

C O P Y

CONFIDENTIAL
ENGINEER HEADQUARTERS, FIFTH ARMY
A. P. O. #464, U. S. ARMY

314.7-E

GAP/FOB/sk
17 Nov 1944

Subject: Engineer History.
To: Army Engineer, Seventh Army,
A. P. O. #758, U. S. Army.

1. A history of all the Engineer units that have worked with the Fifth Army in the Italian campaign is to be written at this Headquarters. We are quite out of contact with most of the units that have left the Fifth Army and are now part of the Seventh Army, yet the record of their achievements while with us is an integral part of our history.
2. It would be very much appreciated if your Headquarters would contact the units under your operational control who were with the Fifth Army during the Italian campaign and have them prepare and submit through you to our Headquarters a preliminary report covering their activities while here.
3. The reports are to contain as much data as possible pertaining to the following outline:
 - a. Very brief history of the organization before joining the Fifth Army, giving date and place of activation, date of overseas movement, length and location of overseas service, and date of assignment to this Headquarters.
 - b. Information about the units' activities from the time of landing in Italy until NAPLES fell and the VOLTURNO was reached, including the main problems encountered, the plans made to solve these problems, the troops and facilities available (above or below T/O and T/E?), and work accomplished.
 - (1) Road Work.
 - (2) Bridges.
 - (3) Minefields cleared or laid. (estimate number of mines removed)
 - (4) Defenses erected.
 - (5) Hospitals and Depots worked on.
 - (6) Any other work accomplished.
 - c. The phase from the attack on the VOLTURNO to the GARIGLIANO offensive on 11 May 1944, including the winter troubles



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and the ANZIO landing. Give data on same subjects as in "b".

d. The attack on ROME, and up to the time the units were withdrawn. Give data on same subjects as in "b".

4. Any stories with human interest value that can be included will add greatly to the readability of the final account, such as intra-unit or inter-unit rivalries, unusual experiences while working, or recreational ideas that might be novel. Any awards given to units or individuals should be noted.

5. Information is also wanted concerning engineering short cuts or proved improvizations, as well as criticisms of engineering equipment and methods.

6. Mention the main supply problems and any unorthodox manner in which the shortages may have been solved.

7. Did the unit conduct any schools?

8. State casualties and their causes; give combat experience.

9. The unit reports should be written in a narrative style, taking care to make observances on the tactical situation existing at the time. Straight facts and figures may then be summarized at the end of each phase and presented in a tabular form, or any method which is concise and to the units' convenience.

10. Maps, charts, and pictures will add to the interest greatly.

11. It will be appreciated if the units can have these reports compiled and sent by 24 December 1944.

/s/ Frank O. Bowman
/t/ FRANK O. BOWMAN,
Brigadier General, USA,
Army Engineer.

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HEADQUARTERS
343rd ENGINEERS (GS)
APO 464, U.S. Army

5 November 1943

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SUBJECT: Information for Technical Bulletin

TO : The Engineer, Fifth Army, APO 464, U.S. Army

1. Transmitted herewith is a brief campaign history of the Regiment since September 1942 in compliance with letter request, your headquarters, dated 1 November 1943.

RICHARD B. DUNBAR
Colonel, CE,
Commanding

2 Incls.
Incl. 1. Historical Brief
Incl. 2. Photographs

Lt Pommer



BRIEF CAMPAIGN HISTORY
343rd Engr. Regt.
From September 1942 to Present

After finishing the construction of the Regimental camp at Nettled, Oxon England the 343rd Engineers entered into a vast construction program which included hospitals, Quartermaster Depots and warehouses for the various Army services and large bivouac installations for use by American troops. These projects extended from Henley on Thames to Reading and west to Taunton, in southern part of England.

The first battalion embarked for North Africa from Glasgow Scotland arriving at Mers El Kabir 11 Nov. 1942 and immediately started to work clearing the harbor and highways out of this port and the port of Oran of debris, mines, and booby trap installations.

The second battalion and Regimental Headquarters landed in North Africa D plus 28 days and the entire regiment went into bivouac at Canastel, East of Oran. A general construction assignment was given the regiment which included hospitals, providing 6400 bed capacity, railroad rights of way, assembly lines for ordnance equipment, quartermaster warehouses and depots, and diving operations to clear the channel at Oran and Mers El Kabir of sunken craft.

The regiment was assigned to 5th Army early in January 1943 and Company F moved into Oujda Morocco shortly after. In March the regiment less Company F was relieved from assignment to 5th Army and assigned to Eastern Base Section and ordered east into Constantine area. Company A remained at Bou Hanifia to complete a large General Hospital assignment and Companies C and D remained at Chaunzy to complete an extensive prisoner of war camp. These companies returned to the regiment some weeks later at Ouled Rhamoun near Constantine. Operations there included the design and construction of hospitals, quartermaster warehouses and depots and all were finished in record time. The lines of communication into the II Corps area in southern Tunisia were the regiment's responsibility and much highway repair work, clearance of mines from railroad rights of way, bridge construction, and general mine sweeping operations were necessary. As the II Corps moved north and east, the regiment moved along with it and kept all lines of communication open to the rear.

At the close of the Tunisian campaign the regiment went into bivouac at Ferryville and began the task of harbor clearance in this city and Bizerta with diving operations, repair and widening of highways leading into these two cities, construction of 33 landing berths for LCT craft, and facilitated the loading operations for the initial invasion of Sicily. Company F re-joined the regiment immediately prior to embarkation at Bizerta for Palermo. Its work at Oujdahad included the construction and installation of all facilities for the operation of Army headquarters.

The second battalion with the Regimental Commander embarked for Palermo, Sicily and landed with the first water convoy entering this harbor. The enormous job of harbor clearance there was begun immediately. 36 new landing berths for LST craft and 14 berths for Liberty Ships were rushed to

completion. All military highways thru and out of the city had to be cleared and repaired. The initial rehabilitation of the city's utility systems was begun. An Italian Military railroad bridge was erected near Sciara in record time. Mine sweeping operations extended along the entire north coast road of this island.

At the close of the Sicilian campaign the regiment was given the assignment of all the bridge design and construction from Randazzo to Cape D'Orlando to Messina and all companies engaged in this operation with regimental headquarters at Patti. All these projects were in the British Eighth Army territory and their rapid completion aided the British to move into position for the initial invasion of the Italian mainland opposite Messina. The regiment was highly commended by the Engineer 15th Army Group, for its work in these eastern Sicily operations.

The entire regiment embarked from Termini Imerese, Sicily for Italy 26 Sept. 43 and made a beach landing near Salerno, 28 Sept. 43. Bridge construction was begun at Battipaglia and on all military highways north and east of this town. As the VI Corps moved forward the regiment moved forward with it keeping all lines of communication open under extremely adverse conditions of terrain and weather.

On 17 Oct. 1943 the regiment was given the assignment of bridging the Volturno River both at Capua and Point Annibale. Operations were started immediately, but temporarily stopped at Capua on account of enemy fire and resumed again 21 Oct. 1943. The bridge at Point Annibale, assigned to the Second Battalion, was completed third of November after 15 actual days of construction and the First Battalion bridge at Capua, begun on 17 Oct. 1943 was expected to carry traffic by Sunday night, 7 November 1943.

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B/L 314.7-E Engineer Hq., Fifth Army 17 Nov 1944 Re: Engineer History

1st Ind. GHD/mhb
HEADQUARTERS SEVENTH ARMY, Office of the Engr., APO 758, U.S. Army, 3 Dec '44.

TO: Commanding Officer, 343d Engineer Regiment, APO #758, U. S. Army.

To supply such information as you desire direct to Fifth Army.
This will not interfere with current operations.

Garrison H. Davidson
GARRISON H. DAVIDSON,
Brigadier General, A. U. S.,
Engineer.

000.4 2nd Ind. RBD/mjr
HEADQUARTERS, 343rd ENGINEERS (GS), APO 758, U.S. Army, 20 January 1945

TO: Commanding General, Fifth Army, APO 464, U. S. Army
(Attention: Engineer Section)

1. Transmitted herewith are History of 343rd Regiment (GS) Prior to Joining the Fifth Army in Italy and History of 343rd Engineer Regiment (GS) in Italy.

2. In compliance with letter Engineer Headquarters, Fifth Army, dated 22 April 1944, subject: Monthly Consolidated Work Report, a report covering the period 1 October 1943 to 31 March 1944 was submitted and thereafter a monthly report for each of the months of April, May and June was submitted. These reports give a detailed description of all jobs undertaken during the time that the regiment was assigned to Fifth Army.



Richard B. Dunbar

RICHARD B. DUNBAR
Colonel, CE,
Commanding

- 2 Incls:
- Incl. 1 - History of 343rd Engineer Regiment (GS) prior to joining the Fifth Army in Italy (trip)
- Incl. 2 - History of 343rd Engineer Regiment (GS) in Italy (trip)

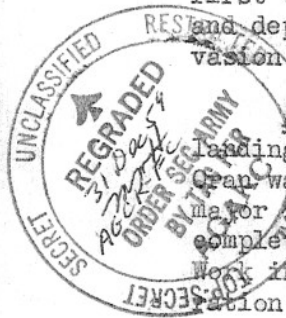
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HISTORY OF 343RD ENGINEER REGIMENT (GS)

1 July '42 to 15 Sept '44

The 343rd Engineer Regiment was constituted as an Organized Reserve Unit in 1921 and was activated at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, 22 April 1942 as per General Orders Number 18, Headquarters, Fourth Corps Area. Colonel Richard B. Dunbar of Fort Worth, Texas assumed command. Colonel Dunbar had been on active duty on the Mexican border in 1906, and in World War I was battalion commander of the 111th Engineers. The officer and enlisted personnel to make up the basic elements of the Regiment were selected specifically because of their civilian abilities as Engineers, equipment operators and construction contractors or tradesmen. After completing basic training the Unit moved to Fort Dix, New Jersey, and sailed for overseas, 1 July 1942. It was through supreme leadership and untiring effort that Colonel Dunbar was to build this civilian group into one of the most outstanding regiments of the Army. The overseas destination of the Unit was England and here both battalions were working upon construction for the first time. They spent several months building bivouac areas, hospitals and depots; training followed and finally preparations for the African invasion were complete.



African Campaign: The Regiment embarked from Liverpool in two echelons landing 11 of November and 5 December 1942 respectively. Initial work in Spain was the clearance of roads, rail yards and harbor. Construction of all major installations for the setting up of Mediterranean Base Section was completed before the Regiment moved east to assist in the Tunisian Campaign. Work included large hospitals, depots, harbor clearance and diving, refrigeration plants, tunnel installation for radio, roads and bridges.

Tunisian Campaign: During the Tunisian Campaign the companies followed close behind the Division Engineers clearing mine-fields at Jelfa and repairing roads in the combat area near Hill 609 in order to keep important supply lines open to rear areas. The closing phase of the campaign found the Regiment busy building hospital groups, landing craft berths on the beaches of Ferryville, divers helping to clear Bizerta Harbor and squads with trucks clearing the quay itself. Miles of road were constructed, bridges built, and roads disintergrating under the pressure of constant pre-invasion trucking were maintained day and night. It was during this campaign that the first major bridges were built. Once more followed days of feverish work, preparations and days of training. The entire regiment then embarked for the Sicilian Campaign.

Sicilian Campaign: The Regiment was assigned to the Seventh Army for the first time in June 1943. Elements of the regiment landed in Palermo harbor 25 July 1943 with the first convoy in port; the remainder of the Regiment landed 4 August 1943. The first work was clearing Palermo harbor and putting the Cities utility system into working condition. The Regiment moved east to work in British Eighth Army Area building bridges over routes to be used by them previous to their invasion of Italy. It was in Sicily that the first important railroad bridge was constructed, a unique one designed and pre-fabricated in Austria although it was from Italian captured stores. This bridge, although not used by our own Regiment again, was

drawn to scale and instructions written for construction; other units found and constructed similar ones in Italy. After this bridge followed a series of highway bridges, some fourteen between the dates of 24 August and 20 September 1943. A fine letter of Commendation was issued to the Regiment by Colonel Garrison H. Davidson, Office of the Engineer, Seventh Army. The regiment had done outstanding work in this campaign as it had in all others. It was for outstanding services in both North Africa and Sicily that the Regimental Commander, Colonel Richard B. Dunbar received the Award of Legion of Merit. (See extract attached).

Italian Campaign: The Regiment embarked from Sicily 26 September 1943 and landed near Salerno, Italy 28 September 1943. It was in Italy that the Unit built up its fame as a bridge building Regiment, the first one was at Battipaglia and included those on all roads north and east, in VI Corps Area. The companies followed close upon the heels of Division Engineers and often maintained roads, bailey ponton bridges, and even built bridges ahead of Artillery positions and in location subject to enemy fire; although not combat troops they have performed combat construction missions and cleared large mine-fields. Supplies had to reach troops well forward of the Volturno river in September and the task of bridging the Volturno was given the Regiment. Dual bridges were planned and constructed in record time against difficulties of material shortages, and lack of adequate equipment. While parts of the Units were cutting steel girders from a bombed Naples steel mill others were rigging Italian pile drivers and securing materials from depots, caves, and local stores. The bridges at Capua and Pte. Annibale when complete brought the Regiment a letter of Commendation from Lt. General Mark W. Clark, 10 November 1943. A letter of Commendation from Brig. General Frank O. Bowman makes the importance of these bridges more fully realized; it also commends a later bridge, one across the Garigliano. "The Capua bridge has been the lifeline of the Fifth Army for the past six months. During this time it has passed well over a million vehicles, many of them 40 tons and over. *****". The construction of the bridge across the Garigliano in five days surpasses in technical achievement, if not tactical importance, the construction of the Capua bridge *****". Other bridges of importance were numerous but an outstanding one was built near Calvi Risorti, a long bridge over a deep ravine. During the winter months supply routes were maintained, mine-fields marked, and one company spent two months at the Anzio Beachhead.

When the drive on the Eternal City began in May the Regiment supported II Corps along Via Appia. It was during this month that the Regiment received the Fifth Army Plaque and Clasp for exceptionally meritorious performance of duty by building the Garigliano River bridge and for day and night road maintenance in this drive on Rome. After reaching a point about 150 miles north of Rome, Piombino, the Regiment was recalled to the Seventh Army. There followed a period of training and re-equipping before the embarkation for France.

French Campaign: On the 22 August 1944, the 343rd Engineer Regiment (GS) was re-attached to the Seventh Army for operations. The Unit landed on the beaches near St. Tropez, France on D-Day and by that evening were all bivouaced within a radius of seven miles of general area of St. Maxime.

The battalions were attached to the Forty-Fifth and Third Divisions and were employed removing road blocks, doing road maintenance, bridge construction and repair, and the operations of water points. During these early phases the companies took about 93 prisoners. It became the task of the regiment from the point when they left Division control to repair and rebuild railroad bridges whose repair would mean the massing of supplies to the Army now so far in advance, and whose lines of supply were growing larger each day. The first task was to open rail traffic between Marseille and Lyon. Supplies again were not accessible in depots, but again the officers and men of the unit used past experience and that store of ingenuity that has made them successful, and by scavenger methods got enough material together to build six railroad bridges and four highway bridges. To illustrate the resourcefulness of the unit the bridge near Aix en Provence might be sighted. This bridge had two fifty foot spans blown that were 107 foot above the flow of the ravine. These spans were replaced by cutting and dropping into place a 270 mm German gun traversing base. This base not only became the stringer but also contained the track already built in as part of the old gun base. Further along the line the Durance river brought new problems because of its sudden rises and falls, here two bridges were built one near Avignon the other near Meyrargues. The bridge near Avignon was a masonry arch one that had five arches destroyed or damaged, and had been once partially repaired by the Germans to use as a rail and highway bridge; but they demolished it again upon the rapid advance of the Army. This bridge was a battalion job, 280 feet long completed with steel from Marseilles and timber procured in depots and locally. The Meyrargues bridge was most difficult because of high swift water, it had a length of 170 feet, and was replaced with quadruple single bailey affording one track rail crossing. Although this bridge was designed to carry no engines it has done so and has carried the bulk of supplies to date. The bridge at Livron was over 300 feet in length but only fifteen feet high. The Isere river bridge was unique in that the metal span blown was dropped into the river and the bents of the replacing span built upon it. This was the last large rail bridge before reaching the town of Lyon. When the job was completed, General A. M. Patch honored the Regiment with a letter of Commendation, 25 September 1944.

The building of railroad bridges did not end with the opening of the supply line to Lyon, but had continued until the road was open to Epinal. Eight railroad bridges and one highway bridges have been completed and many miles of roads maintained in this last stretch of communications.

Legion of Merit has been awarded to three officers.

Soldiers Medal has been awarded to two enlisted men.

One Bronze Star has been awarded.

Forth three Purple Hearts have been awarded, three to officers and forty to enlisted men. There are two oak leaf clusters awarded to enlisted personnel.

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HEADQUARTERS
343rd ENGINEERS (GS)
APO 758, U.S. Army

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11 January 1945

HISTORY OF 343rd ENGINEER REGIMENT (GS) PRIOR TO JOINING THE FIFTH ARMY IN ITALY

The 343rd Engineer Regiment (GS) was activated at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana on 22 April 1942 with Colonel Richard B. Dunbar as its commanding officer.

After basic training one month each at Camp Claiborne and at Camp Dix, New Jersey, the regiment embarked for foreign service from New York 1 July 1942, landing at Glasgow, Scotland, 13 July 1942, and was assigned to permanent station at Nettlebed, England, near Henley-on-Thames.

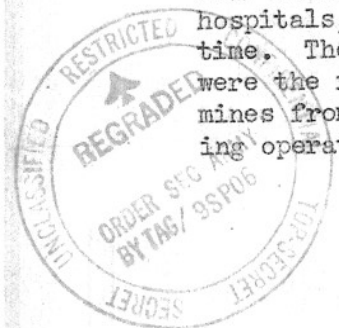
After finishing the construction of the Regimental camp at Nettlebed, Oxon, England the 343rd Engineers entered into a vast construction program which included hospitals, quartermaster depots and warehouses for the various Army services and large bivouac installations for use by American troops. These projects extended from Henley-on-Thames to Reading and west to Taunton, in the southern part of England.

The first battalion embarked for North Africa from Glasgow, Scotland, arriving at Mers-El-Kabir 11 November 1943 and immediately started to work 42 clearing the harbor and highways out of this port and the port of Oran of debris, mines, and booby trap installations.

The second battalion and Regimental Headquarters landed in North Africa on D plus 28 days and the entire regiment went into bivouac at Canastel, East of Oran. A general construction assignment was given the regiment which included hospitals, providing 6400 bed capacity, railroad rights of way, assembly lines for ordnance equipment, quartermaster warehouses and depots, and diving operations to clear the channel at Oran and Mers-El-Kabir of sunken craft.

The regiment was assigned to 5th Army early in January 1943 and Company F moved into Oujda, Morocco, shortly after. In March the regiment less Company F was relieved from assignment to 5th Army and assigned to Eastern Base Section and ordered east into the Constantine area. Company A remained at Bou Hanifia to complete a large General Hospital assignment and Companies C and D remained at Chaunzy to complete an extensive prisoner of war camp. These companies returned to the regiment some weeks later at Ouled Rhamoun near Constantine. Operations there included the design and construction of hospitals, quartermaster warehouses and depots and all were finished in record time. The lines of communication into the II Corps area in southern Tunisia were the regiment's responsibility and much highway repair work, clearance of mines from railroad rights of way, bridge construction, and general mine sweeping operations were necessary. As the II Corps moved north and east, the

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regiment moved along with it and kept all lines of communication open to the rear.

At the close of the Tunisian campaign the regiment went into bivouac at Ferryville and began the task of harbor clearance in this city and Bizerta with diving operations, repair and widening of highways leading into these two cities, construction of 33 landing berths for LCT craft, and facilitated the loading operations for the initial invasion of Sicily. Company F rejoined the regiment immediately prior to embarkation at Bizerta for Palermo. It's work at Oujda had included the construction and installation of all facilities for the operation of Army headquarters.

The second battalion with the Regimental Commander embarked for Palermo, Sicily and landed with the first water convoy entering this harbor. The enormous job of harbor clearance there was begun immediately. Thirty-six new landing berths for LST craft and fourteen berths for Liberty Ships were rushed to completion. All military highways through and out of the city had to be cleared and repaired. The initial rehabilitation of the city's utility systems was begun. An Italian Military railroad bridge was erected near Sciara in record time. Mine sweeping operations extended along the entire north coast road of this island.

At the close of the Sicilian campaign the regiment was given the assignment of all the bridge design and construction from Randazzo and Capo D'Orlando to Messina and all companies engaged in this operation with regimental headquarters at Patti. All these projects were in the British Eighth Army territory and their rapid completion aided the British to move into position for the initial invasion of the Italian mainland opposite Messina. The regiment was highly commended by the Engineer, 15th Army Group, for its work in these eastern Sicily operations.

The entire regiment embarked from Termini Imerese, Sicily for Italy 26 September 1943.

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Authority NND: 735017
By EM NARA, Date 4/19

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HEADQUARTERS
343rd ENGINEERS (GS)
APO 758, U.S. Army

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11 January 1945

HISTORY OF 343rd ENGINEER REGIMENT (GS) IN ITALY

The regiment made a beach landing approximately 12 miles south of Salerno, Italy, 28 September 1943. Bridge construction was begun at Battipaglia and on all military highways north and east of this town. As the VI Corps moved north to Benevento and the Volturno River the regiment moved forward with it, keeping all lines of communication open under extremely adverse conditions of terrain and weather.

On 17 October 1943 the regiment was given the assignment of bridging the Volturno River both at Capua and Point Annibale. Operations were started immediately, but temporarily stopped at Capua on account of enemy fire and resumed again 21 October 1943. The bridge at Point Annibale, assigned to the second battalion, was completed 3rd of November 1943 after fifteen actual days of construction and the first battalion bridge at Capua, begun on 17 October 1943 was expected to carry traffic by Sunday night, 7 November 1943.

A traffic count revealed that approximately 10,000 military vehicles of all types crossed the Capua bridge daily. During the flood period in November this was the only bridge across the Volturno which remained continually open to traffic.

At Calvi Risorti another important bridge was built. In order that the best advantage could be made of the remaining arches of the badly damaged bridge, a 200' timber and steel structure was built beneath the Bailey Bridge that the forward troops had constructed. This method was an innovation and proved its value for the vitally important Route No. 6 was closed at this point for only five hours while the Bailey Bridge was being removed.

Numerous smaller bridges on Routes No. 6 and 87 and the secondary routes of communication were constructed, facilitating the supplying of the troops moving forward. In addition the regiment was responsible for maintenance of routes of communication and construction of hospitals and depots in the Army area.

During the first months of 1944 the regiment was engaged in marking minefields in the heavily mined area from Venafro and Mignano to Cassino. In Caserta the regiment remodeled and repaired buildings on the Palace grounds for an Army Rest Camp. The problem of keeping heavily travelled roads to the forward areas in repair during the muddy winter weather was a headache to all. In March the regiment constructed a 330' Bailey Bridge in Teano to relieve the burden on Route No. 6. Meanwhile one company left for the Anzio Beachhead to construct an underground Army Advance Command Post.

During the spring months as the American forces shifted to the left flank the regiment was charged with the maintenance of the bridges across

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the lower Garigliano River. Warmer weather brought into the open the threat of Malaria and the problem of cleaning miles of small streams and ditches and the job of extending electric power lines and repairing the pumping station to drain the low land at the mouth of the Garigliano. Although mud was no longer a problem, dusty roads became almost as serious. The dust was fought with oil, water and calcium chloride.

While the Army was gathering its forces for the March on Rome, a complete bridge was assembled ready to be put in place across the Garigliano as soon as the military situation would permit pile driving equipment to be used.

As the Army drove northward to Rome and beyond, the regiment supported II Corps keeping the routes of communication open. This included clearing away debris at various locations and constructing a Bailey Bridge overpass to alleviate traffic congestion on the Albano - Genzano bypass. The job of marking the extensively mined areas of the old Anzio Beachhead was undertaken by the 343rd Engineers.

North of Rome the regiment took over routes from IV Corps and constructed bridges across the Albegna and Ombrone Rivers, south of Grossotto. Before this work was completed the regiment was relieved of assignment to Fifth Army and left for the Naples area over roads on which it had worked for nine months.

The 343rd Engineers completed their work in Italy with the same equipment with which they had left England nearly two years before. Keeping that equipment in working order throughout the Algerian-Moroccan, Tunisian, Sicilian and Italian campaigns is indeed a tribute to the mechanics of the regiment.

The regiment had been actively engaged on construction operations during a nearly continuous period from 27 July 1942. The operations have met all requirements of higher headquarters and special recognition was received from SBS, SOS, ETOUSA, Salisbury, England; MBS, NATOUSA, Oran, Algeria; EBS, NATOUSA, Constantine, Algeria, and Mateur, Tunisia; Engineer, 7th Army, Palermo, Sicily; Engineer, 15th Army Group; Commanding General, 5th Army; Engineer, 5th Army and the 5th Army Plaque for the month of May 1944.

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