

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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MENTIONED ARE GOODPASTER,
LYNCH, AND MUNSON

Hollar was platoon leader of the 3rd
Platoon, Company 'A'



A PAGE OUT OF
THE HISTORY OF
THE 1108TH ENGR
BOOK -----"THE
BATTALIONS".



Lt. Courtney P. "Andy" Hollar, Italy 1944.
(Silver Star and Purple Heart recipient)
Member of the Engineer OCS Hall of Fame.
Killed early on in Viet Nam as a Major CE
with the American Military Advisory Group.