



# Carl Furtado's WWII Army Journal

Carl Furtado  
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## Introduction

### **Barrington, RI. 2006-2009. How this all came about.**

I was in WWII and was with the 36th Combat Engineer Regiment. My outfit saw action in the Mediterranean area of North Africa, Sicily, Italy and France. We were there for the first landings in North Africa, at Fedala, in Sicily at Licata, in Italy at Salerno and Anzio and in Southern France at Cavalaire.

Years later and after my wife died in 2005, I was cleaning out the attic with two of my sons when they came across a box with a lot of WWII things in it. In it they found these journals that I had written in from the day I was processed into the Army until I left the 36th after Anzio. In the States I was able to keep a pretty good record because I was able to write most days. But, when we shipped out they were put in my barrack bag. When the barrack bags would catch up with us, either we were off the front or they came up for a change of clothing I would try to remember what had gone on and write in them. Then back in the bag they went and sometime I wouldn't see them for weeks. For the dates and most places I was in overseas they are also accurate, as I checked them from the History of the 36th Combat Regiment put out by the Historical Record Section of the War Department.

Also, as I have put this together I send drafts to two of my buddies, Tony Stefanelli and Walter Miller, who are still around for their comments and corrections that they have. As for the dates of the month, where I have things listed they may not be accurate, as you lose track of what day it is up there.

My boys, I had three, were a little put out that I had not told them about those journals and they had never read them. After they had read them, one of my sons set me up in the Google Earth program. Went through my journals and filled in the text boxes and here is the result of my Journey through WWII. I was fortunate to have those journals, as I didn't have them when I was shipped home. But, some kind person who went through my barrack bag sent my personal things home. They arrived some time after I was home and I was sure glad to get them, as I thought that they I would never see them again

### **Fairhaven, MA. Fall, 1941**

I volunteered for the Air Force in the fall. I received a notice to report for a physical December 8, 1941.

#### **December 7, 1941**

The Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor today.

#### **December 8, 1941**

I went for my Army physical.

## Fort Devens, MA. January, 1942

### January 9<sup>th</sup>

They didn't take long to get me in the Army. Had my physical in Providence RI and then received a letter to report to Fort Devens on January 9<sup>th</sup> to be inducted into the Armed Forces. Issued clothing and went through an interview.

### January 12<sup>th</sup>

It was my turn to step out of line and fall in with the men going to Fort Belvoir, Va. for engineering training.

Talked to whoever was in charge and said "I signed up and got my physical to join the Air Force," He said "Forget it, the Army needs men and you are now in the Army." Big disappointment, but it could have been worse. The way the Army works, from what I have heard the little time I've been in, they could have shipped me off to be a cook.

## Fort Belvoir, VA. January, February and March, 1942

### January 13<sup>th</sup>

I thought I was in pretty good physical condition until I went into training here and found out I wasn't. The days were filled with training exercises, lectures, drills, rifle range, how to build, demolition, marching, hikes, keeping yourself and equipment clean and the dreaded KP.

We were up early in the morning and didn't stop until lights out, which I looked forward to. The worse was that the barracks were on high ground and after spending all day training and especially hiking, you had to march up this hill to end the day, that was a killer.

Managed to get a few passes while I was there and went into Washington for R&R. Also an overnight pass and went up to Yonkers, NY to visit with my grandparents and my dad who was working in that area at the time.

### February 22<sup>nd</sup>

Had a pass for a couple of days which would not get me home and back. So, went up to Yonkers NY for a visit with my grandparents and my dad to see my dad who was staying with them at the time, as he was working in that area at the time.

### March 20<sup>th</sup>

Finished my training here and left for Fort Bragg, NC to join an Engineering outfit.

## Fort Bragg, NC. March 26, 1942

Sent here to join the 36th Combat Engineer Regiment that had just arrived here from Plattsburg, NY. The Regiment was attached to the 9th Infantry Division. I was assigned to the H&S Co. and was put in

the motor pool where I drove a command car for Headquarters. What a soft job I fell into, especially after what I went through at Fort Belvoir. I hang around all day until some officer comes out to be to driven somewhere. Food much better here than at Fort Belvoir. After a month of driving they sent me to a communication class to learn phone and everything pertaining to it from stringing lines to switchboard, to repairing the equipment used. After that I was in communication for H&S Co. Pay went up to \$50 a month and after deductions I had \$37.87 to spend.

### **Fayetteville, NC. April 6, 1942**

Army Day. Drove the Captain in the parade at Fayetteville. Then back at the base, they had a dance for the men of the 36th at the service club. Met a few girls, danced, talked to a few and got some addresses and phone numbers. Have become friendly with a few guys here and hanging out together. Tony, Steff Stefanelli, Walt Miller. Ed Heckle, Tony Stupakis.

### **Raleigh, NC. April 11, 1942**

Spent the weekend with Terry. Considering she's a darn rebel she's all right. Found a room, met Terry at the hotel tap room and from there to one of her friends house where there was a party going on. Went out to eat at 12:00, brought Terry home and finally got to bet at 3AM. What a night. The next day went to Terry's house for dinner. Took a walk around Raleigh and she showed me around the State Capital where she worked. In the evening I cooked supper for us and all in all had a great weekend. Also went down the next weekend and spent it with Terry.

### **Lumberton, NC. May 17, 1942**

Another dance at the service club on base and where the girls were from Lumberton, NC. Met three girl friends that were there together, Ruth, Emmy May and Beulah. Got invited down to Lumberton and a couple of weekend later I did go down there to see them.

### **Washington, DC. June 6, 1942**

Took train to Washington DC to visit with Dad for the weekend as he was now in the Washington area working.

### **Fairhaven, MA. June, 19, 1942**

Home for a furlough. Saw Dad, Mom, Francis, Bernice, Vernice, the Bastines, Rosaline ("Rusty"), B. Tribe. Great to be eating home cooked food again. Dad came home not only to be home when I was, but my youngest sister was graduating from High School. Rusty, I, Ezra and Bernice took a ride and spent the day on Cape Cod. Did a lot of other things while home and I sure had a full day every day I was home. Returned to Fort Bragg on the 28th.

## Norfolk, VA. Aug. 11, 1942

Went by train from Fort Bragg to Norfolk. Boarded a ship and put out to sea. Practiced going over the ship's side in those nettings that went down the side of the ship and into small boats for landings. Also learned how to be beach engineers for a landing. Returned on August 20. Had a USO show at the camp with a number of Hollywood stars performing. One star being Betty Grable and the guys went crazy when she was on stage.

## Fort Bragg, NC. Sept. 3, 1942

Back at Fort Bragg. A Third Battalion was assigned to the Regiment. During September the 2nd Battalion departed for shipment overseas with the 39th Infantry Regiment. Turned in our winter stuff and were issued new summer equipment, new helmets, and new Garand rifles. Something tells me that we are going soon and to a warm climate. Because of my job, message center, I was issued an Elgin radium wrist watch so I would be able to see the time when I couldn't have a light on. Oh, the best part, I now have an assistant assigned to me. Major General George C. Patton came to Fort Bragg to address the troops there. He swore like an old mule skinner and wasn't fussy what he called the Japanese and Germans. We have been packing up for weeks and tonight I pulled CQ in an almost empty headquarters. Just the bare necessities left to operate the Regiment. So, it won't be long now.

## Camp Bradford, VA. Sept. 27, 1942

Arrived here for further amphibious training. We left here at 6:30AM, boarded a train and arrived in Norfolk at 2AM the next day. At 7AM off the train and hiked to this camp, about four miles. When we arrived here, we spent all day unloading trucks and putting up tents. We are roughing it here, as there are no barracks for us and instead we are in those tents we put up. No hot water either and I guess they are toughing us up for what is to come. First night in that pup tent it was cold and I slept with all my clothes on.

## Oct. 1st

But the next night it was better, as I learned how to make a bed roll. You buddy up with someone, use one half of your pup tent and your blankets to make a bed roll. He does the same and with the half of the pup tent you have left you make a tent. Another thing we did to keep warm was that we would take turns hiking down the road to a store where we could buy some wine to drink before we crawled into those tents. Keeping busy, as I'm operating the switchboard as well as message center. While here got a pass and a buddy and I went into Norfolk. We rented a room and the first thing we did was to hit the shower, [but not at the same time] Then we went out, had a good meal and then some drinks.

## Camp Pickett, VA. Oct. 7, 1942

On Oct. 7th the Regiment moved to Camp Pickett. We are now attached to the 3rd Infantry Division and became part of the Western Task Force.

### **Fairhaven, MA. Oct. 9, 1942**

A miracle happened, a three day pass. Was very lucky and caught all my buses and trains without waiting too long for them. Didn't have time to phone home and tell them I was coming. Was my mother surprised to see me walk in the door. Saw Mom, Ezra, and Bernice. Drove up to Lowell the next day to meet Rusty's parents and have dinner with them. On the way home the car I had broke down. My sister and her husband came to my rescues. They brought along a mechanic who fixed the car.

### **Camp Pickett, VA. Oct. 13, 1942**

Arrived back a few hours late and the guys tell me it has been raining for the past few days and the place is a sea of mud. It now has rained steady for a week here and we are never dry. Was told to pack our barrack bag and mark it for shipment. We are going on a boat trip. The sailing list is made up and HQ is leaving in the first group. Our mail is now being censored and so I went into town to write the family, had a good meal and a few drinks. We are now attached to the Third Division.

### **Norfolk, VA. October 23, 1942**

We were up at 3AM, departed Camp Pickett and boarded a train at dawn and at 11:00 AM we were at the dock to board a transport, the ship Ancon, in Norfolk. Not as excited as I thought I would be leaving for overseas. The next morning sailed out of the harbor and into a convoy of ships. Rumor has it we are going to French Morocco in Africa.

### **Middle of the Atlantic Ocean**

Spent 15 days on that troop ship waiting out here for all the ships to arrive to make the landing in Africa. They say there are 3,500 troops aboard the ship I am on and I believe it, as we are packed in like sardines. Takes a half hour or more to go through the chow line. The ship has turned into a gambling den, there are games of chance going on everywhere you look. The ship is overrun with brass and the rumor is that this ship is the flagship and operation center for this landing. Now know that we are attacking in the Casablanca, Morocco, area and it won't be easy. The Vichy French has a Navy Base there and plenty of troops. Go on deck and all you can see are ships as far as your eyes can see. Lots of war ships including carriers. The convoy has been attacked by enemy subs a number of times, but do not know the damage.

### **Saturday, November 7**

We learned that the next day, the 8<sup>th</sup> is "D DAY" and we go in at 4:30AM. The 36th will be landing at Fedala, just below Casablanca. Drew 144 rounds of ammunition and K rations for four days. Cleaned and oiled my rifle.

## **Fedala, French Morocco. November, 1942 – February, 1943**

### **November 8<sup>th</sup>**

The first of four landings that the 36th Engineers made [They made five, but I wasn't with them for the 5th.] Zero hour was 4:30AM and the shelling started from both our ships and the shore batteries, as the American forces started ashore at Casablanca and Fedala. The ships in our area were taking fire from the shore batteries until a cruiser, I believe it was the, Manhattan, sailed in between us and the shore and let loose with its fire power. After that, there was less fire from shore. The Infantry had a tough time and it wasn't until the second wave of Infantry went in that that Fedala was secured. We got in that afternoon and went to work as Port Engineers. Port pretty well shot up and in flames. Were strafed a few times by enemy planes, but no damage to any one in our area. Fedala wasn't secured until the next day and the 36th stay here as the port engineers.

### **November 11<sup>th</sup>**

A couple of our guys got killed by snipers last night while on guard duty as this place is alive with enemy snipers. But, we have patrols out and gradually cleaning them out.

### **November 12<sup>th</sup>**

Three of our ships got hit by enemy subs last night. The sea a mass of flames from burning oil, and explosions from the ammunition in the holes of the ships.

### **November 14<sup>th</sup>**

One by one the outfits are pulling out of here, but the 36th is staying here to operate the docks and supply dumps. I am on the message center desk. Have to pull CQ every 4th night and there is no sleeping on the job over here, as observation and lookout post keep checking in. A couple of our officers had confiscated a lot of Champaign from a French ship and in turn Steff and I confiscated a couple of bottles from them and shared them with our buddies.

### **November 17<sup>th</sup>**

Had to deliver an important message to Casablanca and went with a couple of guards, as there are still snipers around. Our kitchen is up and running. No more C or K rations.

### **November 24<sup>th</sup>**

A red letter day. We got our first mail since we left for over here.

### **November 26<sup>th</sup>, Thanksgiving**

Had a real turkey dinner. Boy did that taste good, even in a mess kit. We are now out of the tents and are housed in what used to be a sardine factory. We have bunks, running water and electricity. What a pleasure.

### **December**

Are we, the GI's in Headquarters ticked off. We had that sardine factory building fixed up like home and they kicked us out. They made us go back to the pup tents and to make matters worse they made us

take down the sides we had built up to have more room in those tents. Did that burn us up, the officers are living in houses and hotels and they can't see us be a little bit comfortable. Another thing, they pull a full field inspection on us and there was more griping. Right now we are ready for another landing or for the front instead of this chicken [you know what].

### **December 6<sup>th</sup> (my 23rd birthday)**

And for my birthday I got to pull CQ. Steff and I had a day off and it was the first time since we landed here. It's been raining, off and off, for some time now and finally we got a sunny day to dry out our clothes and tent.

### **December 25th, Christmas**

Just another day over here, but was doing a lot of thinking of Christmas past.

### **January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1943 - New Year's Day**

Just another day and hoping I don't spend another year over here. Weather turning quite cold. More mail arrived, but from their mail they still haven't heard from me as of December 10<sup>th</sup>. From the reports we have the Germans are still being pushed back and being bottle up in Tunisia.

### **January 21<sup>st</sup>**

And the mail from home said they have finally have had mail from me. Makes me feel better to know that they are getting my mail.

At the end of January we hear that President Roosevelt, Churchill and the Military brass have been meeting in Casablanca. What a treat, no more washing out of a helmet. We now have showers and hot water. Went to a Navy camp and saw my first movie since leaving the States. Also there was an USO show with Martha Ray. Also the end of the month the whole Regiment was lined up and a General present medals to some men in our outfit that had earned them in the landing at Fedala.

### **Rabat, Morocco. February and March, 1943**

We moved up here the 18<sup>th</sup> of the month. We are bivouacked about five miles from the city and are set up in a cork forest. It is the only forest around here and covers about forty miles. I am still with S-1, but have moved into communications with the radio and phone guys. Have been given the switchboard to run along, with message center, and couple of guys to help out. Works out great, as they have us on eight hour shifts, which means I get sixteen hours off.

### **February 26<sup>th</sup>**

Boy, did the mail come in today. Received fourteen letters, one package, newspapers and magazines which my family had sent. Was given a pass while here and went into Rabat with some buddies. We hired a horse and carriage to ride around in to see Rabat. It is an old walled city that dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Then found a place to eat and have some drinks. What a way to fight a war.



## March

The first and third battalions are leaving us and moving up to an invasion training center. Being on that desk job I had and being young and foolish that was not enough action for me. So, I talked my lieutenant into me leaving that job and going with the radio and phone section of the H&S Co. Had to learn radio and code and with the help of the sergeant who said he would build me an oscillator to practice sending and receiving code, I was able to become part of that unit.

## Oran, Algeria. April, 1943

We arrived here after a 500 mile trip by truck and a number of stops along the way. We are bivouacked about 25 miles outside of Oran and have joined up with the 1st and 3<sup>rd</sup> battalions. Spent the first two days putting in lines and telephones. For the first time in a long time I really worked and even got blister from it. One of the guys made an oscillator for me, so that I could practice sending and receiving code. We hadn't been here long when we were told, on short notice, that the Regiment was going to move up to Arzew for amphibious training. The line companies are forming teams with Navy and Infantry units and practicing beach landings.

Another first. Had an all day pass and went into Oran. The service club there had ice cream and I went through the line five times. Boy, was it good. Now that I am no longer in S-1 my name has gone back on the duty roster and I have been catching guard and KP duty.

## Arzew, Algeria. May, 1943

May has not started out well. It's been raining for a week without a let up. It seems to rain the hardest at meal times and we end up with our food floating in water. We haven't had boards or straw to put under our blankets since we left the cork forest and everything is wet in the tent. Hope the sun comes out soon to dry us and the tent out. It finally did and now I have something else to complain about. The wind and sand. When it blows, and it does often, the sand gets into your tent and food. While here the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion that had left us in the States joined us, They had been in on the landing in Africa, in Algiers, with the forces that had come down from England for the invasion of Africa. They have started giving us adabrine pills for malaria and the guys are getting sick from them until your system adjust to them.

## May 13<sup>th</sup>

The war in Africa is over.

The Germans and Italians have surrendered. Have got my code speed up to ten words a minute, but will have to do better than that for those high speed operators I hear on the air. The Germans are coming over nights and bombing Arzew because of the build up here. The first time they did we were watching a movie when the anti air craft fire went up and the first bomb dropped. In no time flat there wasn't a guy around, we all headed for cover or a fox hole. Since then they have been coming over every night. No bombs dropped in our area as yet. We have been told we are moving out of here at the end of the month, but they haven't told us where.

## Ferryville, Tunisia. June, 1943

We moved out June 3 to make the move to Ferryville. This move was going to be by train and we were excited about that. No more being rattled around in a truck. Boy, were we surprised when we found out that they were still using those old box cars from WW 1. Yes, those 40'x8's. Forty horses and eight men. We did a little better than the men in WW 1, as they only packed thirty of us in, but with all our equipment it was really crowded in there.

On our ride up there we saw trains going the opposite way with prisoners. The Italians seemed happy, but the Germans were not.

We were traveling through where the war had ended and there was plenty of wreckage, bombed out towns and captured equipment to be seen. It was an 800 mile trip and took us 5 days to get here. We didn't eat well, only C rations and you get sick of those when you have them three times a day.

We are bivouacked on the shore of Lake Bizerte and between Ferryville and Bizerte. We are again attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. Set up our tents and strung a lot of wire. They are getting us ready for action, as they are taking away a lot of our clothes and now two guys share a barrack bag. You have to be careful where you walk as there are plenty of mines and booby traps around and our line companies are out finding and removing them. A number of guys in those companies have been killed doing that.

Have been out practicing landings and wading through water up to my chest. There are thousands of troops and equipment concentrated in this area and the Germans know it. So, every night we have visitors and we have to get out of our tents and into our fox holes. But, on the other hand, every day big flights of our planes pass overhead to bomb Italy.

Still no kitchen and we only have those C rations to eat. God awful stuff even warmed up. Because the 36<sup>th</sup> are going to be the beach engineers on this landing we have a number of other service outfits going in with us. One of them being a signal company, as our H&S communication could not handle all the communication needed for a landing. The good news for us, communication, is that we will not be going in until after a few hours after the landing had started.

We have been shown a sand table model of the beach we are going to land at, but not told where it was. We were briefed as to gun positions, pill boxes, wire, etc. Told we would be leaving the 8<sup>th</sup> of July.

Had a chance to see a lot of this area before I left, as I spent two days going around looking for some of our lost radio equipment. Went to Matuer, Ferryville, Tunis and Bizerte which was damaged the most.

## Licata, Sicily. July and August, 1943

This is the 26<sup>th</sup> of July and I am just getting around to writing in my diary. Hope I can remember all that has happened.

## July 8<sup>th</sup>

We boarded a LCT, left Bizerte that night. Pursued a rather wandering course to the vicinity of Malta and then turned north to Sicily. At that point we were told that we would be landing at Licata, Sicily. Also at that point the wind came up, the seas got rough and it was a miserable 10 hours on that LCT before we landed. The boat offered no protection, it was just an open landing barge and the water was pouring in. Plus with the rough seas that thing was rocking pretty good and there were a lot of sea sick soldiers on that trip.

## July 10<sup>th</sup>

The 36<sup>th</sup> made their second landing of the war hitting the beach at Licata, Sicily. We, H&S Co, were supposing to land while it was still dark but it was light before we landed. The beach had been cleared and the Infantry was moving inland. Some of our line companies had a hand in clearing up the beach so we could operate. Still there was fire from shore and air when we came in and H&S headed for the hills, behind the beach, where the Regimental CP was going to be set up. When our LCT came in, a ship down the line from us took a direct hit and our ship had shells or mortar coming in too close for comfort. Also enemy planes were still flying down the beach strafing and dropping bombs. We got off OK, took off across the beach and headed for the hills to the spot where we were going to set up the Regimental CP. It took us until the afternoon to get there, as we were under fire from the ground and above, and proceeding very cautious because of mines and wire.

## July 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>

Enemy planes were still getting through occasionally bombing and strafing.

## July 14

We, Reg. HQ, came down and moved into the town of Licata. We have eighteen units attached to us as we are operating the beach, docks and all the supply dumps. As the signal company is still with us that leaves the communication guys with no job, but they found some for us. Some good and some bad. I got a good one. We are doing all the hiring of civilians to work for us and they have me working on that. It's a day and night job and the only time I get back to the bivouacked area is to eat and sleep. A number of the Italians speak English, as some of them have lived in the US and then came back here. Most of them were from Cleveland. The good thing about the job is that I have a pass to go anywhere, as most of the town is off limits to GI's so that gets me to a lot of places.

The food is great here and I am not talking about the food the kitchen serves, but about all the fresh fruit here. I'm just stuffing myself with all kinds of fruit, grapes, plums, watermelon, cantaloupes, etc. What a treat. I have adopted a puppy. She is all white with one brown ear and looks like a fox terrier. Have named her Chalky. Things are going well on the island as the forces that landed here and at Gela, on this side of the island, have advance north and are in Palermo. The British aren't doing as well. They landed on the south east coast of Sicily and were pushing up the east coast to take Messina, but have had tough going and have only reached Cantania.

All the guys have got their hands on the Italian tents which are larger than ours and mated them with what we have. Now we have very comfortable tents to live in with room to move around inside.

More good news. Mussolini has fled Italy and a General Badoglio has taken over but says that Italy will continue to fight with the Germans. But then we hear that the Italian people do not want to continue the fight and want to surrender. Maybe they will win out and we won't have to go into Italy to continue the war here.

Our forces are pushing the Germans back towards Messina. Patton pushing east from Palermo and the British have broken out from Catania and pushing north.

### **August 18<sup>th</sup>**

The battle for Sicily is over. For days the Germans have been evacuating their troops and equipment across the Strait of Messina into Italy and our troops are in Messina.

## **Bizerte, Tunisia Africa, August and September, 1943**

### **August 21<sup>st</sup>**

The 36<sup>th</sup> left Sicily to go back to Africa and back to the Bizerte area. It was a better trip back, as the ship was larger, a LST, and the sea was calm.

We landed and were trucked to a bivouacked in the hills outside of Bizerte where we spent the night under the stars. Our tents and bed rolls never showed up. Put Chalky in my jacket to keep us both warm.

Here we have being changed from Amphibious Engineers to Combat Engineers and getting a change in equipment. So, it's at the front from now on for the 36<sup>th</sup>. Also we have been assigned to the Fifth Army and attached to the VI Corps.

They say this is the big landing and it's going to be in Italy. We have been changed from D+2 to D, not good.

This place is crowded with troops, both American and British. The harbor is full of ships, Navy ships, transports, and landing ships of all types. We have been moved down to the water edge, ready to board ships.

### **August 31<sup>st</sup>**

British troops have been pouring down from the hills to join us here at the harbor. All our equipment has been packed loaded on trucks and sent down to be loaded aboard ships. All we have now is what we are carrying on us.

### **September 3<sup>rd</sup>**

We get the news that the British have landed in Italy. They struck from Messina and have established a beachhead across from Messina in Italy. They are pushing inland to the north and east.

### September 5<sup>th</sup>

Hiked down to the docks in the boiling sun with full packs and it was hot. Boarded LCT's in the harbor which brought us to Lake Bizerte to load on LST's and then we moved outside of the harbor. Good move, as that night there was a terrific air raid and they were dropping their bombs mostly on land.

### September 7<sup>th</sup>

Set sail for our landing area below Salerno at Paestum.

## Paestum, Italy. September, 1943

### September 8<sup>th</sup>

The Germans found us just before dark and it was one continuous air raid.

### September 9<sup>th</sup>

We started landing early in the morning and the reports we are getting are not good, casualties are heavy and having trouble establishing a beachhead for the rest of us to come in. Lot of fireworks going both ways on the ground and in the air. It's a pretty helpless feeling when you're on those ships hearing those planes diving in to bomb and hope they haven't picked your ship for a target.

### September 11<sup>th</sup>

We finally got off the ship and on to the beach. Hiked five miles inland and made camp. Our battalions and line companies are up at the front. The 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion is on the line as infantry and the rest are repairing and building roads and bridges at the front. Had to bring up a radio to the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion one day and spent a number of hours with them before I was able to get back. The 3<sup>rd</sup> was relieved after six days on the line. Another of our battalions, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, was called upon to do infantry work and was on the line for 4 days. H&S is bivouacked near an airport and we are not getting much sleep night, as the Germans are coming over to bomb the field. The rear echelon arrived finally along with the kitchen and Chalky.

### September 18<sup>th</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2nd battalions came in today and the 3rd is still up at the front.

### September 19<sup>th</sup>

Jerry has finally had enough and is pulling back for two reasons. They have been taking a lot of fire from the ships off shore and being bombed. They also were holding out until their forces in the south could get up here and join them. The British, that landed south of us, have made contact with us here, so that means that they, the Germans, have joined up and they can fall back. The 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion came in today.

The front is moving up and so are we. We are working on roads and bridges extended through Battapaglia, north and west, and restoring a railroad line in that area. Also clearing towns of the debris caused by the fighting that went on there and the repairing or building bridges that the enemy had damage or destroyed.

## September 24<sup>th</sup>

Still moving northwest and not staying in one place more than a day or two. At one of the places we were strafed three times and on the last time our fighter planes showed up. There was a dog fight with us GI's on the ground cheering our fighter planes on. It must have done some good, as two of the enemy's planes went down.

## Montella, Avellino and Atripalda, Italy. October, 1943

By the end of the month we had reached Montella, but it was tough going as the enemy had destroyed every bridge and left many mines. The steep grades and hairpin turns didn't help either.

Up at the top the enemy had had a good view of the country below and it's no wonder we had a hard time advancing. When we have taken the high ground, they fall back to another fortified position on high ground and that's how it went all through Italy.

While we are advancing the civilians are going the opposite way and back to their villages. I'm afraid they are not going to find much left in some of them. Also at the end of the month the rain has started and we are never dry.

We are in a valley now, but they have bivouac us on the side of a mountain and with our tents pitched at such an angle that I feel I'm sleeping standing up. The first night I had to keep pulling myself back under the tent and so I staked my blankets to the ground to stop that.

While here one night I was sent out on a detail that were loading a Bailey bridge on trucks. When we returned the next day the company had packed up and left. Caught up with them outside of Avellino.

While there made acquaintance with a family in the neighboring town of Atripalda. I bring the kids candy and the father cigarettes. In turn, they feed me. One of the adults is a Francisco Monk visiting home and he and I are trying to teach one another our native language.

One day I spent all day riding around in a jeep with a sergeant from S-2 up at the front. Why, I can't remember and didn't write it down. Probably as a radio guy for him to keep in touch with HQ.

## Maddaloni, Italy. October, 1943

### October 11<sup>th</sup>

We are moving up to the outskirts of Maddalona, close to the front and the Volturno River. It's still raining and getting colder and we don't have our winter clothes.

### October 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>

The 36<sup>th</sup> in support of the Infantry attempted to put a bridge across the Volturno. The first attempt failed when enemy fire knocked out portions of the bridge and we had to withdraw. The next day

another attempt was made successfully and the bridge was completed. But not without casualties for A Company.

### **October 20th**

All the battalions are now across the river and close enough for us to lay lines for phone communication. The mail has caught up with us and is coming in by the truck full and I have received stacks of it, letters, packages and newspapers. Great for the morale.

### **October 24th**

Today is an anniversary, but not one to celebrate. A year ago we set sail from Norfolk. It's been the most eventful year of my life and my hope is that I survive this war to get home.

## **Pratella, Italy. November, 1943**

### **November 1st**

Moving day again and this move put us ahead of the battalion that is still working on roads and bridges back where we were. We no sooner got here then Jerry came over and made us late in setting up. It was the middle of the night before we got all our lines in.

### **November 6th**

A red letter day. We finally got our winter clothes and boy does it feel good to have a little warmth.

### **November 8th**

Another anniversary, the 36<sup>th</sup> landing in Africa and they feed us a special meal. [It couldn't have been very good, as I don't remember it.] Right now we are playing leap frog with our battalions. They move up, when we get up to them. Then we go ahead of them, as they work on the bridges and roads in the area. On one of the moves, no one told us our long tom artillery guns were right behind us and when they started firing everybody dropped whatever they were doing and took cover. Felt pretty foolish when we realized that they were our artillery guns firing.

### **November 10th**

Along the Volturno near Moutiquila. All work by the outfit has to be done under cover of darkness as they have this area zeroed in with their shelling. Between the shelling and the rain the battalions are very busy keeping up with the damage to the bridges over the Volturno and the roads.

### **November 11th**

Armistice Day. Wish someone would tell the Germans. This last move put us, H&S, in another pass and it is cold. The wind blows through it a mile a minute and we have to line the bottom of our pup tents with stones to keep them from blowing away. But, we do have a view though. We get a good view of the artillery duel that goes back and forth from the two sides, especially at night. We are taking some shelling here in the pass and it is keeping us in our fox holes. Hate it at night, as you have to get out of your tent and blanket and its cold. And speaking of the cold, no one is washing or getting cleaned up, so

we don't smell too good. There is one shell that goes screaming overhead that S2 says it's a railroad gun. It sounds like an express train going through and we hope they are not short with it for it to drop in the pass. There has been so much rain that the fox holes are flooded and now we head for the side of a hill where we have dug in for protection.

### **November 25<sup>th</sup>, Thanksgiving**

They fix us a big meal, turkey, dressing, the works and even pie. But no one enjoyed it, as it was raining like mad. By the time you got your food and got under cover the meal was drowned in water. Wouldn't you know it, the next day the sun came out. But, at least, it allowed us to dry out our tent and some of our clothes. A number of fellows have gone to the hospital with trench foot and I'm trying not to. At night I take off my wet socks and put them next to my skin to dry out. [An old WW1 thing that I had heard about.]

### **Capriati, Venafro, Italy. December, 1943**

We have moved up to this area, in front of the Volturno and waiting to cross it for the third time. [That river certainly gets around.] Early December heavy rains washed out bridges and caused the regiment to be separated on both sides of the river. The motor pool has made a communication trailer for us and that saves a lot of time setting up and taken down our equipment.

It is now the first of December and they say the big push is on to break through the German's winter line anchored by the Volturno and Mount Cassino. The units of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army have started pushing through the mountains ahead and our artillery and planes are throwing a lot of stuff at them.

### **December 6<sup>th</sup>**

Another birthday spent over here. What with what's going on ahead I thought Jerry would forget about us, but I'll be darn if he didn't start throwing shells into us about 2am and kept it up into morning. I am having a bad streak of luck right now. I pull night guard duty for four hours. Came off that and worked the radios from 5pm to 12. The next day was on the radios from 8am to 5pm. That was the good part. The next day I had KP.

### **December 16<sup>th</sup>**

I pity those Germans up ahead. The last three days have been clear and has allowed our planes to fly. The sky has been filled with our planes, fighters and bombers, heading for the front and they must be catching hell from the sound of it here. Also at this time we were assigned a new commander, a Colonel T.H. Stanley.

It never fails we have had five days of good weather and the day we have to move up to the front it is raining. And where do they put us? In a gully with the artillery all around us. No sleep for us. Of course it's dark, raining and there isn't a flat spot to pitch a tent.

Come day light we see that there is blown up power plant that the Germans had destroyed. It had supplied power to Naples and Rome. We not only have to put up with our guns firing away, the Germans are firing at us trying to knock out some bridges right behinds us.



## December 25<sup>th</sup>, Christmas

It was a good Christmas, as it wasn't raining and they gave us a great meal. Haven't had a good night sleep since we have been here. Can put up with it during the day, but nights it keeps you awake this steady pounding of the guns. It stopped raining for Christmas and the day after and now it's raining again.

Sunny Italy-that's a myth. Also see snow on the mountain tops, so probably it won't be long before we will see it down here. Just another thing to make our life miserable.

We are on the right flank of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army and the other troops here are the French and their native Moroccans. The rest of the American forces have left and rumors are flying as to why. The story we get on the Moroccans is that they send them out up the mountains at night to find and kill the Germans in their front observation posts.

## New Years Eve

Had the switch board duty that night. The section had a five gallon can of vino to celebrate the occasion and I had a few. About midnight the telephone service was not very good.

## [Note] Mount Cassino

Mount Cassino was the highest mountain around and held by the Germans who had a clear view of the surrounding country side. On top of it was the Monte Cassino Monastery.

The Germans with their view up there could direct their fire very accurately. We shell and bombed it, trying not to hit the Monastery and tried to take it a number of times but were always turned back.

A lot of GI's lost their life trying to get up there. The Germans said they weren't using the Monastery for an observation post, but they were. We held up trying not to bomb the monastery, but when the decision was made to bomb it to ruins and another assault was made we were able to drive the Germans off and take it.

## Venafro, Italy. January, 1944

The first day of the new year and it's not starting off good. It's snowing, the first we have seen in two years, and colder than ever. They have moved most of the artillery out and now maybe we will get some sleep.

## January 6<sup>th</sup>

Got the bad news today. We were told to pack up all our equipment in boxes and mark them for shipment. That means another boat trip and landing. We hear the H Co. has already left to join the Rangers on another mission.

## Naples, Italy. January, 1944

### January 11<sup>th</sup>

The whole Regiment is now together again and bivouacked just outside of Naples in Afrigola. We are restricted to this area and Naples is off limits. But, I doubt if that is going to keep me or any of the other guys from sneaking in to Naples what with another landing coming up. [And it didn't.] Awful quiet down here and we can use our flashlights at night to get around. That hasn't happen in a long time.

### January 12<sup>th</sup>

They have started waterproofing the vehicles, so it won't be long now. Father Cahill is leaving us today, the 16<sup>th</sup>, and the regiment is getting its first Protestant Chaplin. Everyone one is sorry to see him go.

### January 18<sup>th</sup>

Started loading the trucks and everything that is not on our back was put in those trucks. Communication and S1 loaded a weapon carrier, as that will be the only vehicle going in with us on the landing. I hope we load soon, as it's damn cold and we only have a couple of blankets to keep us warm. They say we are going to land somewhere behind the German lines.

### January 20<sup>th</sup>

At 2am we boarded trucks and drove to a staging area in Naples. Then another wait until 9am to get on other trucks and down to the docks to load aboard the ships. Was I happy to see that this time we were on a larger landing craft, a LST, as I'll never forget that trip over to Sicily on a LCT. Was briefed this afternoon as to where we landing. It is 25 miles south of Rome at Anzio and Nettuno.

## Anzio (Port), Italy. January, 1944

### January 22<sup>nd</sup>

We landed at the port of Anzio without too much opposition, as the port had been shelled and bombed and the Germans had pulled out of there. Before dawn, H Co had landed with the Rangers to clear the port for the landing. There were not many civilians either, as the Germans had kicked them out.

South of us at Nettuno they had landed on the beaches there and were advancing inland. Last night it was the Germans turn to shell us with a terrific barrage. A bunch of us were huddled in a basement of a house hoping that the house would not get hit. It did, as well as houses around us, but ours survived better than some and other than dust and debris no one was injured. Funny story, if anything is funny in war.

When the people that were here left, they put their furniture in the basement. All the time we have been overseas we have been living in pup tents and so we thought we would live it up. My buddies and I brought the furniture up from the basement and fixed up a room on the second floor with beds, chairs and tables. We were going to find out how it was to sleep in a bed.

Well, that lasted two nights, as when the shelling or bombing started we headed down to the basement. But, we ended up sleeping on beds because we set them up in the basement.

They have cut down on their shelling, but doing more dive bombing. We are half mile from the port and near the railroad line and so we are catching our share of the bombs. Within a radius of 500 yards of us there has been six fellows killed and a lot of injured. Butler from communication was one of those killed.

You could always count on Jerry to come over at dawn, sometime during the day, dusk and nights. For all his trips he is not doing too much damage, as everything is in ruins anyhow and he is losing planes. One day I saw six of his planes come over and not one returned. Two went down by anti aircraft fire and our planes shot down the rest.

### January 26<sup>th</sup>

The first follow-up came in today, and also Chalky. About Chalky, she is my dog, but the whole outfit keeps an eye on her and tries to keep her out of harms ways. But she is no dummy. She is experienced under fire. She runs for cover when we start taking fire and ends up with someone either calling her into his foxhole, or she finds the closest one herself.

### January 28<sup>th</sup>

Here we go again. We have received word that the 36<sup>th</sup> is going up to Infantry work again. I quote from our history- 'Thus began what has to be the most "rugged" period in the history of the Regiment.' The 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion went up today and the 2<sup>nd</sup> tomorrow.

We are attached to the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on the left flank of the beachhead and there are some British troops here also. A few of us from Reg HQ are going up to establish a forward C.P.[command post] We are doing more and more radio work than ever now and between that and maintaining the phone lines that are always going out because they have been broken by getting hit I'm not getting much sleep.

### January 29<sup>th</sup>

Didn't get up to establish the forward C.P. until late afternoon. We are the only American troops in this sector and we have taken over the communication network. The good thing about it is that we don't have to dig in our radios and switchboard as we are using their dug outs and fox holes. That night, I had the 6 to 6 shift and I damn near froze to death, as we came up with no blanket roll. I didn't have my overcoat either.

The communications from the OP's [observation posts] in this area to the army and the navy are going through us and we hear them directing fire on the enemy. We hear them calling in the coordinates, zeroing in on them if they have to and then you hear "you're on them, you're on target." Good bye target.

Up here we spend very little time above ground, as you never know when you are going to take fire. The 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion helped to wipe put some Germans that they had trapped in a wooded area, by calling in fire

on them from the Navy. Then went in at night to bring in some of the bodies to identify the German unit.

Co. F did not fare as well when they went forward to clear out some snipers and got caught in a heavy concentration of mortars fire. They suffered 25 casualties with 6 men killed.

### February 1<sup>st</sup>

During the night both battalions were relieved and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> we were all back and joined up in Anzio. Good to eat hot chow again, especially the coffee. Chalky was sure glad to see me and never left my side for days. Mail is going out now and we are hoping that it soon will be coming in. Now able to write in my journal again.

### February 7<sup>th</sup>

They better get us the hell out of this town, as all this bombing and shelling we are taking there are a lot of casualties in the regiment. H&S Co. has had two killed and a number of wounded. One of those killed was a good friend and the first that I was close to.

The Germans bombed the 95<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital in Nettuno and they did it deliberately, as anti-personal bombs were dropped on it. They also strafed the hospital. They don't use those for bombing targets other than for dropping them on soldiers.

Ed and Walt were on their way down there and got there just after it happened and they said it was a terrible scene. Bodies all over, the scream of the helpless wounded and blood all over the place. A number of doctors and nurses were also killed and wounded.

### February 9<sup>th</sup>

Well, they are going to make Infantry troops out of us again. We are moving up tonight to take over the position we held the last time and this time the whole regiment is going. We will anchor the left flank of the beachhead from the sea to the British position in the middle.

### Diary Note

It's been a long time since I have written in my diary, as we have been at the front for 45 days and then when we got back they had us training for another mission. I'll have no trouble remembering all that has taken place, as all of it will stick in my mind for a good long time. I had a lot of close calls and consider myself lucky to be able to continue writing in this.

## Anzio (Front Lines), Italy. February and March, 1944

### February 9<sup>th</sup>

All three battalions moved into the line under cover of darkness and we are on the left flank of the beachhead. The sea is on our left and on our right are some British Army units. We got our lines in to the battalion's command posts with the help of the Germans. They sent up flares which would help us get our bearings, but which didn't help, was the occasional shelling.

We had with us some radio men from the VI Corps to handle the radio traffic, as we had our hands full with keeping the phone lines open. They were always going out, but we always laid two or three lines with alternate routes so that if one went out we would still have communication. We were in direct observation by the Germans and you never wanted to hear that all of the phone lines to one of the battalion's were out during daylight.

I knew every hole, ditch, shell hole, and dug out along the route our wires ran and a lot of times that came in very handy. The two lines I hated to go out on were the OP, the observation post and one at a crossroad, as they took the most fire. If you, and we only sent one man out for those, had to go out on those lines you spent the day. Find the break, repair it, stay in the nearest hole or cover and come back in at dark.

I look back now and kick myself for ever leaving that desk job.

Lots of nights it would be as bright as day, as the Germans would light up the place with flares that they would send up or drop from planes. Then you would drop to the ground and freeze or hope that there was something close by to hide in. Hoping all the while that they were not zeroed in on where you were when they started shelling.

Because the Germans held the high ground, they were in the hills surrounding the beachhead and could see most of what was going on, so most of the action was at night. They would send their planes over to bomb and drop AP's, [anti-personnel bombs]. The AP'S would explode just above the ground and rain down many small fragments of the casing of the bomb. Very effective against troops and vehicles. They would sound like a string of fire crackers you set off on the Fourth of July, only a lot louder.

So when we heard the planes overhead at night we headed for a fox hole or dug out with a roof on them as the AP's were not powerful enough to penetrate a good roof. One night they missed us and dropped them on their own troops. They must have been out of their foxholes, as there was a lot of screaming and hollering going on from the other side.

Twice enemy patrols landed on the beach along side of our position. One patrol didn't get further than the beach before they were wiped out, but another night the other one got inland and gave our guys a bad time until they were all caught or killed. And speaking of kill, there were sheep and cows wandering around the back area. So, those that survived the shelling, we killed for fresh meat.

Of course, our planes were in the air day and night. At night you would hear the planes and then see traces coming out of nowhere. Sometimes they would fade out and other times they would get another plane and it would come down in flames. When we saw those, we always hoped it was one of ours shooting down a German plane. During the day we would lie in our fox holes on our backs and cheer on our fighters when there was a dog fight going on.

Also there would be more cheering when our planes would come over and drop their bombs on the other side. It was a lot of misery living in those fox holes and it helped to keep our spirits up. At night we

would stand in our fox holes and watch the bombing raids on Anzio and the water front. It was something to watch the barrage that went up from us, as it was like a big Fourth of July night display.

The Navy was a big help to us as they would sail in and fire their big guns when needed. The Germans did shelling of their own in our area, but they didn't get many of us as we didn't spend much time above ground and if we did we ran from one hole in the ground to another.

Communications had an elaborate dug out. It was back breaking to make but well worth it. Where the switchboard and message center was it was big enough to stand up in. Off that was a tunnel leading to dug out sleeping areas. All the walls were lined with shell casings, supported by fence rails and posts. The roof was more fence and railings covered by sand bags and a lot of dirt.

When the civilians come back they can find their fences in all our dug outs and fox holes.

### **More about fox holes and being lucky**

A hair cut that almost got the barber and I killed. On one of the unusual quiet days I asked the guy, Frankie that gave haircuts, to give me one as I needed one bad. He said yes and we went into the brush and down in a little gully. I sat on a water can alongside a fox hole and he started cutting. Then on our right some shells started coming in, but some distance away and I said "You can finish the job later lets hit the fox hole. No, he said they are traversing right, going away, and I'm almost finished."

Just as he said that we heard the close one. They had crossed us up and thrown one back our way, which was common. They say, the ones that go over you or coming in some distance away scream and the real close ones you can hear, if you're lucky, fluttering. Well, this one was a flutterer and I just fell into the hole and Frankie fell on top of me as it hit close by. Frankie was moaning lying on top of me and I got out from under him and he was face up and I saw no wounds. But, when I turned him over I saw an ugly neck wound.

I yelled for a medic and when no one showed up I ran to our communication dug out to call for help and could not raise any one. I found out later our main cable had been knocked out. Beat it down to where the jeeps were and got someone to go for a medic. On the way back to Frankie I picked up my first aid kit and when I reached him put some sulfur powder on the wound and bandaged it as well as I could until the medic arrived to take care of him.

That shelling cost us one killed and two that were wounded not fifty yards from our fox hole. He was one lucky guy as he had shrapnel in his neck and it missed all the nerves there in the neck. He returned to us later on after his wounds had healed. I was also lucky also, as random shelling was still going on while I was running around.

I used to feel pretty secure in a fox hole until one day when I am out on lines and there were a couple of British linemen in the area also. Shelling started and I jumped into the nearest hole. It must have been a gun or a machine gun hole as it was large and I didn't have enough earth around me. So, when there was a brief stop in the shelling where I was, I looked around for a smaller hole in the ground. Found one and got into that. The shelling returned and one landing not too far away. When the shelling stopped

and I felt it was safe to precede away from there I saw where that close one had landed. Had to go by it and there were the two British linemen, they had been killed by that close one. They, like me when the shelling had let up had moved and they had made a bad move, unlike me that had made a good move. I never felt safe underground again wondering if my time was up.

## **Anzio (Port), Italy. March, April and May, 1944**

### **March 25<sup>th</sup>**

We were relieved this date. I don't know how true this is, but they say that the 36<sup>th</sup> set a record of 45 straight days on the line without any relief and they said that not any Infantry regiment had ever done that.

### **March 26<sup>th</sup>**

Today was clean up day and boy did we need it. While at the front I occasionally washed my face, hands and feet, but that was all that saw water and soap. Like all the rest of the guys you didn't smell so good and boy was that shower great. All the clothes we had were thrown away and we were issued new ones.

Chalky was happy to see me even in my stinking clothes. I grew a mustache and beard while I up there, but was told to shave it off.

You don't realize until the replacements start to come in how many men were killed or wounded. We have had 400 replacements so far and more to come.

What a change has taken place with the towns of Anzio and Nettuno. It was a little shot up when we first landed, but now those two towns are in ruins from the constant shelling and bombing that they have taken with bomb and shell craters all over the place.

The Germans have a couple of railroad guns that they run in and out of caves in the mountains shelling the beachhead and we have not been able to knock them out. I have heard them and thank goodness none have landed in any area I was in, as they sound like a freight train coming in.

### **April**

Since we got back every five days or so a group of men leave for the rest center back in Casserta. The fellows say it's heaven and really enjoy their stay. They get passes to go to the surrounding towns, Naples and the food is great. Can't wait until it is my turn to go.

Every day the Germans hit at least one dump, but hell he can't miss as this place is just crowded with all kinds of ammo, equipment, food etc. They are piling it up and I guess we are going to break out of this place soon. The place is crowded with troops, British and Americans just waiting to go.

A couple of the radio guys have found a supply of wine and liquors, but they are not telling anyone where or how they found it. But we don't care as long as they keep supplying us with it. Nights we sit around sipping on the stuff and listening to a radio we have tuned to an army radio station playing

music. We shoot the bull, play cards and have another drink. Pretty soon we forget where we are until we get a reminder every once in awhile when the shelling starts.

One night they shell the area the Hdgs building was in and it lasted forever, it seemed, but probably a half hour. A bunch of us were in the cellar of the building and that cellar just rocked all the time. No direct hit, thank goodness.

This place, Anzio and Nettuno, is just full of underground tunnels. When we have nothing to do we take a flashlight and go down in them. Most of them led us nowhere, used for storage I guess, but in some of them we come up in barns, basement of houses and fields.

### **Sunday, April 9<sup>th</sup>, Easter**

Went to church in town and it was just crowded with refugees, most of them with the few belongings they had managed to salvage. Really felt bad for their kids and what they were going through.

### **April 10<sup>th</sup>**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion caught it last night. They are in a wooded area about two miles out of town. They counted 300 shells. It did a lot of damage, but killed only two. Here in town we play baseball or toss a ball around. We even have a volley ball court, but sometimes the baseball or volley ball has to be called because of shelling.

### **April 12<sup>th</sup>**

The Colonels radio has been acting up the past few days and this day it wasn't working at all. He blew his top and said we better get it fixed or he was going to put us all in the line company. He had to calm down and not follow through on his threat when we found the problem.

### **April 14<sup>th</sup>**

At last I have something to look forward to, as I am leaving for R&R on Monday. We must have moved in more anti aircraft guns here, as last night the German planes came over and I never heard such terrific barrage that went up. They said that we shot down seven of their planes, but I didn't see that. I was in a doorway facing away from the action and I wasn't about to step out to see, as the flak was coming down like rain.

Have been doing alright in poker lately and have won myself a nice little pot of money to go on R&R. The company baker plays with us and he usually brings some goodies.

### **April 17<sup>th</sup>**

I left early in the morning on a LST. Went down with two guys from H&S, Signorelli and Swatchz. For the first time in years I met someone from back home. A Charlie Tapper from New Bedford who was a sailor on the LST I was on. Was great talking to him and that was the only great thing about that trip on that LST. Very rough trip down, sick as hell, and couldn't eat. That was the worst thing, couldn't eat, as they feed you very good on a Navy ship.



The first day there I went to the NCO Club that night and got high on brandy and grape fruit juice, as they wouldn't give us a pass until the next day. The next day the three of us took off for the town of Benevento. Thumbing up we met up with some British USO girls who were going there also and trying to get a ride. So we stuck with them, as we figured they would get us a ride and they did. Half the town of Benevento was in ruin, but the three of us had a good time. Enough said.

Spent the night there and went back to camp the next day. That night went to see Berlin's "This is the Army show." and enjoyed it very much. The next day I went into Naples. Thumbing a ride there, I was given a ride by an air force guy in a jeep. Turned out it was another fellow I knew from back home, Joe Gorman from my home town of Fairhaven. He was with an Air Force headquarters there and he got the day off and showed me around Naples. We had a grand old time talking about things back home and people we knew. He had to go back to his headquarters that evening, but he set me up for that night.

Got back to camp the next day just in time to leave to go back to Anzio. As I was leaving who comes in but my buddy Steff, who I was hoping that he and I could have come here together.

### April 23<sup>rd</sup>

Very smooth trip back, much better than going down. Got here early morning and glad it wasn't earlier, as there was a terrific air raid and shelling of the harbor at dawn. [You can't dig a fox hole in steel.]

We, the 36th, are getting famous. The fellows told me when I got back that they had heard Sally, the German propagandist, on the radio saying that we, the 36th, were not fooling anyone and that they knew that the Seahorse Division was fighting on the left flank. Because we are one of the few regiments allowed to have a shoulder patch, most have Army or Corp patches, they think we are a Division instead of a Regiment.

### April 27<sup>th</sup>

They got the radio room today. Luckily we had a warning by a shell coming in and landing nearby. Everyone hit the floor. The second one hit real close and shrapnel flew in the room through the door and window. Foster got some shrapnel in him, but not serious. It made a mess of the room and all our pin up girls got purple hearts.

### April 28<sup>th</sup>

Heard something we haven't heard in awhile, diving planes and bombs dropping. They hit a gas dump down the road and it lit up the whole place. They kept it up most of the night, as they now had light to drop their bombs.

### April 29<sup>th</sup>

A first. We had a PX today where we could buy seven candy bars and a coke. That night they had beer for us. The coke was the first one since I left the states and I hope they continue to pass out the beer. Rumors are flying that we are going back on the line as Infantry. The line companies are getting Infantry training again, so it looks like the rumors are going to be true once more.

Had a close one today. Got caught above ground and nowhere to hide when some shells came in. Hugged the ground and hoped none hit close. Still around, so I'll make it here another day.

### May 1<sup>st</sup>

Looks like the breakout will be soon. Plenty of shipping in the harbor, which gives us at least two air raids a night now, and lots of supply and equipment coming off those ships. They have cleared out all the hospital patients, another sign it's going to be soon.

### May 7<sup>th</sup>

The rumor is true, we are moving up to the front again, but this time on the right flank of the beachhead. Last night our area caught hell as the Germans really shelled us, because they can see what's going on down here. They did hit some ammo supplies that went off for some time and damaged some equipment. Also, one man was killed and six injured.

## Anzio (Front Lines), Italy. May, 1944

### May 8<sup>th</sup>

Kunkle, Farrell and I went up to the front on the right flank to look over the communication set up we are going to take over. A lot more and longer lines than we have ever had to take care of.

Communication has a whole farm house to itself and the best part of it is that we are  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from Headquarters.

We have a big switch board, a commercial job, teletypes, two radios and a large message center. It looks like what I have seen at a Corps or Division Headquarters. Again, we have some radio guys from Corps to take care of the radio work, but this time I get to stay with the phone, switch board and message center instead of going out on lines.

Sgt. Farrell doesn't want to trust this part of the operation to any new men, so he has assigned Kunkle and me to operate the center and the new guys will go out on lines. That's fine with me, as I have had a belly full of line work and I'll let the new guys feel how it is to go out in all kinds of hours, weather and dodging shells.

We have quite a farm here. We have a cow that gives milk, some chickens that we have rounded up that don't lay many eggs, but are good to eat. Also some pigs that we are going to make pork chops out of and a couple of old horses that we ride.

### May 12<sup>th</sup>

This is the craziest front I have ever been on or heard about. On the left flank the Germans were so close and rained a lot of fire power down on us. But here, we are on flat ground that we hold and the Germans are in the hills in front of us and some distance away. They have no trouble observing us, but they don't often fire at us. With all the fire power we have on the beachhead and the navy offshore any time they fire they get spotted and we can put a lot of fire on them to knock out their guns.

That's why, two miles from the front we walk around, play ball, ride bicycles up and down the roads and even sun bathe.

### May 13<sup>th</sup>

We hear that our forces all along the front, south of the beachhead, are advancing up our way and I guess that we will soon be breaking out of here to join up with them. Nights the switchboard is dead here and so I plug in all the switchboards down the line, thirteen of them, and we shoot the bull.

One night one of the guys thought it would be a good idea to have a women joins us and he got a night nurse from one of the hospital units to join us. It was nice talking to an American girl again.

### May 16<sup>th</sup>

When I am on from 2 to 8am I get all the reports on what is happening at the front. About 5am the Battalions start phoning in their reports to S-2 and S-3 about how things are going in their sector. I am glad I'm here and not in on that action. Gun positions are being dug out here and even as far forward as the front so when we start the push out of here they can get the guns into position quickly. They have moved some up already, but are not firing as not to give their position away.

### May 19<sup>th</sup>

The rear echelon came in today, as they have been kicked out of the houses they were in back in Anzio to make room for another Corps that has come in. Pretty soon there will be no room for anything more and then we will have to push out of here.

Farrell, the lucky guy, is transferring out of the outfit and going back to a base section in Carserta. Kunkle is taking over and that moves me up. But, as the company is over in tech sergeants he can't move up and I can't get his sergeant stripes.

### May 22<sup>nd</sup>

Tomorrow must be it. Late in the afternoon they smoked up the whole front where we are and then men and equipment started moving up. What an eerie feeling to see them emerging out of the smoke and then disappearing in to the smoke as they move up to the front.

### May 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>

It didn't go off on the 23<sup>rd</sup> but on the 24<sup>th</sup> we got word that the 36<sup>th</sup> was to move out at 4:30 am and push south to make contact with the main Fifth Army troops moving up from the southern front. We are no longer Engineers they have made Infantry out of us.

### May 25<sup>th</sup>

There are no more beachheads. Company A of the 36<sup>th</sup> has made contact with the units of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army coming up from the south.

## Cisterna di Latina, Italy. May and June, 1944

### May 27<sup>th</sup>

We are moving up to the central section of the beachhead to do Engineer work. Moving up we passed through the town of Cisterna which was pretty well in ruins with nothing much of it left. They moved us into the only woods around and they didn't do us any favors putting us there as we are right in front of our artillery. Five miles away is Velletri which is taking a pounding from us and they in turn are trying to take out our guns. The Germans are always trying to knock out our guns so we get our share of their shelling and then at night they come over dropping flares and AP's.

### May 29<sup>th</sup>

Heard a rumor today that I hope is not true. We are moving into the line again as Infantry.

### May 30<sup>th</sup>

It's true, we are going back into the line as Infantry. The 36<sup>th</sup> is losing a lot of good engineer officers and enlisted men using us as Infantry. It is the opinion of the enlisted men, we never discussed this with an officer, that the reason why we are being used as Infantry so much is because of our Commanding Officer. The CO of this regiment, Colonel Stanley, was in WWI, is regular Army and Infantry man at heart. And that is why he is always at Corps headquarters looking to use us as Infantry. It rings true to us.

### June 1<sup>st</sup>

Moved to our new CP. We had to bury Germans before we could even set up and they sure fled this place in a hurry, as they left a pile of equipment around. Scattered all over the place were guns, ammo, machine guns and even their clothes and personal stuff. From the looks of the ground around here it looks like quite a tank battle took place.

### June 2<sup>nd</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion with the 3<sup>rd</sup> in reserve started the push to take Velletri and assisted in taking the town and mopping up operations.

The trapped Germans are putting up a hell of a fight and we are suffering a lot of casualties. The PWs have been coming in all day long and in big batches. A lot of them are just gave up and sneaked into our lines to surrender from what we hear. Not many old looking guys, mostly young and looking in their early teens. They are glad to be PW's.

## Velletri, Italy. June, 1944

### June 3<sup>rd</sup>

Velletri has fallen and we have moved our Hqs to the outskirts of it. Lt. Carsten, Red, and Sandy went into a house to look for a place to set up communications and came out with four Germans. Red and the Lt. got pistols out of that catch.

We are at the base of the mountains that encircles the beachhead and no wonder we were on that beachhead so long. We have a view of the whole beachhead with the sea in front of it and you can pick out any spot on it for miles around.

As I am writing this Jerry is over dropping AP's a couple of miles down the road and hope they stay down there. Its 2AM and as there is not much traffic I am having a hard time staying awake.

### June 4<sup>th</sup>

Rome is taken by our troops. Hope I get to see it.

## 5 Miles Outside of Rome, Italy. June, 1944

### June 5<sup>th</sup>

Made a long haul today, about 30 miles, and five miles outside of Rome to the South bank of the River Tiber. As we got closer to Rome people lined the way cheering, throwing flowers and handing us vino.

The women looked great. There we constructed floating tread way bridges across the Tiber. Also construction of by-passes, bridges, culverts and doing road maintenance.

### June 6<sup>th</sup>

The invasion of Europe has started on the French coast. Now I can start dreaming of the end of this war and getting back home.

## Civitavecchia and Rome, Italy. June, 1944

### June 7<sup>th</sup>

Moved again, about 25 miles north of Rome and it looks like I am never going to see the one city I wanted to see in Italy, Rome.

### June 8<sup>th</sup>

The Germans are really on the run and we have moved up 30 more miles. The old man has picked some crazy spots to bivouac, but this is the craziest. Sometimes he has had HQ ahead of his battalions, when we are not up close to the front, but this time he has us ahead of the Infantry. We passed the Infantry resting along side of the road as we passed on and that night they advanced through us to capture a town up ahead.

### June 9<sup>th</sup>

Went AWOL today and sneaked into Rome. Borrowed a bike and another bike rider and I left early in the morning. Rode into Rome and toured the city. Saw the Vatican, but it was closed and couldn't get in, saw the Coliseum, St Peters Church and a lot of old Roman ruins.

### June 10<sup>th</sup>

We moved up to Civitavecchia to clear the streets and open all port roads. The 36<sup>th</sup> was relieved from the VI Corps and attached to the IV Corps. Wonder what that move means?

### June 11<sup>th</sup>

The move for today was postponed, as the old man, Colonel Stanley, got himself killed last night when he went up to the front and his luck ran out. He wasn't a bad CO, but he should have been in the Infantry.

## Montalto di Castro, Italy. June, 1944

### June 12<sup>th</sup>

Another move North doing road maintenance and mine clearance. Ending up in a great bivouac area on the banks of a small stream that in parts were deep enough to swim in. Some guys are fishing and catching fish and lots of shady tree to lie around under.

Man, it's just like a rest camp here, as we are just lying around doing nothing. Could stay here until the war is over, but that is not going to happen, so we are enjoy the time we have here.

There is a little town nearby, Montalto, that we have named "The Town of the Beautiful Women" because it's surprising to see so many beautiful women in one town. But no vino, as the Germans cleaned it out when they left.

### June 14<sup>th</sup>

Wasn't on shift today so took off in the S-4's truck for Rome and spent most of the day in Old Rome. It's the same old story the Germans cleaned out the place real good and it's hard to find anything to buy, food and vino included.

## Orbetello, Italy. June, 1944

### June 16<sup>th</sup>

Another move and it is getting to be a pain in the butt, but I'm not complaining, as we are not up at the front and we are doing what we were trained to do, engineering work. We are now north of Orbetello.

We haven't received mail now for some time. I guess we are moving too much and it hasn't caught up with us.

### June 18<sup>th</sup>

A couple of Partisans that we kicked out of the bivouac area a few days ago turned up today with four Germans they had captured. Two days ago two Polish soldiers came in that had escaped from the Germans and said they had been forced to serve in the German Army.

### June 19<sup>th</sup>

Bad news, the 36<sup>th</sup> has been relieved of attachment to the IV Corps and attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division for training at a later date. This does not bode well for the 36<sup>th</sup>. There are rumors that the Allies are going to open up another front and it will be in the Balkans.

## Grosseto, Italy. June, 1944

### June 20<sup>th</sup>

Moved up to the town of Grosseto. Except for the rail road yard the town has not been badly hit. A strange occurrence of this town is that what we have seen in previous towns that have been liberated; people come streaming back in a couple of days. This town must have loaded with Fascists, as it is not happening here.

### June 23<sup>rd</sup>

We have a new CO. He is Colonel Mark M. Boater. He arrived just in time to join the regiment for a long move back to Naples.

Naples. I don't like that town, as that is where we set off for our last landing in Anzio and if it is another landing it will be the fifth for the men of the 36<sup>th</sup>. All the regiment is going in one long convoy, traveling at night and resting days.

## Pozzuoli (Naples), Italy. June, July, August and September, 1944

### June 24<sup>th</sup>

After a miserable all night ride, 13 men to a truck, Chalky being the only comfortable one, we arrived at the Littoria airport where we stopped for the day. Got some sleep in the morning, game of softball in the evening and the rest of the time playing poker where I relieved the guys of \$70.

### June 25<sup>th</sup>

After another night trip down to Naples we arrived at the Port of Pozzuoli. Lots of invasion crafts in port which is not a good sign, as they signal invasion. While here we will be training with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division for another landing. Where? They haven't told us yet. Seems strange to see all the lights here at night.

### June 26<sup>th</sup>

Back to garrison life. Pup tents got out and lined up in a row. Set time to eat, work and play and bugles ringing out. No radio work, as the Battalions are close enough for phone lines. Just loafing around and have got into Naples, on business [official, honest] the last two days.

### June 27<sup>th</sup>

Man, what a head this morning, as I brought back a couple of bottles of cognac from Naples and we sat around last night and killed them. I don't think the first sergeant believed us when most of us reported

sick for reveille. The sailors we are going to train with came in today and they are the same group that was with us for the Sicilian invasion.

### June 28<sup>th</sup>

Someone has discovered a wine shop just up the road from us. The guy, who we named Pop, makes his own stuff and the wines and brandy are a lot better than what we are getting from Naples. Someone makes a run there most nights.

One night he invited a few us to come up and his wife would fix us a meal. Home cooked meal and was it every delicious. Dick brought his accordion and we had a great night.

### June 29<sup>th</sup>

The 72<sup>nd</sup> Signal Co. came in today to take over communication for the landing. It is very hot here now and I am glad I am not in the line company, as they and the infantry guys go by us after practicing for the landing and they are just wringing wet in their own sweat.

### June 30<sup>th</sup>

We are restricted to the area, but I have been getting out going to signal repairs in Naples and then I ride around for a few hours before going back.

## July

Not going to put in dates all the time while we are in camp, as it's the same thing most of the time. I am not complaining as we are living it up with this camp life.

The chow has been wonderful since we got down here. We have fresh meat at least once a day, pastry all the time, ice cream often and except for the coffee all our drinks are iced.

Doesn't get better than that. We even have benches and tables to eat our meals. Nights we have movies and occasionally we have a band or a show to listen to and watch.

It's a sure thing now that that Chalky is going to have puppies, as she is swelling up more as the days go by. She better have a dozen for all the requests I have had for them.

### July 4<sup>th</sup>

We celebrate the fourth here by getting paid this day. Not going to put anything in my soldier's deposit account this time, as I have another landing coming up. I'll spend it on "wine, women and song."

I manage to get into Naples and the surrounding country side every other day or so in my trips to the signal dump or repair. So, I am not stuck in camp and get to see different things. Naples I get in and out of that place in a hurry as it holds nothing for me, as I have seen it so many times.

### July 14<sup>th</sup>

Pop fixed us up a pretty good time last night. He got us a house on the beach, fixed us a great meal brought along his good liquor refreshments and women. Had a radio for dancing and the twelve of us that went certainly had a good time.



Well, I was due the way I had been living it up, and got stuck with water proofing our communication vehicle for the landing. I had been assigned to drive it for the landing and the guy that drives it, waterproofs it. It's a dirty job and as all the fellows in communication drove it, I talked them into helping me.

### July 17<sup>th</sup>

Left early in the morning for the staging area outside of Naples. As we won't leave today to load aboard the ships I went back to camp. Put on my OD's and took off for Naples along with everyone else that's here.

Next time I see Chalky, I hope, she will have had her puppies. Had left her with Steff and Ed and I won't see her have her puppies and how she acts with them.

### July 19<sup>th</sup>

Wrote this the 26<sup>th</sup>. This morning started feeling terrible, chills, headaches and running a temperature. Ended up going to the hospital with a 104 temperature. Had malaria. What a week that was getting over the malaria. Chills, fever, sweating, the shakes and big headaches.

The good side was when I was getting over it and could enjoy the good food and lying in a bed on a mattress. Did alright playing poker while there. Won myself a nice watch and some money.

### July 31<sup>st</sup>

Left the hospital today and returned to my outfit. Chalky was sure glad to see me and she hadn't had her puppies. Guess she was waiting for me to get back before she had them.

### August 4<sup>th</sup>

Chalky had her puppies' today-six of them, all colors. Steff won the pool as to the number of puppies she would have. She is so cute with them, always cleaning them up and if she has to leave them she hurries right back. No other dog gets into the headquarter area now, as she runs them right out.

### August 6<sup>th</sup>

The army has a saying-"Do not volunteer for anything" and it's so true. I had volunteered to be a dispatch rider while in camp and was enjoying getting out of camp with that job riding that motorcycle.

Then it turned bad. Was told that I was no longer the driver of the communication vehicle, and come in later, but that I would be a dispatch rider for the landing and that's not good. After the landing and they send you out and you don't know what's down the road. So, I wasn't looking forward to this landing. I'm kicking myself for not listening to that advice of not volunteer for anything.

### Aug. 7<sup>th</sup>

***[Last entry in my journal. From this date on I had to depend on my memory and notes I took while hospitalized.]***

Got the order today to go down and load aboard a LST for the landing. I never made it, as the motorcycle I was driving collided with a jeep coming the other way on a narrow dirt road and ended up in a hospital.

I don't remember whose fault it was, as all I remember was seeing that jeep at the last second and couldn't avoid it. Next thing I remembered was waking up in that hospital with my leg in a cast and they told me that my knee cap was so badly damage that they had to remove it.

### August 15<sup>th</sup>

Hear that the landing was in Southern France and that things were going OK.

### August 18<sup>th</sup>

They started bring in the wounded from the landing today. I had an end bed and they were coming down and going around it so I could see the guys they were bringing in. Then I recognized one of them and asked to talk to him.

It was Antonuccio the H&S bike rider and he and I were going to be on the same ship for the landing. Asked him what happened to him and he told me that as they went in for the landing the ship was hit and there were a lot of wounded and dead. Lucked out again, as that accident kept me from being on that ship and who knows what would have happened to me.

### Notes from the hospital

Thought the happiest day of my life was when I got home, but it was the day my leg stopped paining me. Between the leg hurting and getting a shot of penicillin every three hours I wasn't getting much sleep.

Towards the end of the month, August, they took the cast off and I tried to get up, but couldn't. Got some crutches after that and then I could stand up which got me out of that bed. That was another good day.

Oh yes, another happy day was when I was told they would not have to have my knee aspirated anymore. Three times I had that done without pain shots. They would have to hold me down, as the doctor would stick this long needle into my sore knee to get the pus and blood out. Man did it hurt.

My leg is stiff as a board and I can't lift or bend it. Another painful ordeal, going to therapy. I go every day and the heat and massage treatments are great, but when they work on bending it, that's another painful thing. When I work on bending it I take it easy on myself. But those nurses have no mercy at all and they are killing me when they grab that leg and work on bending it. I tell them it's going to break, but they don't listen to me and keep right on trying to break it.

### September 5<sup>th</sup>

I'll always remember this date, as this is the date I got the good news. That I was ZI, Zone of Interior. That means I was going back to the good old USA. Hope it is soon.

## Travel Home

Some days later I was shipped home on a hospital plane. I knew we flew to Africa and then to one of the Azores Islands, in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, where we had an airbase and then on to Florida.

Stayed there for a few days, then put on another plane and flown up to Massachusetts to the Cushing General Hospital in Framingham Massachusetts. Was treated there, with visits home.

## December 14, 1944

Discharged from the Army.

## Reflections on my service

As I finish writing my journey through WWII and looking back on my war experiences, I have to think that there were three very important events that took place that allowed me to survive the war:

1. Being put in H&S Co. and not in a line company.
2. Moving from one fox holes to another when I was out on line work at Anzio.
3. Being in the hospital with my accident and not being on that ship I had been assigned to, that took a direct hit in the landing at Cavalaire, France.

## Life After The Service

Went back to my job at the newspaper in New Bedford MA.

Married in October of 1946 and had three sons.

In 1955 I moved to Rhode Island to work for the Providence Journal and retired from the paper in 1979.

As I finish this, at age 89, I have a lot to be thankful for. I survived the war, married a wonderful woman who I loved until I lost her in January of 2005. We would have been married 59 years.

We had three boys and between them and a couple of daughters in laws they take good care of me. Not that I need looking after, as I am in excellent health, with no major problems and still living in my own home. Still drive and take trips in the car and overseas when I get the urge to take off and go.

Still see two of my buddies that I went through the war with, Tony "Steff" Stefanelli and Walter Miller and visit with them whenever I can. Both are 93. Steff lives in New Jersey and I'll drive down there to see him. Walt lives in South Carolina now and we, Steff and I, fly down to see him and play some golf. We both complain about our golf game, as we are taking a lot more strokes now and the ball does not go as far as it used to.

So, life has been good to me and still continues to be.