



14 DECEMBER 1943 ASSIGNMENT THRU 1108 ENGR GROUP
PHONE MESSAGE FROM COL GALLAGHER (II CORPS ENGR) TO CO 48TH ENGR BN
MAKE RAILROAD FROM MIGNANO TO FRONT OF MT LUNGO PASSABLE TO TWO-WAY CLASS 40 VEHICLE
TRAFFIC WITHOUT DELAY. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THIS ROAD WILL BE NEEDED IN SIX DAYS.

This was the most difficult task yet undertaken by the battalion. This stretch of railroad, running into Cassino along a high embankment in a rough parallel to Highway 6, was at all times under direct enemy observation and heavy fire. The total distance called for was 6 miles and there were 13 distinct demolitions along the way, including 3 blown bridges, the shortest of which had been 115 feet. The road was flanked in 3 places by 8-mines, trip wire and Tellermine fields, and on the bed itself the rails had been severed by explosive and the wooden cross-ties sliced in half by the enemy's ingenious railroad "hook" drawn by a locomotive.

At a heavy cost in manpower and equipment the thoroughfare was opened well within the allotted time. During its construction over 300 recorded rounds of very close, accurate artillery fire were received. Direct hits were sustained on 2 of the 3 Bailey bridges erected. The final 2500 yards of roadway were cleared and developed in spite of small arms and mortar fire in addition to intense artillery fire on men and bulldozers. When completed, "Highway 48" provided an avenue of approach for men and supplies to the areas in front and to the west of Cassino, and was an arterial route of paramount importance in the ill-fated crossing of the Rapido at San Angelo by the 36th Division in January.

These were also the days when the little town of San Pietro, clinging to the hillside east of the highway and heavily defended, was a costly thorn in the side of the advancing Fifth Army Divisions. The German gunners had unobstructed vision across the valley to the highway, Mount Rotundo, taken after a stiff fight, afforded the only immediate screen for our approaching armor.

**TAKEN FROM "THE BATTALIONS" 1108TH ENGINEER GROUP
BY MARK REARDON**