

THE OLD RED BULL GOES HOME

We were going home. On 27, September, 1945, the Division commenced the long but happy trek away back to Naples and Bagnoli, a road distance of 800 miles. The 88th Division was now to take over the border assignment, many of our latest recruits remaining with the "Blue Devils." The assembly area near Naples was familiar: Collegio Ciano, the same college grounds where so many of our troops had quartered in early October, 1943. Then, the unknown and uncertain lay ahead; now, eager men knew their destiny was home. For them, no more long marches; no more mud, mules and mountains; no more night patrols; no more worries of Stukas and 88's, mines and booby-traps; no more weary nights on damp, cold ground, in snow, in caves, or pup tents; and no more hunting men with M-1's, tommy and machineguns—nor being hunted in return.

It was a proud Division that embarked for home, proud in the knowledge that its men had performed in the best American traditions; proud too, that more days of combat are accredited to the 34th than to any other Division of the Army. But there was an air of sad reflection in the minds and faces of the veterans as, in retrospect, they contemplated the many scenes that had unfolded during the past four years and nine months of their lives: comrades had fallen in the snows, on the deserts and in the poppy fields of Tunisia; wearers of the Red Bull Patch lay under rows of gleaming, white crosses along the many purple paths of Italy; and in hospitals and homes, were unnumbered comrades whose dreams, hopes and aspirations remained shattered forever.

The price of victory had come high to the 34th.

3,737 killed in action, 14,165 wounded and 3,460 missing in action, a total of 21,362 battle casualties. These figures were furnished by the Department of the Army, which advises that the compilation of the 34th Division casualty list is not yet final.

Embarking from Naples on October 22, 1945, the diminished Division, still under command of Major General Bolte, landed at Newport News, Virginia, proceeding immediately to Camp Patrick Henry, where the troops were mustered out on November 3, 1945.

And so, the 34th Infantry Division, covered with glory, had returned to the United States, as it had left: totally and completely without pomp or ceremony; no bands, no popular greeting, no public review nor speech-making. Public acclaim had been expended on troops which had returned earlier. We had left the shores of America in January 1942 under the greatest of secrecy; we became at times, a forgotten Division on a "forgotten front;" and now, we had returned home in almost total obscurity. But in the heart of every man who wore the Red Bull patch will forever glow a pride founded on the firm knowledge that the services of his Division in World War II, ranked second to none and that the name of the 34th Infantry Division will stand high on the scroll of honor among the greatest fighting units that ever carried the Stars and Stripes into battle. Yes, a pride too in the knowledge that the gallant Old Red Bull fought its battles and made its sacrifices to insure that Democracy shall ever remain a beacon for all freedom loving peoples of the World.

THE END

MARION: THIS WAS GIVEN TO US AT THE LAST REUNION
ALONG WITH THE BOOK I WOULD LOVE TO SHARE THIS WITH
OTHERS IN OUR FORUM, BUT JUST TOO MUCH TYPING FOR ME.
HINT, HINT. ROGUE