance along the Cecina River, the Battalion Operations Officer and two enlisted men were enveloped in a German counterattack and captured. They were Capt Fred Wright, M/Sgt Austin Granger, T/5 Herbert Herritt.

The 34th Division constructed two fords across the Cecina River, each with one-way approaches, with the plan in mind of developing a one-way traffic circuit. As soon as the bridgehead at Cecina was cleared of small-arms fire, Company "C" moved up to build a good two-way crossing alongside the Cecina Bridge which had been destroyed by our bombers. The engineers built a 15-foot, simple stringer, two-way bridge with an 8-foot flow line.

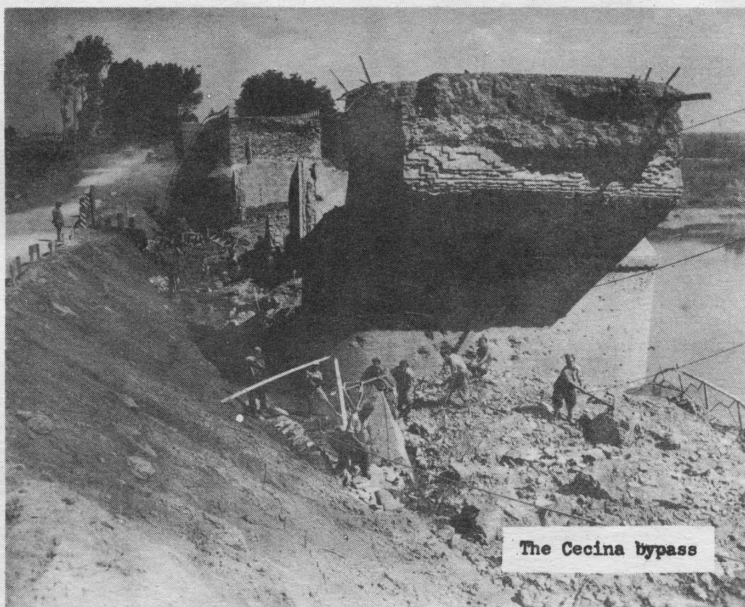
3 JULY 1944 TEL CALL LT DANNER TO MAJOR BOWSHER, 1108 ENGR GP:

JERRY MUST HAVE TAKEN THAT ONE PLANE OF HIS OUT OF ORDNANCE BECAUSE HE HAS MADE FOUR PASSES OVER THE BLOWN BRIDGE VIC CECINA AND WOUNDED TWO OF OUR MEN.

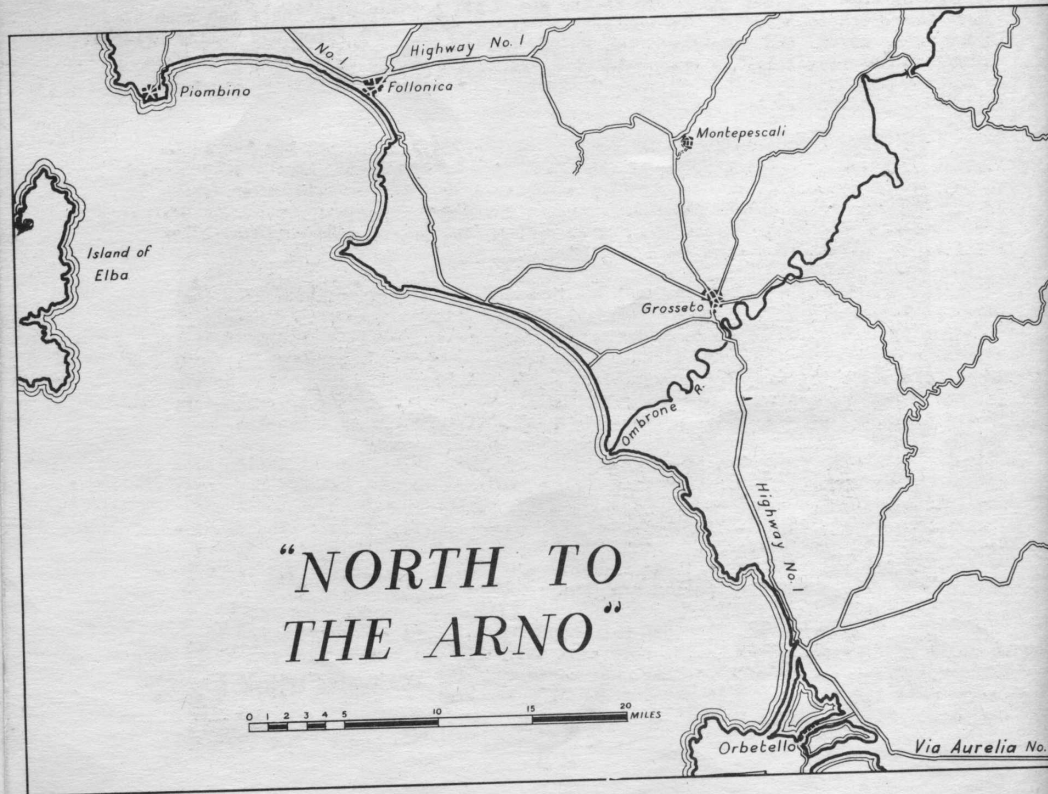
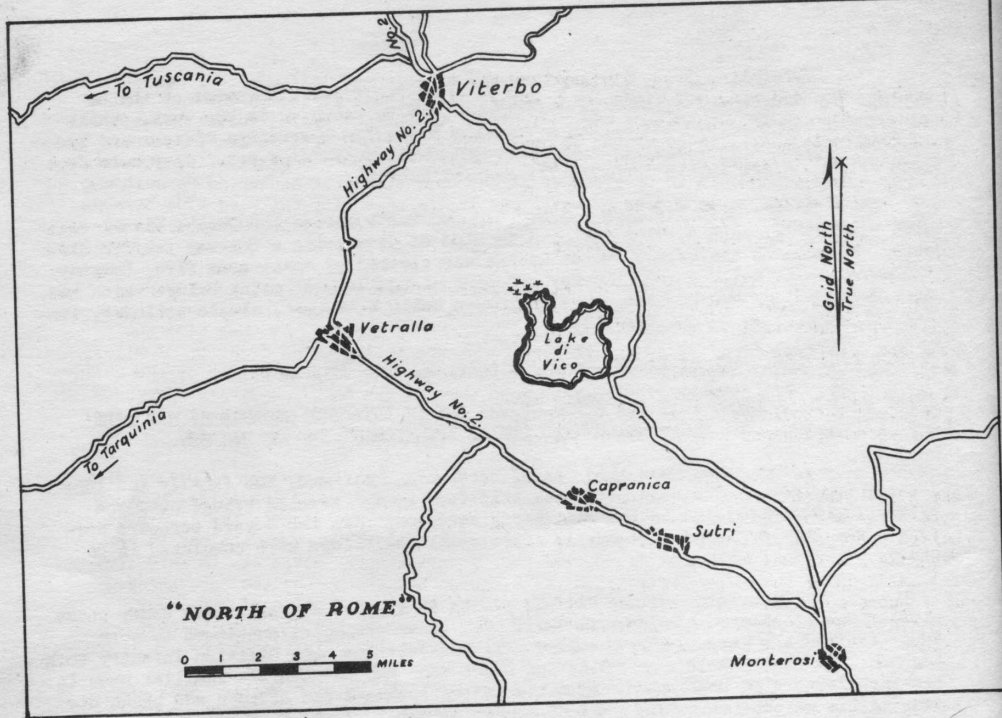
For three days this aerial harassing continued, but finally the long job was complete, a 300-foot fill with a 15-foot wooden trestle bridge over the water. By using all the battalion's heavy equipment plus two 8-yard scrapers borrowed from Army engineers, the fills approaching the bridge were completed in 36 hours.

On 4 July Company "A" was placed in support of Task Force Ramey whose mission was to advance along Route 6821. The other companies continued to work Route 165 and the laterals to the east. In mid-July the 34th Division infantry took Leghorn. On their heels came "Stan the Donut Man" who painted his familiar name in ten-inch letters on bomb-spattered walls in the southern end of town and began dispensing his welcome cakes and java to weary 'soldats'.

Leghorn was slated to be the main supply port for Fifth Army and its immediate road net was vitally important. On its northern fringe, the road to Pisa is cut by some 6 canals which run to the sea. All bridges over these had been blown. Here the 235th constructed, in succession, infantry support spans and Bailey bridges. Continuing north, the line companies opened the seacoast road to Marina di Pisa plus the numerous laterals that join it to Highway 1.







Meanwhile, Group Headquarters was established inland at the hamlet of San Ruffino and remained there for 6 weeks, its longest period in one spot since Cassino. The dreary, hot summer was uneventful but for one bright spot. The men of the 235th, principally those of "B" Company, produced "Bypass To Berlin", an all-G.I. revue which became a rousing success. Opening in the town of Fauglia, it later moved to Florence and played to standees at the same time that Katherine Cornell and Brian Aherne were running a show of their own in the same city entitled "The Barretts of Wimpole Street". All in all, "Bypass to Berlin" was seen by 62,000 soldiers before its actors went back to manicuring the roads of Italy.

On 3 September, Lt-Col Allen Clark assumed command of the 1108th Engineer Combat Group, Col K. S. Andersson going to 6th Army Group in France. Lt Col William P. Jones arrived from Fifth Army to command the 235th. At this time the unit was responsible for the engineer work along the entire Corps front of 55 miles. Task Force 45 had no engineers whatever and it became the responsibility of the 235th to do all the engineer work necessary to move them across the Arno River. Our heavy equipment problem at this time was becoming critical. There were few spare parts and fewer maintenance units. There was a serious shortage of prime movers.

At this point it should be noted that the patient weeks of effort with the 23rd Battalion were beginning to bear results. In September the Allies moved across the Arno, and the magnitude of the engineer tasks assigned to the 1108th required that jobs of equal importance to those of the 235th be given the native engineers. There was a 70-mile front, two task forces and two divisions to care for. The 23rd, under the close supervision of Lt Andrew Hedges, opened the Autostrada from Lucca to Pistoia, a difficult feat involving the construction of 7 Baileys, 3 of them in one day. In so doing, they used 6000 pounds of explosive to prepare bridge sites, clear blown concrete overpasses and remove debris from towns.

As this is written, these engineers of the Regular Italian Army are pulling their weight as an integral part of the 1108th Group in the tough mountain campaign of the Apennines. When they joined the Group in July near Cecina, they were disorganized, ill-equipped, dispirited. Three items in the main were responsible for their steady rise to present efficiency: one, the careful coaching of American engineer officers and NCO's of Group and Battalion, notably Lt Hedges, S/Sgt Edward Labate and a maintenance crew from the 235th; two, the leadership of Lt Col Luigi Zezza, a young career officer with pride in his unit; three, the gradual rebirth of esprit in the men themselves, who now know the value of the work they do and can see that the finished product compares favorably with that of the best engineer battalions in the theater.

In the early fall, "A" Company of the 235th supported the 6th South African Division by opening Route 67 from Pontedera to Florence. At the same time, Company "C" built a 230-foot double-single Bailey across the Serchio River south of Viareggio, using as a base the pile bents of a destroyed German bridge. The bridge was dedicated to the nine men of this same company who were killed while building a Bailey at Cassino in March.

September was a big month. We built 33 Baileys totaling 2160 feet (average Bailey was 70', DS, Class 40) and 8 other bridges, timber and treadway, totaling 175 feet. Other jobs: 22 bypasses, 60 craters, 55 fills, 50 culverts, dismantled 4 bridges totaling 410'; checked 42 areas for mines, destroyed 762 enemy mines, cleared paths to remove bodies from mine fields; operated 12 water points and one beacon, prepared 6 Cub strips and 2 QM dumps; dug in 10 Artillery units; took 3 prisoners of war, built 6 fords and used 10,000 pounds of explosive.

October was routine, consisting of work, sweat and statistics. The Serchio River rose to flood proportions and threatened to wash out "C" Company's Dedication Bridge near Highway 1. The low-level treadway bridges at Lucca and Vecchiano were washed out. Another span near Lucca was imperative. In two days Company "B" plus one company of the Italian engineers built two Baileys at one site, divided by the ruins of an existing concrete span. The American bridge was a 160-foot double-double BB; the Italian bridge a 130-foot triple-single BB.

In November the 235th and Group Headquarters were bivouacked in the vicinity of Porretta, high in the mountains above Pistoia. Much work had to be done up here under cover of smoke or darkness because of the enemy's dominating positions overlooking the highways. It was the job of the Corps engineers to keep the roads

open between the two main elements in the Corps---the Brazilian Expeditionary Force and the 6th South African Division. The importance of secondary roads was increased because they offered more defiladed routes of approach to the front and provided alternate routes in the event of shelling on Highway 64. Drainage was the problem on these tributary roads. Maximum use was made of Italian civilian labor. These artisans were recruited with the aid of AMG, taken to and from their jobs by trucks from the company for which they were working, were given a noon meal in addition to the average daily wage of 60¢, and worked under the supervision of American NCO's. Our quarries turned out 4000 cubic yards of rock during the month.

Winter in the Italian mountains is no joke. Where the 235th lived for awhile, near the dam at Suviana, the wind whistled down from the north and dropped a blanket of snow over the narrow gorge of the Reno River. Porretta Terme, a gutted town now but once a popular spa and overnight stop for travellers between Pistoia and Bologna, became an important and crowded communication center. The enemy must have known this, because for six months---October to March---he used it as an impact zone for shells from his long-range 170mm cannon. In early Spring of '45 the "Stars and Stripes" printed excerpts from the diary of a captured German artillery officer. One of the entries reads thus:

"February 20---Yesterday I threw some shells into Porretta. This must have made the enemy feel very uncomfortable..."

It did. Almost every day and night, at irregular intervals, the tremendous shells, a few at a time, crashed into the town. Now and then they killed a civilian or a soldier, or wounded several people. For the most part they did no harm. But it was hard on the nerves. You never could tell where the next one was going to land...

For the 235th, November and December were filled with cold jobs, difficult jobs. "B" Company built a 180-foot triple-single pier Bailey at Poretta; and a 140-foot combination double-single and single-single on a cribbed-up leaning pier at Castel di Casio; plus several smaller ones and numerous culverts. But the prize of them all was the 180-foot double-triple "Christmas Bridge" over the Serchio at Borgo Mozzano. It was an unsupported span with overhead transoms, built on a restricted site. Routed from the sack on the eve of their second Christmas overseas for the rush job, Capt Harold Baker's men got into the spirit of the occasion and had the great structure ready for traffic in 27 hours flat. Nor was "A" Company idle. Along the upper Serchio they bulldozed a thousand-foot Cub airstrip and floored it with pierced steel plank in true aviation engineer style. At Riola they built a 240-foot triple-single pier Bailey; they constructed two bridges at Silla and assisted in a third. All of this work was shelled intermittently and some of it was within mortar range.



"Yesterday I threw some shells into Porretta..."





"...in true aviation engineer style..."

At the same time, Company "C", never an outfit to draw easy assignments, was sweeping trails and pulling mines for tanks in the first assault on Mt. Belvedere. Lt Eugene Owens and S/Sgt Jess Patterson, riding a tank dozer to reconnoiter a possible bypass were badly shaken but uninjured when the machine struck mines.

The harsh demands of the war in Italy call for more and more engineers and doughboys. Late in November the 1108th Group was given two former AA searchlight battalions for conversion to combat engineers. Fifth Army allowed thirty days for reorganization and re-equipping, and set aside a training area south of Florence for Group with the parting admonition: "Bring them up in a month ready to take the field as operating engineers."

The converted battalions were composed of uniformly high caliber officers and enlisted men, including in both categories many graduates of technical schools. In their original branch of service they were crack organizations with 30 months overseas---Africa, Sicily, Italy. Morale was high, enthusiasm for the fresh tasks burned brightly. It was decided that this unique opportunity to crystallize the ideas evolving from 15 months of engineer experience in the theater should not be neglected. Colonel Clark prepared an Operational Guide to outline the training. Its motif might be condensed in the maxim: "Give them what they must know and leave out the eyewash."

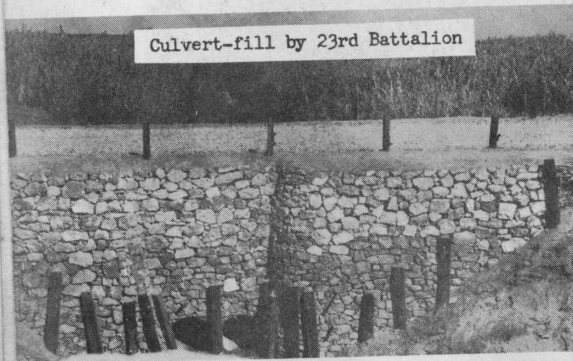
The training was hung on three main pegs: Bailey bridges, mines, roads and culverts. Adequate time was set aside for familiarization with timber bridging, treadway bridging, water purification, quarry operation. There was emphasis on night work. Commissioned and non-commissioned instructors were pulled from organic Group personnel, and additional NCO's were loaned by neighboring Corps engineer units. Specialist training got underway immediately---compressor and shovel operators and demolition men went to work in existing quarries; fledgling dozer pilots worked with old-timers on day-to-day operational jobs up the line; grader men sat with grader men and learned by doing. Water personnel slept at water points. German and Allied land mines were covered thoroughly but simplicity was the byword. Unnecessary and involved technical study was avoided, rare mines dwelt upon but briefly. The mine detector was carefully studied. In road maintenance the old adage of "Water off, rock on," was emphasized as being dull but true. The great lesson of how to save your men by using your machines properly was taught with the diligence it deserves. The new engineers absorbed the information with incredible speed. Before two weeks of training had passed, they had executed two complex bridge-strengthening and pier-reinforcing jobs that would ordinarily come within the province of skilled Army engineers.



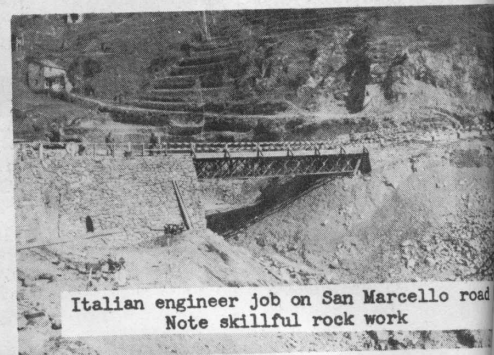
Removing infantry support  
rafts on Leghorn canal



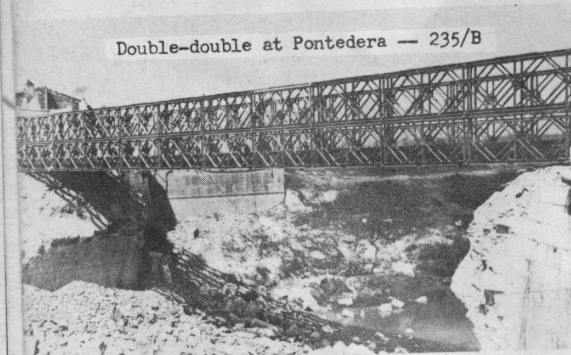
"The Christmas Bridge"  
over the Serchio



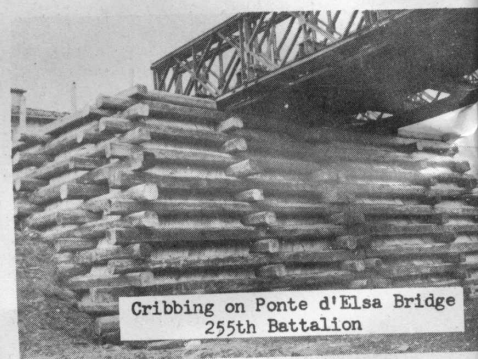
Culvert-fill by 23rd Battalion



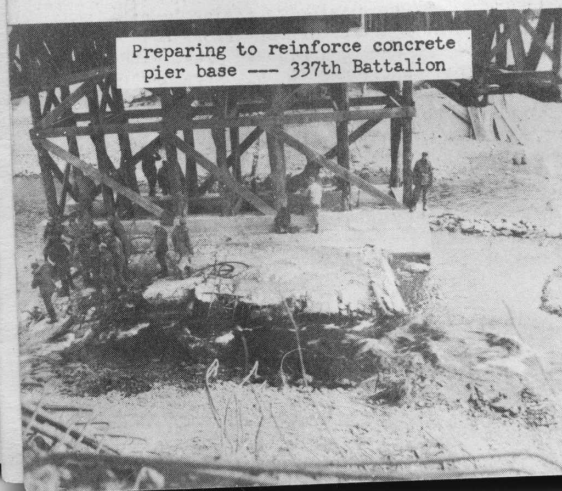
Italian engineer job on San Marcello road  
Note skillful rock work



Double-double at Pontedera — 235/B



Cribbing on Ponte d'Elsa Bridge  
255th Battalion

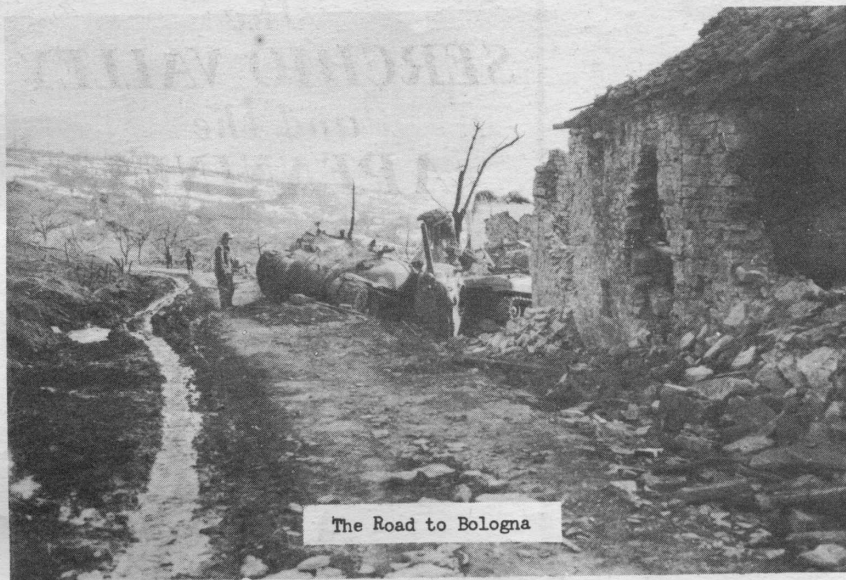


Preparing to reinforce concrete  
pier base — 337th Battalion



German PW's taken near Spigno





The Road to Bologna

In mid-January the Group moved to Lucca. One of the new battalions, the 255th, went to the Porretta sector for line work. The other, the 337th, took over the central Serchio area. The veteran 235th stepped back for a well-deserved rest. The 23rd Italian Battalion remained on the line and improved the Bagni di Lucca--San Marcello road net.

On the mild and sunny afternoon of February 15, on an airstrip north of Lucca, the entire 235th and representative companies of the other battalions assembled in a last review for Colonel Clark. He was reluctantly leaving to fill a new assignment in Washington. It was at the same time a review in honor of the new Group Commander, Colonel John O. Colonna. Perhaps it was a coincidence that our first glimpse of him should have been on an airstrip, for he is the foremost aviation engineer in the Mediterranean Theater.

In March the young and eager 10th Mountain Division, new in Italy and spoiling for a fight, crouched for a spring at the stout enemy defenses hinged on Mt. Belveders. When these boys struck they struck hard and smashed through to take five mountains in a row, including Belvedere and Della Torracchia. In the overall picture this was good, but in the push the 235th, back on the line, took severe casualties and lost many key men within a space of a few days.

A booby-trapped German box mine in a mountain bypass killed 3 men of "C" Company. Two days later one round of heavy mortar on a Bailey bridge they were building killed 4 and wounded 16 engineers of Company "A". Twenty-four hours later "C" Company had a man killed by shellfire while working on a road, and then an officer of "B" Company was struck in the back by shrapnel in a bypass. The 337th in the same week hospitalized two men who fell from the aerial tramway the battalion is operating, plus another man seriously wounded by shellfire in the bivouac area.

The recent casualties are mentioned, not for drama, but merely to set down the facts. The Italian campaign is tough and grinding. In these mountains it is a doughboy's war and an engineer's war and they are the ones who will win it, mile by mile. As this is written, our patrols are in the town of Vergato, and Vergato is 20 kilometers from Bologna.

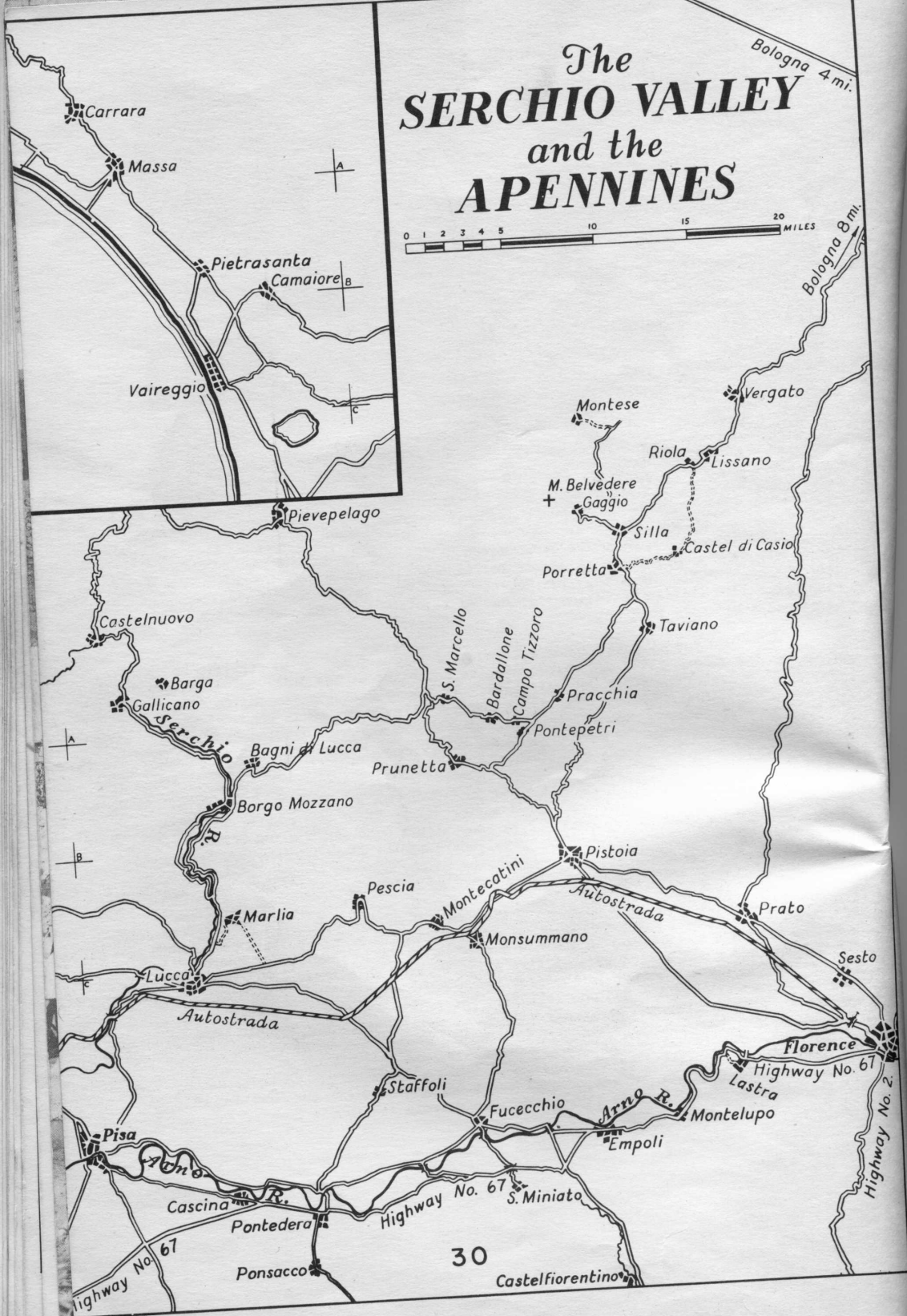


# The SERCHIO VALLEY and the APENNINES

0 1 2 3 4 5 10 15 20 MILES

Bologna 4 mi.

Bologna 8 mi.



DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION


(GO #95, Hc 5A, 5 June 44)

THE 48TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy, during the period 15 December to 21 December 1943. This unit was assigned the mission of converting the railroad between Mignano and Mount Lungo, Italy, into a two-way highway. The road contained twelve obstacles ranging from craters to destroyed bridges and constituted a high exposed defile, open throughout to direct German observation and observed artillery fire, which was accurate, continuing and concentrated, on all work parties and equipment. Obstacle sites, not accessible by road, were reached by routes opened and constructed through mine and trip-wire fields flanking the railroad. The road was constructed to a point two hundred yards in advance of infantry outposts under hostile small arms and automatic weapons fire. On two occasions the officers and men of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion carried on their work continuously for 36 hours, with highest determination and spirit. Despite all obstacles, the inclement weather, and intense artillery fire, they completed their hazardous mission as ordered. The performance of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion was an inspiration to other units, and reflects the highest traditions of the Corps of Engineers.

THE 235TH ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy, during the assault on Mount Porchia, Italy, between 4 January and 8 January 1944. The 235th Engineer Combat Battalion was assigned the mission of opening and maintaining axial supply routes for a task force in an assault to capture and occupy an enemy mountain stronghold. This organization not only performed its normal engineering task under heavy fire from a fiercely resisting enemy, but also attacked as infantry during bitter fighting to take the objective. On the right flank of the task force the engineers eliminated two obstacles of blown bridges to enable armor to move forward in support of the infantry attack. These obstacles were overcome in the face of intense enemy small arms, machine gun, mortar and artillery fire. Twice during the operation it was necessary for the engineers to attack and drive the enemy from strongly fortified positions in order to clear routes for the advance of armor. The courage, determined spirit and sustained combat efficiency displayed by members of the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion were vital factors in the accomplishment of the task force mission and reflect the finest traditions of the Corps of Engineers of the Army of the United States.

# CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR

(GO #56 WD Washington 12 July 1944)



**SERGEANT JOSEPH C. SPECKER,** Co. C 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, United States Army. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty, in action involving actual conflict. On the night of 7 January 1944, Sergeant Specker, with his company, was advancing up the slope of Mt. Porchia, Italy. He was sent forward on reconnaissance and on his return he reported to his company commander the fact that there was an enemy machine gun nest and several well placed snipers directly in the path and awaiting the company. Sergeant Specker requested and was granted permission to place one of his machine guns in a position near the enemy machine gun. Voluntarily and alone he made his way up the mountain with a machine gun and a box of ammunition. He was observed by the enemy as he walked along and was severely wounded by the deadly fire direct at him. Though so seriously wounded that he was unable to walk, he continued to drag himself over the jagged edges of rock and rough terrain until he reached the position at which he desired to set up his machine gun. He set up the gun so well and fired so accurately that the enemy machine gun nest was silenced and the remainder of the snipers forced to retire, enabling his platoon to obtain their objective. Sergeant Specker was found dead at his gun. His personal bravery, self-sacrifice, and determination were an inspiration to his officers and fellow soldiers. Entered the service from Odessa, Missouri.



DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS

T/5 BEN SANTJER, (Posthumously), 48th Engineer Combat Battalion. For extraordinary heroism in action. In the attack on Mt. Porchia, Italy, on the night of 7 January 1944, T/5 Santjer repeatedly exposed himself to draw fire away from his advancing comrades. Although twice wounded by enemy grenades, he continued to fire on the enemy, shooting three and bayoneting a fourth. He was killed at close range by machine pistol fire. His courage was an inspiration to his fellow soldiers and in the finest tradition of the military service. Home state: Minnesota.

CAPT WALKER B. SORRELL, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For extraordinary heroism in action. In the battle for Cassino this officer made a foot reconnaissance over unswept minefields in the face of heavy enemy artillery, small arms and mortar fire, to ascertain all possible tank crossings of the flooded Rapido River Valley within the zone of action. The following morning he organized and directed, while under heavy artillery fire, the demolition of two obstacles to clear a route for tanks needed for infantry support. This hazardous task completed, he rode the leading reconnaissance tank over the selected route to assure the tank commander of its feasibility. His efforts were responsible for the success of a combined infantry and tank attack against heavily fortified German positions. This officer's sustained courage and willingness to disregard his own safety to insure the success of the mission provide inspiring examples of the heroic traditions of the Corps of Engineers. Entered military service from Ozark, Alabama.

CAPT ORVILLE O. MUNSON, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion. For extraordinary heroism in action. On the night of 6 January 1944, Capt Munson, (then Lieutenant), commanding a company of combat engineers, led his men through mined and shelled areas to the foot of Mt. Porchia, Italy. During the entire route of march, he acted as the point of the column, and in several instances was far in advance and alone in enemy territory. Coming upon two enemy machine gun nests and drawing fire from them, he extricated his company from danger by leading them in a circular path around the machine guns. At this time he killed one enemy at close range with a submachine gun. Later on the same night, while again acting as point of his column, he encountered an enemy patrol and was captured by them. With a gun at his back he shouted a warning to the rest of his company and prevented their walking into an ambush. At this time a hand grenade went off close by, a fragment striking Lieutenant Munson in the shoulder. With great presence of mind he fell to the ground and feigned death. His captors took his submachine gun and left the area, leaving him for dead. He arose after his captors left, picked up a carbine and captured two prisoners before returning to his company. The courage displayed by Lieutenant Munson prevented the ambush of his company and also enabled them to capture six of the enemy patrol. His performance was in the highest tradition of the Corps of Engineers and of the military service. Entered service from Wessington Springs, South Dakota.

T/5 HERMAN L. CRISUP, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion. For extraordinary heroism in action. During the attack on Mt. Porchia between 6 January and 8 January 1944, T/5 Crisup, a company medic, established an aid station at the foot of the mountain. With his small supply of equipment he treated every casualty brought to him. He and his patients were under constant enemy fire. T/5 Crisup organized litter parties to evacuate the wounded until he himself became a casualty from enemy sniper fire. For almost the entire engagement he was the only aid man in the battle area.

1ST LT HARRY M. THAMES, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion. For extraordinary heroism in action. From 7 January to 9 January 1944 in the assault on Mt. Porchia, Italy, while leading his platoon up the mountain he killed one enemy at point blank range. When his carbine jammed he picked up a discarded rifle and killed two more Germans. The following day he led a scouting party against enemy snipers on the crest of the mountain and personally killed one sniper with an M3 rifle at a range of 400 yards. On two separate occasions he took important messages through mined and shelled areas to his Battalion Commander. Entered military service from Austin, Texas.

SILVER STAR

CAPT THOMAS V. THOMPSON, (Posthumously), 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action. On 7 January 1944, in the vicinity of the railroad junction and the San Vittore Road, Italy, while engaged in an engineering project, Capt Thompson's company was subjected to an intense and sustained artillery barrage. Because of the lack of cover, temporary abandonment of the task was necessary. Realizing the extreme danger, Capt Thompson personally directed small groups through avenues of withdrawal. After repeating this procedure until all his men were removed from the barraged area, he returned with single trucks of gravel and alone supervised the dumping. Upon completion of the mission, as he was leaving the area, this officer was killed by artillery fire. His cool judgment and undaunted courage in the face of extreme danger reflect the finest traditions of the armed forces. Home state: Alabama.

1ST LT WILLIAM J. LONG, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action on the night of 4 January 1944 in the vicinity of San Vittore, Italy. Lieutenant Long directed the successful construction of a tactically important culvert under artillery, mortar and machine gun fire so accurate that bullets passed through the culvert itself. Several men were wounded during the night, including, at the moment the mission was completed, Lieutenant Long. His inspiring leadership during three hours of constant enemy fire exemplified the highest traditions of the military service. Home address: Bessemer, Alabama.

CAPT JOHN H. DRINKWATER, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in the vicinity of Venafro, Italy, 5 November 1943 to 19 November 1943. Capt Drinkwater (then 1st Lieutenant) volunteered to lead an engineer combat platoon in the mission of clearing enemy mine fields, most of which were on exposed ground and covered by enemy machine gun, mortar and artillery fire. The work had to be done in daylight and speed was essential. The enemy repeatedly laid down heavy artillery fire on the mine field making it necessary for the platoon to take cover. Whenever the shelling became too intense Capt Drinkwater sent his platoon back and with one volunteer continued to remove the mines. At one time, screened by only one infantry platoon, Capt Drinkwater went ahead five miles in front of the troops main position to gap a mine field directly in front of the German lines. During these operations, which took place in broad daylight, he and his platoon were subjected to intense enemy machine gun, mortar and artillery fire and were continuously being driven from their task. Captain Drinkwater's actions were characterized by complete disregard for personal safety, and his skill and courage in removing these minefields made it possible for our infantry to attack and gain important positions. Capt Drinkwater's gallant acts reflect great credit upon him and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered military service from Greenwich, Connecticut.

SGT HENRY J. PAQUIN, 43th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in the vicinity of Mt. Porchia, Italy. On the morning of 7 January 1944, while crossing a stream, one of the men of Sergeant Paquin's platoon stepped on an S-mine. Seeing that the medical aid man was busy some distance away, and heedless of the danger from other mines in the area, Sergeant Paquin made his way to the injured man and dragged him from the stream. He administered first aid, severed the man's dangling foot and applied tourniquets to both legs. He then assigned a litter detail before rejoining his platoon. All this was done under severe mortar fire from the nearby hill. Sergeant Paquin's great courage and presence of mind undoubtedly saved the life of the injured soldier. Home address: Iron Mountain, Michigan.

T/5 STEVE J. MARCON, 43th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action. In an assault on Mt. Porchia, Italy, T/5 Marcon was one of the first of the American troops to reach the crest of the mountain. During the advance, he constantly shouted encouragement to the troops following him. Without rest, the following day, he relieved many of the outpost guards and made many trips under artillery fire for water for those holding the mountain. (remainder of citation unavailable)

2ND LT GEORGE W. REED (Then Corporal), 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action on the night of 4 January 1944 in the vicinity of San Vittore, Italy. The 235th Engineer Combat Battalion had the mission of facilitating the passage of tanks up Highway 6 to support the 6th Armored Infantry in its attack on Mt. Porchia. Cpl Reed volunteered to accompany his platoon officer on a reconnaissance patrol to ascertain the position of the forward elements of our infantry. While proceeding up highway 6 the patrol was subjected to German machine-gun, rifle-grenade and mortar fire and was under steady artillery pounding. The patrol stationed itself in a small house to return the fire and while here Cpl Reed heard the cries of a wounded soldier in a field. He immediately left the comparative safety of the house and brought in the wounded infantryman although the field was blanketed with artillery fire at this time. As his patrol started to leave the house it was attacked by a strong German patrol using machine pistols and grenades. Cpl Reed and his platoon officer elected to evacuate the wounded infantryman regardless of enemy fire and then held the German patrol at bay with hand grenades and tommy guns until help arrived and the patrol could successfully evacuate its position. While voluntarily on a similar reconnaissance mission a short time later, Cpl Reed covered his patrol's withdrawal with tommy gun and hand grenades. When his platoon was assigned the mission of clearing mines within 50 yards of enemy positions Cpl Reed volunteered to lead a three man patrol and act as a roving outpost. During this period he engaged a German patrol and succeeded in holding them at bay. Cpl Reed's sustained courage and willingness to engage the enemy was a great factor in the successful completion of his platoon's mission. Entered service from Quincy, Illinois.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ANDREW J. GOODPASTER, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action. On the morning of 8 January 1944, when his Battalion was acting as Infantry in the assault on Mt. Porchia, he was requested by the Commanding Officer of the 6th Armored Infantry to advise upon the organization of the ground for defense. While engaged in this mission, he and one of the infantry battalion commanders were wounded by the same shell. Lt Col Goodpaster rendered first aid to the infantry officer and saw to his evacuation; then, in spite of his wound, he searched for and found the next in command, and spent several hours with him going over the defensive situation before he made his way back for treatment. His action was above and beyond the call of duty and was in the finest tradition of the Corps of Engineers and of the military service. Entered service from Granite City, Illinois.

SERGEANT THEODORE J. PROCTOR, New York, N.Y. SERGEANT EWING P. WRAY, Humboldt, Tenn. PRIVATE JOSEPH E. CHARLEBOIS, Glens Falls, N.Y. PRIVATE C.D. MURRELL, Kingsport, Tenn. SERGEANT EDWARD E. WENZEL, Iron Mountain, Mich. PFC JOSEPH R. ST. JOHN, Glens Falls, NY. All of the 235th Battalion

For gallantry in action. On the night of 12 December 1943, in the vicinity of San Pietro Infine, Italy, these enlisted men moved forward through muddy, rough terrain under constant mortar and machine-gun fire from the enemy, in constant danger from enemy patrols, and proceeded to blow, by explosives, numerous gaps in stone walls which were obstructing the field of fire of our tanks. Due to their specific action, our tanks were able to bring effective fire upon the enemy and successfully complete their mission. Their action was an inspiration to all who observed their feat and was in the finest tradition of the United States military service.

SGT RICHARD F. STERN, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action. On 7 January 1944, during an assault on Mt. Porchia, Italy, Sgt Stern and other members of his company were pinned down by enemy machine and rifle fire. A complete enemy encirclement seemed imminent. Sgt Stern stood erect in full view of an enemy machine gun nest, and addressing the Germans in their own language, demanded that they surrender. The machine gunners refused and resumed their fire, but Sgt Stern stood erect under fire until ordered to take cover. Later in the engagement the forward elements of the company were ambushed, and several men were wounded. Seek-



SILVER STAR (cont'd)

ing once more to save the situation by ruse, Sgt Stern ran into the center of the contested area, shouting to the enemy and to his own men to cease fire. He then persuaded the enemy troops that they were surrounded, and further resistance was useless. At this point, six members of the ambush party dropped their weapons and surrendered. Sgt Stern's coolness and presence of mind under fire enabled his company to continue its advance.

CAPT DIXIE E. SNIDER and T/5 JAMES W. MacDOWELL, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action in the vicinity of Mignano, Italy. When two enlisted men were wounded by enemy shell fire, Captain Snider, the Battalion Surgeon, was informed of the incident and went out to assist the injured man, taking T/5 James W. MacDowell, who volunteered to go with him. They drove to the site in a jeep in spite of the fact that observed enemy artillery fire was brought to bear on any vehicle on the road. While treating the wounded man at least eight shells burst within 40 yards of them. The casualties were loaded into an ambulance, and as the ambulance drove away four more shells burst within ten yards of the vehicle. Their heroic actions did the maximum that could be done toward saving the lives of the wounded men.

SERGEANT FRED L. HUGHES, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action. On the night of 4 January 1944, the first platoon of Company "A", 235th Engineer Combat Battalion was ordered forward to repair a blown culvert in the vicinity of the cross road of highway 6 and the San Vittore road. This culvert was of high tactical value to allow for the passage of the 753rd Tank Battalion. Sergeant Fred L. Hughes was ordered forward of the culvert with a detail of men to form the protection of the right flank of the working detail. Immediately after establishing his position he was attacked by a large patrol of German infantry. He successfully directed the fire of his machine guns in such a manner as to prevent the patrol from reaching the culvert. Although seriously wounded he continued to direct the fire of his men until such time as he was relieved. His conduct and leadership was of great inspiration to the men under his command and in the highest traditions of the service. Entered the service from Albany, Georgia.

CAPT MARK REARDON (then 1st Lieutenant), 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. During the period January 7-9, 1944, inclusive, for two days and two nights, Lt Reardon was in great measure responsible for the successful taking and holding of the center portion of Mt. Porchia, Italy. Commanding two platoons of the company, he organized and led the initial assault line up the center of the mountain. The advance was made in full view of the enemy. Reaching the summit the first of his group, he directed fire and encirclement against enemy personnel and positions in the rocks. He killed two enemy at a range of 20 yards before his carbine jammed. For the remainder of the night he was unarmed but continued to direct the fire fight, leaving the summit early in the morning only to obtain a weapon. Later in the engagement he established and maintained defense lines along both left and right flanks of the mountain and shot one sniper with an M1 rifle at a range of 200 yards. Throughout the engagement Lieutenant Reardon's leadership and courage were in the highest tradition of the Corps of Engineers and of the military service. Entered service from New York, New York.

PRIVATE LOUIS L. STOPEK, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. On the afternoon of 8 January 1944, several German planes were seen approaching the town of Mignano. Pvt Stopek proceeded immediately to his half-track and commenced firing at these planes. Bombs were dropped within twenty yards of him and he continued to fire his machine gun with extreme accuracy until his half-track received a direct hit and he was severely wounded. His disregard for his own personal safety and his complete devotion to duty in the face of extreme danger were of the highest traditions of the service. Entered the service from Lincoln, Nebraska.

1ST SGT DONALD F. BUCKLEY, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action. In the vicinity of Mt. Porchia, Italy, Sgt Buckley was with the leading elements of his company in its attack on Mt. Porchia when two platoons became separated from the main body. Passing through harassing enemy fire without regard to his own safety, he acted on his own initiative and led the two platoons safely back. Upon return to the leading elements of his company and finding that his commander had proceeded to an advanced base to await further orders, Sgt Buckley again took the initiative to lead the whole company through another mine field to their objective. While passing through the field, an S-mine was set off injuring Buckley and four others. In spite of his own wounds, Sgt Buckley recrossed the field to report the position of the wounded man to a company officer and report a safe path through the field. As a result of his actions, the men were treated without loss of life, and the company accomplished its mission. Home address: Marion, Ohio.

SERGEANT CARL E. PFEIFFER, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. On the night 4 January 1944 Sgt Pfeiffer's company was ordered forward to clear mines in the vicinity of route 6 and St Vittore road. During the clearing operation enemy machine gun fire was directed on their immediate right flank. Sgt Pfeiffer, who was leading the protecting squad on the right flank directed his assistant squad leader to take over command. Sgt Pfeiffer proceeded forward with grenades and his submachine gun to draw fire from his squad. The fire became so intense that the company was forced to withdraw and take defense positions. Sergeant Pfeiffer continued in pursuit of his mission until cut off from his unit and when he finally withdrew on the morning of the 5th January 1944, Sergeant Pfeiffer was believed to be missing. He was later found by an officer of this command who returned with him to Battalion CP. Sergeant Pfeiffer had spent several hours searching for his squad and company commander which he believed had been trapped by the evening attack. His disregard for his own safety and great concern for the men under his command were in the highest traditions of the service. Home address: St Louis County, Missouri.

SERGEANT LEONARD OLSON, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry on Mt. Porchia, Italy. In the forefront of an assault up the center of the mountain on the night of 7 January 1944, Sergeant Olson reached the summit among the first of his group. He immediately engaged in a fire fight with enemy personnel at point blank range. Using an M1 rifle, he killed six and wounded several more. He did not cease to operate his rifle until wounded in the face and chest by fragments of a stick grenade. His courage and coolness were an inspiration to all who were with him and in great measure responsible for the capture of the summit in this sector. Entered military service from Aikin, Minnesota.

PRIVATE CHARLES K. SEIBERT, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion for gallantry in action. On the night of 4 January 1944, the first platoon of Company "A", 235th Engineer Combat Battalion was ordered forward to repair a blown culvert in the vicinity of the cross road of highway 6 and the St Vittore road. This culvert was of high tactical value to allow for the passage of the 753rd Tank Battalion. Private Seibert, acting in the capacity of machine-gunner, was ordered to the position of the right flank of the culvert, to protect the working party. His emplacement was attacked by a patrol of German infantry and he was seriously wounded. Despite a machine gun wound in his neck he continued to fire his gun until he became unconscious from loss of blood. His disregard for personal danger in the face of the enemy are in the highest traditions of the service. Entered the service from Augusta, Kansas.

1ST LT COURTNEY P. HOLLAR, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. In an assault on Mt Porchia, Italy, when his company was ambushed by an enemy patrol, 1st Lt Hollar led its successful withdrawal. After the company commander was wounded, Lt Hollar assumed command and remained in the assault for two days and a night, continually disregarding his own safety to walk up and down his lines reassuring his men. When officially relieved, he was the last Engineer officer to leave the summit of Mt. Porchia. Entered service from Shippensburg, Pa.

PRIVATE BENJAMIN J. SPERDINI, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action on the afternoon of 4 January 1944 in the vicinity of St Vittore, Italy. Company "A" of the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion was ordered to withdraw from its position in the vicinity of Route 6 and the St Vittore road. During the withdrawal, the area was subjected to intense enemy artillery fire, severely wounding several men of the company. Pvt Sperdini disregarded completely his personal safety and returned to remove them from the direct line of fire. While shells burst within twenty feet of him, he removed three wounded men to a position where they were comfortable and protected from fire. Private Sperdini then withdrew to obtain the necessary medical aid, and returned to the site with men and litters. He personally directed removal of the wounded to a jeep out of the line of fire. His resourcefulness and complete disregard for his own personal safety were the primary factors in saving the lives of the men concerned. His action was in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service. Home address: New York, NY.

CAPT JOHN W. KATZBECK, (then 1st Lieutenant), 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry on Mt. Porchia, Italy. From January 7-9 inclusive, for two days and two nights, Lt Katzbeck commanded his company in the taking and holding of Mt. Porchia, and though injured, he refused to be evacuated until the mission was successfully terminated. After bringing the entire company through mined areas to the base of the mountain under heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire without a casualty, he immediately directed his men in a successful assault which captured the summit of the mountain and held it all the following day and night. On January 8, 1944, though injured in the spine by mortar fire, he refused evacuation and remained with his company. Unable to walk, he directed the protection of both flanks of the mountain against the threat of strong counter-attack for a night and a day. Only when his unit was officially relieved did he leave the scene, and then after organizing the entire column of march. His devotion to duty and performance under fire were in the highest tradition of the Corps of Engineers and of the military service. Entered service from Chicago, Illinois.

T/5 OTHA D. BRIGANCE, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. On the afternoon of 7 January 1944, in the vicinity of San Vittore, he was driving the vehicle occupied by his company commander. The officer ordered T/5 Brigance to remove his vehicle from the area which was being subjected to mortar fire. Shortly after his withdrawal the company commander and a platoon Sgt were killed by enemy artillery fire. Neither infantry nor medical units could proceed forward to the site of the shelling. With complete disregard to his personal safety, T/5 Brigance went forward under heavy fire to ascertain the death of his company commander. His exemplary action was in the finest tradition of the service. Entered the service from Portland, Tenn.

\*1ST LT MAXWELL V. JONAH, Newtonville, Mass.

1ST LT ALFRED L. KINCER, Bowie, Tex.

1ST LT FRANCIS X. BUCKLEY, Philadelphia, Pa.

SGT THOMAS GOOGOO, Fresno, Calif.

SGT FLORIAN B. SCHREINER

SGT ROBERT L. OVERCASH

CPL SANFORD M. TOLCHINSKY

(All of the 48th Engr (C) Battalion)

For gallantry in action. All of the above men were together in the attack on Mt. Porchia, being among the first to reach their summit of the mountain under enemy mortar and small arms fire. Their company had been called from engineer construction work to act as infantry in the attack. They held the positions they had attained for two days and two nights under intense enemy fire. Their courage and determination aided materially in the successful capture of the vital terrain feature.

CAPT EDMOND N. SOVINE, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. On the night of 4 January 1944 in the vicinity of San Vittore, Italy, Capt Sovine volunteered to lead a reconnaissance patrol to ascertain the position of forward infantry elements during the attack on Mount Porchia. Displaying exceptional courage and inspiring leadership he fought off determined enemy interference and returned with the desired information. When his patrol was threatened with capture, he covered its withdrawal and aided in the evacuation of a wounded soldier. Subsequently he



SILVER STAR (cont'd)

was given the mission of clearing mines for a tank assembly area within 50 yards of enemy infantry. Again under fire from all types of weapons he accomplished the task. The manner in which Captain Sovine performed these deeds exemplifies the highest standards of conduct on the part of an officer of the United States Army. Home address: Tenafly, New Jersey.

SGT FRANCIS J. BRAHMER, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. In the taking of Mt. Porchia, during the assault, Sgt Brahmer's platoon was pinned down near its objective by enemy machine-gun fire. Sgt Brahmer set up his own weapon and by concentrating fire on the opposing nest, succeeded in silencing it. His platoon then advanced to the objective. Sgt Brahmer was later given the responsibility of placing and maintaining automatic weapons on one entire flank of the hill. He did this successfully for two nights and two days. His competence and coolness did much to calm the men of the company throughout the trying period of the attack. Home State: Wisconsin.

S/SGT VIRGIL W. TRELOAR, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. In the assault on Mt. Porchia, Sgt Treloar was a key man in taking and holding the summit of the mountain for two days and two nights. He organized the defense of one flank of the hill and held it against two counterattacks. Later he voluntarily acted as a reconnaissance scout alone under sniper fire. His courage and skill were in keeping with the highest traditions of the army. Entered service from Madison, S.D.

S/SGT BLANCHARD O. OLSON, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. Near Mt. Porchia, Italy, on the night of 6 January 1944, the forward elements of S/Sgt Olson's company were held up by fire of a German patrol. Sgt Olson crept to within twenty yards of the patrol and attempted to open fire with his carbine. His carbine failed and he was wounded twice. In spite of his wounds he guided a company officer who had been wounded in the face to an aid station. (Complete citation not available)

SGT RUSSELL DEBOER, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. During an assault on Mt. Porchia, Sgt. Deboer constantly exposed himself to mortar and small arms fire as he passed up and down the lines encouraging his men. His skillful placing of his troops on the line undoubtedly saved many casualties during the assault. (Complete citation not available)

S/SGT JESS W. PATTERSON, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action on the night of 16-17 January 1944. Sgt Patterson was in charge of a platoon engaged in building a Bailey Bridge on Route 6 near Mr. Trocchio, Italy. During construction of the bridge, the site was subjected to accurate, harassing enemy artillery fire. Between the hours of 2300 and 0200, a total of fifty-eight large caliber shells, believed to be 170mm, landed within a radius of one hundred yards of the site, most of them within fifty yards. The panel-carrying parties were endangered constantly because in dispersing to escape shrapnel the panels, which will not stand by themselves and weigh 600 pounds, would fall on the members of the party and injure them. On several occasions Sgt Patterson ordered these men to fall to the ground and himself stood and supported the panel to prevent it from falling on them. Sgt Patterson's disregard for his own safety, and his sustained courage set an admirable example for his men, and provided the inspiration necessary for the accomplishment of the construction of the bridge. His action was in the highest tradition of the armed forces and of the Corps of Engineers. Entered the service from Cobutta, Georgia.

CPL LOUIS G. GONZALES, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. On the night of 21 March 1944, in the vicinity of Cassino, Italy, an enemy artillery barrage inflicted many casualties within a working party constructing a Bailey Bridge across the Rapido River. In spite of the intense shelling, Cpl Gonzales, a medical aid man, administered first aid and assisted in the evacuation of the wounded. Although he was himself wounded by shrapnel, Cpl Gonzales continued to per-

SILVER STAR (cont'd)

form his work until all the wounded had been treated. His courage and devotion to duty under enemy fire reflect the highest traditions of the military service. Home address: New York, N.Y.

CAPT JACK A. WITT, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. On the night of 1 February 1944, Capt (then 1st Lt) Jack A. Witt volunteered to lead a seven man patrol into the outskirts of Cassino, which was being strongly defended by the enemy, in an effort to mine the path of a German SP gun which was giving our tanks considerable trouble. In the blackness and confusion of the night the patrol found itself in an enemy minefield behind German lines. Realizing the extreme danger his patrol was in, due to these mines and German infantry, Capt Witt elected to continue forward alone in order to secure additional required information. In spite of heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire, Lt Witt returned after having operated for approximately six hours in enemy territory. His information was of great value to the forthcoming operation since he had located several minefields, blown bridges and flooded areas. Lt Witt's disregard for his own safety and high sense of duty reflects great credit upon the Corps of Engineers and is in keeping with the finest traditions of our armed forces. Entered the service from Edina, Mo.

1ST LT DALLAS R. LYNCH, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. On the night of 1 February 1944, Lt Lynch volunteered to lead a four man reconnaissance patrol into known enemy territory in order to clear mines for an alternate tank crossing on the Rapido River. Proceeding to enemy lines, Lt Lynch came under heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire and upon infiltrating into German positions was subjected to heavy machine gun fire. Lt Lynch found a possible tank crossing and immediately began to clear mines, although he realized the precariousness of the situation and the difficulty of finding trip wires in the darkness. He had cleared approximately 200 feet of mines when he tripped a wire and exploded a personnel mine which wounded him severely in the leg. Disregarding his own personal safety, he ordered his men to take cover and remain quiet as he was afraid the Germans would investigate the noise. Only when it became apparent that his patrol would not be attacked would he allow himself to be evacuated. The courage, leadership and bravery displayed by Lt Lynch was an inspiration to all who had knowledge of his deed and is in the finest tradition of the United States Army. Entered the service from Sapulpa, Okla.

SGT JOHN F. ARLEDGE, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. On 21 March 1944, while Sgt Arledge was constructing a Bailey Bridge in the vicinity of Cassino, Italy, the enemy subjected his working party to a concentrated artillery barrage. Sgt Arledge assisted in administering first aid to several wounded men. The working party was unable to complete its task due to heavy losses and had to abandon three trucks at the bridge site. In order to evacuate the wounded, Sgt Arledge volunteered to bring one of the trucks out of the shelled area. Working over difficult terrain under intense fire, he completed his task, thereby saving lives and at the same time retrieving critically needed equipment. His action was in the highest traditions of the military service. Home address: Alexandria, Louisiana.

T/5 HOWARD V. DARTT, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. In May 1944 near Terracina, Italy, Corporal Dartt had parked his vehicle when an urgent message was handed him for the officer he was driving. The officer had gone forward, so Corporal Dartt went in search of him, crawling through intense mortar, sniper and machine-gun fire to the location where he believed the officer to be. Finding that his commander had started back to the vehicle in a tank, Corporal Dartt returned through the fire, followed the tank, and delivered the message as the officer was dismounting. Home address: Chicago, Illinois.

LT COL ALLEN F. CLARK, JR., 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for gallantry in action. On the afternoon of 22 May 1944, in the vicinity of Terracina, Italy, upon learning that reconnaissance and tank elements were unable to advance along the road that provides the only means of access to the town of Terracina, Lt Col Clark personally went forward on reconnaissance. He found the road blocked by two craters,

SILVER STAR (cont'd)

and was informed by reconnaissance troops that they were unable to advance because of small arms and mortar fire. He went to the nearest bull-dozer operator at the lead of the tank column and led him to the craters. He then went forward with the bull-dozer to assist and direct the operation and lend moral support to the driver. After filling the first crater, the driver started to work on the second when the bull-dozer was momentarily immobilized by small arms fire. He made the driver take cover. Another bull-dozer came forward at that time and completed the job. As the work was finished the entire area was subjected to intense enemy small arms and mortar fire. Lt-Col Clark called to a tank and effected the evacuation of the two drivers. The outstanding leadership and courage displayed by this officer under these hazardous conditions are worthy of the highest commendation and exemplify the finest traditions of the military service. Entered the military service from Bridgewater, Mass.

COLONEL KINGSLEY S. ANDERSSON, 1108th Engineer Combat Group, for gallantry in action on the night of 4 June 1944, in Rome, Italy. Acting as engineer for the commander of the First Special Service Force, Col Andersson entered Rome with this task group, which had for its mission the seizure of five bridges over the Tiber. The advance party of seven men engaged in a close fire fight with German forces at the Margherita Bridge in the city. Col Andersson killed one of the enemy at close range and later, during the fight, stepped from the shelter of the bridge railing into full view in the middle of the roadway, and called upon the Germans to surrender. By this action he stopped the fight and nine of the enemy threw down their weapons and were captured. Although wounded in the leg and in the shoulder during the engagement, Col Andersson personally worked until dawn inspecting the five bridges to make certain they were not prepared for demolition. His courage and coolness under fire undoubtedly saved several lives and were in the highest traditions of the military service. Entered the service from Ann Arbor, Michigan.

XXX

LEGION OF MERIT

MAJOR HENRY J. WINGER, 1108th Engineer Combat Group, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services. During the period 15 December 1943 to 23 March 1944, Major Winger, as S-3 of the 1108th Engineer Combat Group, and as Commanding Officer of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, displayed superior qualities of initiative and technical ability in support of combat operations in the vicinity of Mignano and Cassino, Italy. At the time indicated, this Group Headquarters had under its control its two organic engineer battalions, the 48th and 235th, plus a company of Italian soldier-laborers. In December, the 48th Engineer Battalion was assigned the task of clearing, grading and bridging a 5-mile stretch of railroad bed northwest of Mignano, and converting it into a motor thoroughfare. The job was done partially under direct enemy observation and totally under artillery fire, and resulted in a considerable number of casualties. Major Winger was on the scene persistently and effectively, greatly facilitating the work of the Battalion Commander and his staff by thorough reconnaissance and liaison work with Group and Corps Headquarters. In addition to the above he was placed in command of the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion from 12 February 1944 to 25 March 1944 when the battalion commander was hospitalized as a result of wounds received in action. Concurrently, the 235th Engineer Battalion was carrying out an equally urgent mission on Highway #6. The opening and maintenance of the road net in this territory, consumed a period of 6 weeks. Major Winger's vigorous and untiring efforts in behalf of the Battalion were again highly contributory to its success. His superior efforts continued throughout the battle for Cassino, and until this Group and its battalions were relieved and sent into rest and reorganization on 23 March 1944. Entered service from Fort Wayne, Indiana.



BRONZE STAR MEDAL

LT COL FRANK J. POLICH, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services from 10 December to 12 December 1943, northeast of Mount Rotundo, Italy. He organized, supervised, and carried to a successful completion the task of constructing a road over which tanks and tank destroyers could be brought to bear direct fire upon San Pietro Infine, thus enabling the successful assault upon this stronghold on 13 December 1943. His reconnaissance was carried out under direct fire of the enemy; his work under extremely adverse conditions of weather; well in advance of the infantry outposts lines. He personally led the tanks and destroyers to their locations, through lanes he had cleared through the minefields, and finished his task in daylight under direct observation of and within about 600 yards of the enemy positions. His determination, courage, and organizational ability, his cheerful and unhesitating work for long hours under adverse conditions made possible the successful completion of his mission. Entered service from Caspian, Michigan.

MAJOR HAROLD E. BOWSHER, 1108th Engineer Combat Group, for meritorious conduct in connection with combat operations. During the period 15 December 1943 to 23 March 1944, Major Bowsher, as Operations Officer of the 1108th Engineer Combat Group displayed superior qualities of initiative and technical ability in support of combat operations in the vicinity of Mignano and Cassino, Italy. At the time indicated, this Group Headquarters had under its control its two organic engineer battalions, the 48th and 235th, plus a company of Italian soldier-laborers. In December, the 48th Engineer Combat Battalion was assigned the task of clearing, grading and bridging a 5-mile stretch of railroad bed northwest of Mignano, and converting it into a motor thoroughfare. The job was done partially under direct enemy observation and totally under artillery fire, and resulted in considerable number of casualties. This officer was on the scene persistently and effectively, greatly facilitating the work of the Battalion Commander and his staff by thorough reconnaissance and liaison work with Group and Corps Headquarters. Many of the tasks he performed could have been delegated, but he preferred to do them himself, and this direct devotion to duty was in large measure responsible for the efficient and rapid completion of the job, which was of vital urgency.

Concurrently, the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion was carrying out an equally urgent mission on Highway 6 and in the contested areas surrounding Mt. Rotundo, Mt. Porchia, Mt. Trocchio and the towns of San Pietro and San Vittore. The opening and maintenance of the road net in this territory, including bridges, culverts and mine clearances, consumed a period of 6-weeks. This officer's vigorous and untiring efforts in behalf of the Battalion were again highly contributory to its success. His work was of a nature singularly lacking in color or opportunities for battle valor, but its importance can be appreciated by a knowledge of the staff work required in a large scale engineer operation involving two combat battalions. This officer worked day and night and without regard for his own physical well being, in the performance of tasks that were in addition to, and beyond the scope of his normal duties. Entered service from Terre Haute, Indiana.

COLONEL KINGSLEY S. ANDERSSON, 1108th Engineer Combat Group, for meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy. From 10 December 1943 to 23 March 1944, from northwest of Mignano to Cassino, Italy, he organized, supervised and guided to a successful conclusion the many varied, difficult and hazardous tasks assigned the 1108th Engineer Combat Group. His determination, energy, courage, and devotion to duty were an inspiration to all who served under him and in no small measure directly responsible for their successful accomplishments. Home address: Ann Arbor, Michigan.

1ST LT RUSSELL M. FINNEGAN, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion. Near Mignano, Italy, from Dec 15-21, 1943, on four successive days and nights he supplied technical direction for the preparation of sites and construction of three Bailey Bridges under the most difficult conditions of construction space, weather, and intense observed artillery fire. Lt Finnegan's drive, determination, skill, technical knowledge, and hard work during continuous long hours were vital to the accomplishment of the tasks in the time allotted. Entered service from Waterloo, Iowa.

BRONZE STAR MEDAL (cont'd)

CAPT WILLIAM A. LESTER, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for meritorious conduct in support of combat operations. Northwest of Mignano, Italy, between 15 December and 21 December 1943, Capt Lester was assigned the tasks of clearing and grading two miles of railroad right-of-way into a high order military road; of reducing 5 major obstacles; and of bridging and building approaches at a stream 48 feet below grade where 275 feet of existing bridge had been destroyed. This work was completed under direct enemy observation and artillery fire. Receiving more than 170 rounds in three days he kept his losses in men and equipment at an absolute minimum. Capt Lester's performance and abilities contributed materially to the splendid accomplishment of his company. Home state: Virginia.

CAPT HOWARD R. MARDIN, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for meritorious conduct in support of combat operations. Northwest of Mignano, Italy, between 15 December and 21 December 1943, Capt Mardin was assigned the difficult and urgent tasks of clearing three major obstacles from a railroad right-of-way, and of clearing and grading one mile of railroad right-of-way into a high order military road, the forward end of the mile being 100 yards beyond our infantry outposts. His skill in handling especially attached heavy equipment and organizing his men led his company to the completion of the task in the time allotted. Home state: Pennsylvania.

CAPT JOHN W. KATZBECK, 48th Engineer Combat Battalion, for meritorious conduct in connection with combat operations. Between 15 December and 22 December 1943, Capt Katzbeck displayed extraordinary qualities of force and leadership in performing hazardous, difficult, and urgent engineer work northwest of Mignano, Italy. He was assigned the tasks of bridging a 103 foot gap with grade 48 feet above water level, of clearing and rough grading 3 miles of railroad right-of-way into a military road under observed enemy artillery fire, and of making passable in one day a demolished stone arch culvert 69 feet wide with water level 60 feet below grade. Because of his presence on the job under fire, and his skill, vigor and determination, the task was completed in the time allotted. Entered service from Chicago, Illinois.

CAPT EDMOND N. SOVINE, Tenaflly, N.J. 1ST LT VICTOR J. VEGA, Kansas City, Mo., 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action. On the morning of 29 January 1944, the 756th Tank Battalion was unable to cross the Rapido River to assist the infantry because mired vehicles were blocking the roads which had been prepared for the crossing of the tanks. When an alternate route was selected, it was discovered that a concrete footbridge would block tank passage. This bridge was two feet thick, two feet wide and twenty feet long. These officers placed demolition charges expertly and with care, so that the obstructing bridge was completely destroyed. The entire operation was done while the area was pounded by heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire.

S/SGT ARCHIE W. VISNAW, Cedarville, Mich.

CPL KENNETH H. DALE, Joplin, Mo.

CPL WILLIAM E. HALSTEAD, Lincoln, Neb.

T/5 WILBUR F. RICE, Alton, Ill.

T/5 KENNETH L. HOLLINGSWORTH, Hermitage, Mo.

PFC OTTO E. SCHEERER, Kansas City, Mo.

All of the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. On the morning of 29 January 1944 the above named men, each carrying 50 pounds of explosive, with caps and fuses, passed through infantry lines and while under direct enemy mortar and artillery fire, blew a reinforced foot bridge which the Germans had partially destroyed and which was impeding the passage of the 756th Tank Battalion across the Rapido River. Their daring demolition work enabled the armor to cross the river and complete its mission. Their actions were in the highest tradition of the Corps of Engineers and of the military service.

BRONZE STAR MEDAL (cont'd)

CAPT WALKER B. SORRELL, Ozark, Ala.

SGT MACK D. GIBSON, Monroe, La.

T/4 MELVIN D. ROSE, Antioch, Calif

All of the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action. On the night of 21 March 1944 at Cassino, Italy, a working party engaged in the construction of a Bailey Bridge was subjected to an intense and devastating artillery barrage. Due to heavy casualties the company was forced to abandon two dump trucks loaded with bridging material. Later that night despite continued artillery fire, Capt Sorrell, Sergeant Gibson and T/4 Rose voluntarily returned to the bridge site and recovered the trucks. Their action in preventing the loss of critical government property at risk of life is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service.

\*1ST LT ALFRED O. SETTER, Eau Claire, Wis.

1ST LT ROBERT L. BALDRIDGE, Des Moines, Iowa.

Both of the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action on the night of 21 March 1944. Lieutenants Baldrige and Setter were leading platoons which were assigned the mission of constructing a Bailey Bridge near Cassino, Italy. By the use of flares the enemy was able to detect the presence of activity there and subjected the area to heavy artillery fire. The first shell landed in the midst of a group of men killing and wounding several of them. Without regard for their personal safety Lieutenants Setter and Baldrige immediately rushed into the impact area to ascertain the extent of the casualties. Upon arriving they at once began assisting in the administration of first aid to the wounded. As the wounded were taken care of they directed their evacuation to the rear, as they did with the dead in order that the bodies could be properly identified. During all this time the barrage continued, and more were wounded, including Lieutenant Setter, who refused treatment until the others had been cared for. The artillery fire became so intense that the mission could not be completed. The actions of Lieutenants Baldrige and Setter were an inspiration to all who observed their feats, and were in the highest traditions of our armed forces and of the Corps of Engineers.

CAPT HAROLD E. BAKER, Dallas, Tex. 1ST LT LAWRENCE J. GAISSERT, College Park, Ga.  
1ST LT JOHN A. MATULICH, Santa Rosa, Calif. 1ST LT THOMAS L. McDONNELL, Boston, Mass.

All of the 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For meritorious service in support of combat operations. In Italy, from May 19-24, 1944, these officers, members of a combat engineer battalion attached to a cavalry reconnaissance squadron, remained with the advance reconnaissance elements supervising the work of their engineer platoons in constructing numerous by-passes, repairing bridges, neutralizing mined bridges and mine fields. In the drive from Fondi through Terracina to the Anzio Beachhead, these four officers accompanied the advance reconnaissance elements, often under small arms and mortar fire, promptly and accurately estimating the situation that was retarding progress. In the flooded marshes near Terracina they supervised and worked all night in filling in craters and constructing a ponton bridge so the reconnaissance parties could reach the city by morning. They also supervised construction of a by-pass which enabled reconnaissance platoons to proceed onto the Pontine Marshes and this continued progress effected an early contact with the Anzio forces. Their untiring efforts, skill and devotion to duty is worthy of high praise and in keeping with the highest traditions of the armed forces.

CAPT PAUL L. BROSE, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion for gallantry in action. On the night of 4 June 1944, Captain Brose, commanding Company "A", 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, was assigned the mission of constructing a bridge over the Aniene River near Rome, Italy. After making a reconnaissance, Captain Brose led his company and a Bailey Bridge train to the site. While bulldozers were preparing the near shore approach to the bridge, a German patrol opened fire from the far shore. Captain Brose immediately deployed his company and emplaced his weapons to protect the site. At the time infantry support could not be obtained to establish a bridgehead across the river. On the following morning Captain Brose met a French captain commanding an infantry company which was moving up on his right flank. The French officer stated that he could not get across the river as it was not fordable. Captain Brose immediately borrowed some reconnaissance boats and in a combined opera-



BRONZE STAR MEDAL (cont'd)

tion with the French infantry established a bridge head and constructed the bridge across the river. By his persistence and devotion to duty he succeeded in completing his assigned mission in the prescribed time. His initiative and courage were an inspiration to all who observed his work and were in keeping with the highest tradition of the Corps of Engineers. Entered the service from Marion, Kansas.

S/SGT RUFUS J. WILMOTH, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For gallantry in action on the night of 4 June 1944, at Rome, Italy. (Complete citation not available)

XXX

SOLDIER'S MEDAL

CPL FRANK J. REPOVSCH, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For heroism not involving actual enemy conflict. On the night of December 6, 1943 in the vicinity of Presenzano, Italy, a convoy of Company "C", 235th Engineer Combat Battalion, overtook an Italian convoy which was parked at the side of the road. In passing the Italian vehicles, one of the trucks of the Company "C" convoy was caught by the protruding blade of a bulldozer. The blade ripped open the tank on the truck causing a gasoline trail to be left on the road behind the truck. As the convoy of Company "C" stopped, one of the Italian soldiers, in spite of repeated warnings, lit a cigarette and inadvertently threw the match on the trail of gasoline which resulted in a trail of fire between the two convoys. Unhesitatingly and with total disregard for personal injury, Corporal Frank J. Repovsch, who had seized a fire extinguisher in case a fire broke out, stepped into the blazing trail and succeeded in heading it off before it reached the truck with the torn gasoline tank. His prompt and courageous action averted possible injury to the surrounding personnel and saved many valuable government vehicles from probable damage or destruction. Entered the service from Peoria, Illinois.

T/5 VIRGIL R. PRUITT, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For heroism not involving actual enemy conflict. On the night of 6 December 1943, in the vicinity of Presenzano, Italy, T/5 Pruitt was driving a 1/4 ton truck on a convoy of Company "C", 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. As the convoy passed an Italian column, which was parked at the side of the road, a protruding blade on an Italian bulldozer caught the gasoline tank on one of the trucks of Company "C" tearing it open and causing the gasoline to spill on the road. As the convoy of Company "C" stopped, one of the Italian soldiers, in spite of repeated warnings, discarded a lighted match which ignited the trail of gasoline. The conflagration spread immediately and enveloped the front of the vehicle of T/5 Pruitt in flame. Gasoline which had splattered on T/5 Pruitt shoes also caught fire. With great presence of mind and with total disregard of personal injury this soldier entered his vehicle and drove it out of the convoy. He then seized a fire extinguisher and extinguished the fire on his jeep and his feet. By his calmness of mind in a moment of danger, and by his exemplary devotion to duty, he saved a valuable piece of government equipment and removed the danger of fire to the surrounding vehicles and personnel. Entered the service from Peoria, Illinois

T/5 DALTON O. PRICE, 235th Engineer Combat Battalion. For heroism not involving actual enemy conflict. On 27 December 1943, a slide occurred in the rock quarry in the vicinity of Presenzano where T/5 Price was operating a bulldozer. Although warned, in sufficient time, to abandon his machine and get to safety, T/5 Price remained with his bulldozer and tried to pull it out of danger. His calmness, devotion to duty, at risk of life, and his superior manner of handling this valuable piece of equipment, which resulted in only slight damage to the machine, was an inspiration to all who observed his act and upholds the finest traditions of the service. Entered the service from Evansville, Indiana.

PURPLE HEART

235th Battalion

\*Cluster

\*ABRAMS, Dora Pvt  
ALDRIDGE, Clyde B. T/Sgt  
ALLEN, Thomas M. Sgt  
ANGIOLINO, Vincent J. Pvt

BAKER, Harold E. Capt  
BALDRIDGE, Robert L. Lt  
BARTLETT, Paul R. Pvt  
BARTSCH, Edward I. Pfc  
\*BAYES, Harry H. Pfc  
BEATY, Jack S/Sgt  
BERG, Merle L. Pvt  
BOND, Lewis B. Pvt  
BOQUET, Harry J. Pfc  
BOSLEY, Earl E. Cpl  
BOUROS, Peter S. Pfc  
BOYD, Marion F. T/5  
BRUGGHMAN, Arthur J. Cpl  
BUESCHER, August Pfc  
BUONAUTTO, John F. Sgt  
BYLER, Teddy L. Sgt

CALLAHAN, Daniel C. Pvt  
CAMPEST, Saverio Pvt  
CANNON, William C. S/Sgt  
CARDARELLA, Angelo J. Pfc  
CARDINALI, Peter Pfc  
CARHART, William T. Jr. Sgt  
CARIDI, Dominick T. Pvt  
CARILLA, Edward Pvt  
\*CARTER, Eugene Sgt  
CERASO, Guido Pvt  
CERTAIN, Martin H. T/5  
CHAFFIN, Wade Pvt  
\*\*CHARLEBOIS, Joseph E. Sgt  
CHRISMAN, Harold H. Pfc  
CIRILLO, Dominick M. Pfc  
CLAPPER, Carl W. Pfc  
COLLINS, Thomas H. Lt  
CONROY, John J. Jr. Pvt  
\*CUTBIRTH, Louis R. T/5

DALTON, Homer E. Sgt  
DALY, Joseph T. Pvt  
DARTT, Howard V. T/5  
DeGRAVE, Jule Pfc  
DILONARDO, Savino Cpl  
DOPKINS, George S. Sgt  
DUCHESE, John M. Pfc  
DUDAS, Charles Pfc

EAGLE, Theodore Pfc  
EHRLITZ, Louis J. Jr. Pvt  
EICKMEYER, Kenneth H. Lt  
ELSTERMEIER, Bernard H. R. T/5

\*\*ERPENBACH, Alvin V. Sgt  
EVANSON, Donald R. Pfc

FAGG, Roy Sgt  
FONTENOT, Leroy Pfc  
FORD, Donald A. Capt  
FOWLER, Henry U. T/5  
FRANCISCHELLI, August R. T/5  
FRANCISCO, Michael J. Pvt  
FRAZIER, Acey W. Pvt

GAGE, Loren E. Pfc  
GAISSERT, Lawrence J. Lt  
GEHM, Edwin A. Pvt  
GIASI, Vincent M. Pvt  
GONZALES, Louis G. Cpl  
GRAUSO, Michael C. Pfc  
GRAY, Benjamin F. Cpl  
GRAY, Pvt  
GROSSMAN, Leland Sgt  
GRUBER, Francis E. Pvt

HAHN, Harold Cpl  
\*HALLAS, Desmond F. Pfc  
HAMM, Edward R. Pvt  
HARKINS, Joseph J. Pfc  
HENDERSON, Edwin C. T/5  
HENSHAW, Agrey H. Pvt  
HILL, John A. Sgt  
HILLMANN, Donald F. Cpl  
HOLLINGSWORTH, Kenneth T/4  
HOLMES, Frederick S. T/5  
HOWELL, Harlan K. T/5  
HUGHES, Fred L. Sgt  
HULSEY, Arthur M. T/5

\*JAMES, Donald D. Pfc  
JENKINS, David H. Lt  
JENSEN, Sam Sgt  
JERGOVICH, Michael Pfc  
JOHNSON, James L. Pvt

KEETON, Peter Sgt  
KNOTT, Jess F. Cpl  
KOSOWSKI, Edward Pfc

LAMMERS, John G. Jr. Pvt  
LANTZ, Lloyd F. Pfc  
LEVIA, Joseph T/5  
LEWIS, Frederick G. Pvt  
LINK, Russell L. Lt  
LONG, William J. Lt

235th Battalion

\*Cluster

LORENCZ, Julius W. Pfc  
LOSH, William L. Pfc  
LOWE, Leonard M. T/5  
LUCKSHIS, Zigmund J. Pvt  
LYNCH, Dallas R. Lt

MACHONIS, Leonard W. Pvt  
MacINTOSH, John A. Cpl  
\*MARTIN, William G. Sgt  
MATEJKOWSKI, John A. T/5  
McGANN, John M. Lt  
McGEE, Eugene B. Pfc  
McGUIRE, Francis P. Pvt  
McLEOD, Lee T. Lt  
MEHEMANN, Walter J. T/5  
MENEZES, Lloyd G. Pfc  
MERCER, Morris H. T/5  
MIDDAUGH, Mariot W. Pfc  
MILMAN, Charles Sgt  
MONTANARO, Emilio Pvt  
MUNDAY, Charles Cpl  
\*MURRELL, C. D. Pfc  
\*MYERS, George M. Pfc

OBSZEWSKIE, John Sgt  
OSTROWSKI, William Pfc  
OWENS, Eugene R. Lt

PANNACCIULLI, Dominick Pvt  
PATTERSON, Jess S/Sgt  
PENNFEL, Lester R. S/Sgt  
PETERS, Louis E. Sgt  
PETITTI, Ernest Pfc  
PFAFF, Louis H. Pvt  
PHILLIPS, Herman D. S/Sgt  
PILON, Viateur J. Sgt  
POOLE, Fred Pvt  
\*POPE, Gordon A. Maj  
PRICE, Harry Cpl  
PROCTOR, Theodore J. Sgt  
PLUMMER, John A. Sgt

RAGOTSKIE, Harold W. Pfc  
REED, George W. Lt  
REIS, Max I. Lt  
RICHARDSON, Theodore T. Pvt  
RIEMER, Russell E. Cpl  
ROSKOWSKI, Milford T/5  
ROY, Merton L. Sgt

SARUBRI, John P. Pvt  
SAUTER, William T. Pvt  
SAYRE, Virgil W. Cpl  
SEIBERT, Charles K. Pfc  
SEICH, Francis J. T/5  
SETTER, Alfred O. Lt  
\*SHAW, Thomas Cpl  
SIMS, Donald C. Pvt  
SINNING, Fred T/5  
SPALDING, James L. Sgt  
SPERDINI, Benjamin J. Pvt  
SMITH, Ted E. T/4  
SMITH, Dwight W. Pvt  
STARK, Victor Pfc  
St JOHN, Joseph Cpl  
STOPEK, Louis L. Pfc  
STRAUS, Walter F. Pfc  
SWINGLE, Howard R. Pvt  
\*SYVERSTON, Walter N. Pfc

TASSALO, James A. Pfc  
TIMBO, John Pvt  
THOMPSON, Thomas V. Capt  
TRUJILLO, Phillip Pvt  
TRYON, Ranson Pvt

VARADE, William S. Pfc  
VODEHNAL, John E. Pfc

WALSH, Robert Pfc  
WHITWORTH, Jacob R. Pfc  
WILL, William A. Cpl  
WILLIAMS, Ben H. T/4  
WILLIAMSON, George T. Jr. T/5  
WINESETT, Robert A. T/5  
\*WINGARD, Byron T/5  
WITT, Jack A. Capt  
WITTENBERG, Harold Pvt  
WOLFF, Lothar T/4



PURPLE HEART (cont'd)

48th Battalion

(Up to June 15 1944 only)

ANDERSON, James A. Pfc  
BING, Pvt  
BUCKLEY, Donald 1st Sgt  
CRISUP, Herman L. T/5  
EMERSON, Tom Lt  
\*FINNEGAN, Russell M. Lt  
\*GOODPASTER, Andrew J. Lt Col  
GROSSMAN, Leland Sgt  
JACKSON T/5  
JIRAK, William Cpl  
KATZBECK, John W. Capt  
KRATCH, Frank J. Lt  
FRATZ Pvt  
LITTLE, Hugh M. Pvt  
MAKI Pvt  
McCRACKEN Pfc  
METCALF, Warren E. Sgt  
MILKOVICH, Michael J. Pvt  
MILLER Pvt  
\*MUNSON, Orville O. Capt

NELSON, Christopher Pfc  
O'BAR, Lee Pvt  
O'LEARY, John Lt  
OLSON, Blanchard O. S/Sgt  
OLSON, Leonard Sgt.  
O'NEIL T/5  
PAQUIN, Henry Sgt  
PEDRO, Richard G. Pfc  
PRIBYL, Jerome W. Lt  
REARDON, Mark Capt  
SANTJER, Ben T/5  
SCHREINER, Florian B. Sgt  
SEIBOLT, Edward J. Cpl  
SPECKER, Joseph C. Sgt  
SHOFNER, Keith Cpl  
SWIFT, Dean E. Lt Col  
TURNER, Edward Jr. Pvt  
VAN CAMPEN, Richard J. Capt  
WRIGHT, Marvin J. Sgt  
WYKLE, Pvt

1108th Group

\*ANDERSSON, Kingsley S. Col  
CRAYCRAFT, Joseph F. T/4  
WINGER, Henry W. Maj

xxx

HISTORY COMPILED AND WRITTEN  
BY  
CAPT MARK REARDON CE

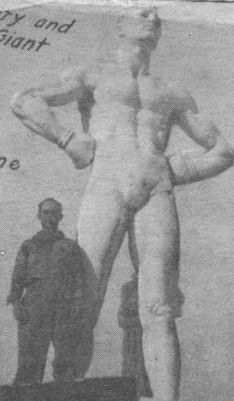
Mr. William Rate  
119 Stover Rd.  
Rochester, NY 14624-4451

Gen. Keyes pins DSC on Capt Munson



Gerry and the Giant

Rome



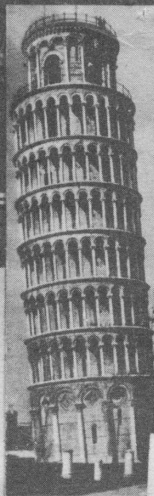
Col. Andersson - S. Sgt. Arledge  
Silver Star



"Bypass to Berlin"



48th Review - Casanova



Pisa



Group Harmony

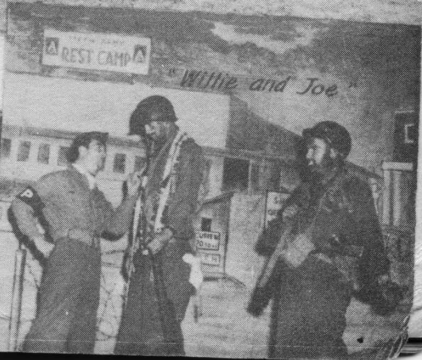
235th Review -

Suviana



"War is hell"

Col. Andersson -  
Gen. Keyes



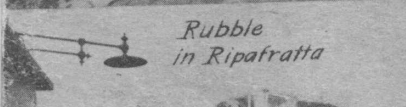
Willie and Joe



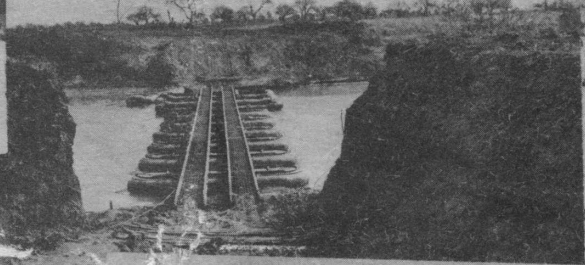
Dummy Bailey  
North of Leghorn



Pneumatic training bridge at Brezza.



Rubble  
in Ripafratta



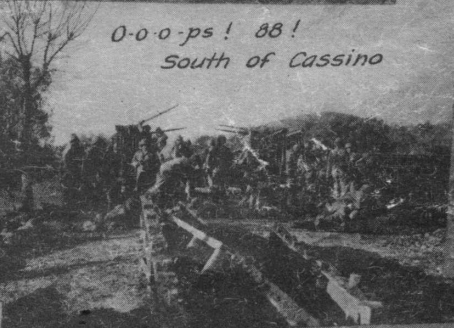
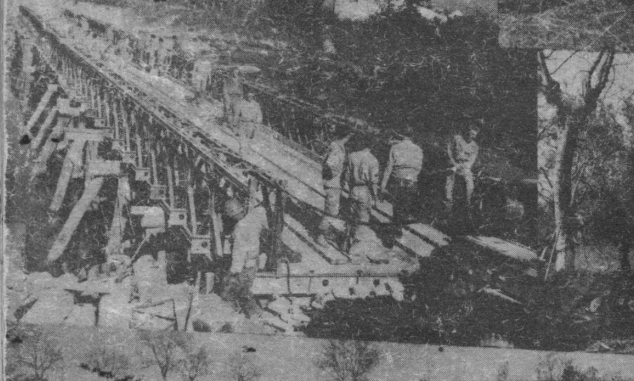
Near Casaglia  
235th



Mine warfare - Africa



Memorial Bridge near Viareggio



O-o-o-ps! 88!  
South of Cassino



Lowering treadway - Brezza



Causeway over Serchio at Vecchiarena