

**IN MEMORY OF**

**Cpl. Benjamin F. Gray  
Sp. Martin A. Certain  
Sp. Fredrick S. Holmes  
Pfc. Michael J. Francisco  
Pfc. Donald R. Evanson  
Pvt. Louis H. Pfaff  
Pvt. Edwin A. Gehm  
Pvt. James L. Johnson  
Pvt. Donald C. Sims**

**KILLED IN ACTION**

**CASSINO**

**MARCH 22, 1944**

**CO. C 235<sup>TH</sup> ENGR. COMBAT BN.**

**THE ABOVE SIGN WAS PLACED ON THE BAILEY BRIDGE BUILT BY  
COMPANY C, 235<sup>TH</sup> ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION**

The gap requiring a Bailey bridge was caused by a stray allied bomb aimed at Cassino or the Abbey on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 1944. The bomb hit a small dirt road. The road was of great value to the Allies as it offered the only covered approach to the Rapido River directly in front of Cassino. Company C of the 235<sup>th</sup> Engineers got the job to build the bridge and they started work the evening of 21 March. At midnight all was going well when with terrible accuracy shells started to fall. They moved in from the road's intersection with Highway 6. Three shells tore into the bridge and among the men. As the survivors moved in to care for the wounded more shells poured down. In the end 44 soldiers earned the purple heart -- nine were killed and seventeen were seriously wounded.

## Everyone Felt Like Applauding for Engineer Hero From S. D.

By GRAHAM HOVEY

NAPLES—(MS)—Most combat engineers are either consistent heroes or dead ones, and yet they generally get less recognition than any other frontline units of an army.

Those general truths explain why everyone felt like applauding overtime recently when Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes, commander of an American Fifth army formation, planned the distinguished service cross on Capt. Orville (Bill) Munson of Wessington Springs, S. D. Munson is a consistent hero.

He was awarded the DSC for leading his engineers into the front lines to fight for three days and three nights as infantrymen during the bitter battle for Mt. Porchia, but it could just as well have been for half a dozen other outstanding accomplishments.

In the Porchia affair, Munson's men literally had to drop their tools, park their dump trucks where they had been working, grab up rifles and rush right into the battle, some of them still wearing hip boots.

But they fought gallantly and are given credit for helping to swing the balance in favor of the American forces—and it un-

doubtedly was Munson's leadership that did it.

Bill led his men through mined and shelled areas in the middle of the night to the foot of Porchia, acting as the point of the column. By way of starting off right, he led the company around two German gun positions and killed an enemy soldier in the process.

Captured later, he shouted a warning which saved the company from walking into a trap despite the fact he had an enemy gun in his back at the moment.

When fragments from an exploding grenade hit him in the shoulder, Munson fell and feigned death, but as soon as the Germans started to leave

the area, Bill grabbed up a carbine, took two prisoners and made his way back to his men.

Stocky, sandy-haired Munson is a onetime halfback on the University of Idaho football team. A fun-loving officer he occasionally puts booby traps in the beds of his officers to keep their mine-detecting faculties alert.

He's also a consistent hero who finally has been recognized as one.

### RECEIVE AWARDS FROM SON SERVING IN ITALY

Mr. and Mrs. Emil Munson are in receipt of two medals, the purple heart and silver cross, sent by their son Capt. Orville Munson, who is back in action in Italy after being wounded three times. Another medal, the distinguished service cross, is expected soon as it is on the way. Presentation was made recently somewhere in Italy.

## Wessington Springs Man Awarded DSC

Italy, April 25.—(AP)—Thirty-two officers and enlisted men were decorated Monday by Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes, commander of an American army corps, in three front-line ceremonies within range of enemy guns.

Capt. Orville D. Munson of Wessington Springs, S. D., received a DSC.

The citation for Munson said: "He led his company in darkness through a mined, shelled area to the foot of Mount Porchio, Italy, and acted as point of a column far in advance and alone."

It said he led his men around two German machine gun positions, killing one German. Later he was captured, but with a German pistol prodding his back shouted a warning that prevented his men from walking into a German trap.

Hand-grenade fragments struck him in the shoulder and he fell. Thinking him dead, the Germans started away. Munson seized a carbine, captured two of the enemy and took them back to his company. He also aided in capture of four other Germans.

## WESSINGTON SPRINGS SOLDIER RECEIVES MEDAL FOR GALLANTRY IN ACTION ON ITALIAN FRONT



Picture shows Lt. Orville Munson receiving the Silver Star from Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes, for gallantry in action in an engagement on the Italian front. The picture was sent by Orville to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Emil Munson of this city and received by them recently. Munson has since been promoted to the rank of Captain.

In the picture between Keyes and Munson is Capt. Swift. The picture

was taken in Italy.

The picture is captioned: "Congratulations Geoffrey Keyes Maj-gen. U. S. A."

Munson has been awarded the Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross in addition to the Silver Star. The medals have been sent home for safe keeping.

Munson is again serving with the combat engineers in Italy after being wounded three times.

## Billy Munson

### Back In Action

"Billy" Munson, who was recently reported wounded in action on the Italian front writes to his parents Mr. and Mrs. Emil Munson, that he has been promoted to the rank of Captain. The letter follows:

I am now fairly convinced that soon this whole mess is going to be over with, so keep your spirits high. Your prayers, I'm sure, is what's helping me, so to them I thank you and am grateful the rest of my life. Lately we have sure had a lot of cold—seems like February is their coldest month. I just received December 4th paper yesterday. The wind has started to blow again so undoubtedly before morning the tent will be down. Love Bill."

MY REASONING FOR WRITING ABOUT THE ATTACK ON CASSINO IN THE DETAIL SHOWN IS TO JUSTIFY COMMENTS THAT CLAIM WW II HAD MANY IMPORTANT BATTLES BUT NONE MORE DIFFICULT, VICIOUS AND DEVASTATING THAN CASSINO. THE BATTLE CULMINATING FINALLY IN ITS CAPTURE TOOK FOUR MONTHS AND EIGHTEEN DAYS TO COMPLETE. UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF TODAY'S MONTE CASSINO (THE ABBEY), ONE CAN FIND A BRITISH CEMETERY BEING ENCIRCLED BY THE CITY -- IT CONTAINS THREE THOUSAND DEAD. THE POLES BURIED THEIR DEAD ON THE HILLSIDE OF THE ABBEY AND THEIR CEMETERY CONTAINS 1,533 DEAD. THE FRENCH CEMETERY IS CLOSE BY AT VENAFARO WITH 4,000 DEAD. THE ITALIANS BURIED THEIR DEAD AT MT. LUNGO, WHERE MY COMPANY 'A' OF 48<sup>TH</sup> ENGINEERS BIVOUACKED FOR THREE MONTHS AND IT CONTAINS 756 DEAD. THE AMERICAN CEMETERY FOR THOSE KILLED AT CASSINO IS FOUND NEAR ANZIO AND IT CONTAINS 7,372 KNOWN DEAD AND 490 OTHERS KNOWN ONLY TO GOD. ON THE WALLS OF THE MEMORIAL AT ANZIO ARE THE NAMES OF AN ADDITIONAL 3,094 KNOWN AS MISSING IN ACTION. ANZIO CONTAINS THE GRAVES FOR EIGHTEEN SOLDIERS THAT SERVED WITH ME IN THE 1108<sup>TH</sup> COMBAT ENGINEER GROUP -- SIX OF WHOM SERVED IN MY COMPANY. THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT THE CEMETERIES MENTIONED HOLD ONLY THOSE NOT REPATRIATED ACCORDING TO THE WISHES OF THE NEXT TO KIN.

THE GERMAN TROOPS KILLED AND NOT REPATRIATED ARE BURIED IN A CEMETERY ON A SMALL HILL OVERLOOKING CASSINO FROM THE NORTH. IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE LARGEST WW II CEMETERY IN ITALY. IT CONTAINS 20,002 SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN.



GERMAN CEMETERY OVERLOOKING CASSINO -- 20,002 DEAD


## ROAD TO ROME

After Terracina was consolidated and approximately 0830 24 May 1994 work began for the 1108th Engineer Combat Group to head north as fast as possible. The 48th had received orders to open a beach route north and the 235th were to continue along Highway 7. Everybody knew our goal was to reach Anzio as fast as possible. Along the beach route the men of the 48th worked at breakneck speed. They spanned 3 canals, filled at least a score of craters, and got their jeeps filled with flowers as they raced through newly liberated villages barely ninety minutes behind German demolition crews blowing the roads ahead of them. They collected eight prisoners and opened 24 miles of road in 23 hours.


At 0731 on 25 May, Lt. Francis X. Buckley, Company B, 48th Eng (C) Bn, and PFC "Pancho" Savalo, were walking past the sleeping hamlet of Borgo Grappa when they ran into a Capt. Ben Souza who was leading a patrol of American Engineers who had fought their way out of Anzio. No matter how history may dress it up, the actual conversation went something like this:

SOUZA: "Where are you going, Lieutenant?" BUCKLEY: "We're engineers, trying to get to Anzio and latch onto some of that beer we hear they've got up there." SOUZA: "Well, goddammit, if you're trying to get to Anzio, you've made it! We are the beachhead forces. We're the 36th Engineers. My name is Souza." BUCKLEY: "Mine's Buckley, 48th Engineers. God, what a day for us gravel shakers."

On 26 May a radio message from General Keys, II Corps, to Colonel Andersson, 1108th Engineers read: CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR AGGRESSIVE RECONNAISSANCE TO ESTABLISH INITIAL CONTACT WITH BEACHHEAD ENGINEERS. ACCOMPLISHED FAR EARLIER THAN ANTICIPATED.



25 May 1944, a proud moment for the 48th Engineers, as Lt. F. Buckley makes contact with Anzio beachhead at Borgo Grappa. Buckley is shown with General Mark Clark who arrived 0930 to congratulate the juncture.



One chocolate bar was supposed to have sufficient food value to sustain an individual for 24 hours. We had discovered, however, that if you shaved the bar into some hot milk and water, it made a wonderful hot chocolate drink. I called out to the Brits asking them if they wanted some hot chocolate. They laughed loudly at my suggestion as if it was some kind of a joke. The cook went back and fixed a cup of hot chocolate for everyone. When the cook came in with the hot chocolate the Brits were all eyes and their commander broke the silence very appropriately by saying, "You got hot chocolate? Even the bloody King doesn't have hot chocolate."

When the Brits were ready to call it an evening, one of them asked about the shoulder patch we were wearing. Though our unit was supporting the New Zealand Corps at the time, we still wore the II Corps patch that was made available to us when we first joined Fifth Army. Lieutenant Finnegan who was relatively new in the company was feeling no pain so he chose to tell them about the patch. He pointed to the Eagle emblem on the left hand side of the patch and said it represented the United States. He pointed to the Tiger emblem on the right side of the patch and said it represented England. As for the Roman numeral II on the patch, Finnegan said it stands for the second time we had to come to your rescue.

