

We continued on to our area, marked exact gun & C.P. position & routes of entry, & check for mines. Only the security had bed-rolls, but they loaned us some blankets, & we broke into a house. We found a lamp, blacked-out the windows, brought in some water, "C" ration, & a stove, and made ourselves at home. Pictures & posters showed our absent "host" to be an ardent fascist. The floor was concrete. Peter & I slept on a quilt, & under a blanket. Finally the word came down that Jess would not come up until 0530 in the morning. We (check ^{checked out} our) of the net, & turned in.

2 Nov.

Up at 0600. Found Jess had been ordered forward again at 2300 last night. He passed us by & pulled into a cover position at 0300. The attack has been moving ahead so well that we are going forward to look for new positions. Ciorlano and Fonkegreca are ours, & Copriaki is being fought over. (in doubt.) We drove up within a mile of Copriaki, where they stopped us. We worked our way through town, and into the valley on the left. The town was so eerie that it is indescribable. A dead soldier on the edge of town, the absolute quiet and absence of life or motion were more nerve wracking than fire. We worked down the valley together; Lou, Peter, Dotson, & I, to the cemetery. Then I swung off to the left, Dotson to the right, & the others to the right-front. I climbed to the high ground. The field of fire is excellent, but it would be next to impossible to make the grade. Went back to town to wait for the others.

Found some peaches & pomegranates, and then laid low. Col. Bernay & Shirley came up to the town. He wants us on the hill I was just on. How & I climbed it again, selecting positions & route. The other two went back. How & I hiked back to the car an hour & a-half later & returned to the Company. We had the crews put on 4 grousers per track. I took Henningsen, Hutchens, all the gun commanders, & a bunch of security men up. We pioneered a way in & showed the commanders the exact spot for each gun. Returned to the Company. Words cannot describe how tired I am. Ate a bit. Moved out at 1945. The grousers make the destroyers ride very badly on the hard road-bed. I rode the 1st destroyer & watched for the place where I was to turn off. The ponderous vehicle, & the darkness, made it seem that I was going to for. I "sweet out" the turn, & finally came to it. We bounced across the irrigation ditches, with the half-tracks bringing up the rear. When I arrived at the crossing we had pioneered I found the 27th F.A., our old friends, going through. The delay was unwelcome, but not too angering. What did "get" me was the way they destroyed the usefulness of our crossings. Their M7th broke down the bank of the stream 'till the water was diverted down the ruts. The result was,

mess. I was in water over my boot-tops, which was discouraging. It was cold. As we followed the last F.A. vehicle through, a half-track, there was a long delay. I finally tramped up & found a Capt. standing there debating where to put his vehicle. I really bored into him. He stood there and said, "yes sir, yes sir," to everything I said. I was mad enough to sound like a Col. Eventually we pulled on through the F.A., up onto the forward slope of the mountain. As we were digging in I heard a bad noise from #6 handcrabs, then quiet. I "churned" up the hill & found them on the forward slope, in the center of a big bare field, turned broadside to the enemy, and with a track thrown. Oh woe! I called for Shear & his wrecker. No small vehicles could move due to the mud, so Gunnerson hitch-hiked back & got Shear. The track was on again a half-hour before dawn. I was a bit concerned for a while that they might not make it. Turned in at 0300.

3 Nov.

Up at 0730. I am still stiff, & have a cold. Lay the battery on 5760. The large trees we felled toward the enemy, & the gun positions look pretty good. I have restricted all movement. The "dutch" have some excellent OP's opposite us over Vengro & Pozzilli. Finished laying the wire & generally relaxed. Just before dark we carried ammunition up the rear

slope. After dark the drivers carried it to the guns. Our wire has been broken many times today, but by some miracle when we were ready to fire at 2300 it was in. We fired until 0530 in the morning. There is a lot more artillery firing. This has been a rough two days
H Nov.

Turned in at 0545, was roused at 0730 by a good sized air-raid. There were about 15 Lutewafes. Our position is hard to pick up, but once seen it sticks out like the well known sore thumb. Therefore we gave the order to hold A.A. fire unless attacked. There was another good sized raid in the afternoon, & a lot of artillery shot in, as they did yesterday. The intense air attacks we are receiving convince me that the Germans are against our gaining this ground very much. The Russians out off the Crimea today according to BBC.
5 Nov.

We have a lot more Flak in the valley today. I turned in at 1900 last night, & the Lutewafe jerked me out of bed at 0800. We expected to fire last night, so the much needed sleep was a pleasant surprise. Three heavy air-raids by dive-bombers. One 500 pound dud landed ten feet from a "C" Company half-track! That Jerry worked pretty hard to put it

there, so I imagine he was quite disappointed about the whole thing. I will only describe the third raid. They pretty much follow a pattern. Our planes made their raid across the voltorno & had just disappeared when 15 German planes, ME 109's & F.W. 190's with bombs, came in. They split up, some taking the road, & the others seeking arty. positions. We escaped their attention. The flak was quite heavy & the ME's were flying very low & fast, waving their wings to avoid being hit. The high ground we are on afforded the Jennys cover from the rear & surprise to their front, so the "hedge-hopped" over us. They were about 25 yards up. When we cut loose with our 12 .50 cal. mgs ^{there} ~~there~~ was consternation in the planes. They bellied up & tried for altitude. Two of the four were coughing great gobs of black smoke as they glided down into the valley, around the mountain, & out of our sight. A curious bomb fragment came in the top of #1. It was 8" x 2.5" x .75" with razor edges. It missed Hannerberg & cut his field-bag to pieces. Had a sudden fire mission, but the F.A. observer had to call it off. He was shelled out of his position. The German artillery has been very active today, but not near us. Played hearts until 2230. I dropped 16.85, which is pretty bad in hearts.

6 Nov.

Amused by the usual enemy planes. They passed us by, however, & struck the

next valley. Evidently the enemy moved a S.P. Gun or Tank in last night, because we were awakened by near hits & overs. It is remarkable how many duds the Germans have. Evidently the German-American plane schedule got screwed up this morning because a brisk dog-fight took place. That makes one in Africa & one over here that I have seen.

Today, I believe, is the tenth. I will try to write up the past few days.

We went out on reconnaissance for new positions this afternoon, after a battalion officers call in the morning. Moved up after dark. I brought up the rear. We dragged the last vehicle through the ruts & mud at ~~2500~~²⁴³⁰ in the morning. It is rainy, cold, & dark.

8th November
Started laying in the battery at 0430 in the rain. Climbed in bed in the upstairs of a rickety old house with Lou. No sooner was I in bed than we opened up with a heavy barrage (not our company.) More counter-battery came in on "B" & "C" & the artillery than I have heard in some time. I knew I should get up, but just couldn't make it. I'm so weary. Up at 0900. Gave Peter a chance to go

The 6th & 7th
were about the same.

to bed now. The enemy can look right down our throat. Received orders; vague, poorly written orders, to reconiter certain positions & contact ~~the~~ the Infantry. There was no infantry at the coordinates given. We reconited the other two spots. By going from one infantry rear CP to another we finally located Shintey, now acting exec. The Col. sent us the coordinates in yesterday's code.

The places we were are far ahead of the infantry. We realized that at the time. Mines & booby-traps are everywhere. After dark we moved up to the road junction beyond Montaquila. The infantry said they were covering us. I posted the security & turned in at 1245.

9 & 8 November

0115 artillery started in on us. The soil is so sticky & rocky we could not dig good holes. About 0300 or 0400 German auto-weapons started in 300 yards to our west flank, & gradually worked away. I was up at 0530. One of the guards said someone was passing through our area. I searched the area over, but heard no one. Later others verified that someone had passed through us. After daylight I tried to catch some sleep.

Finally, not having much success
 at that, I went up & talked to
 a Capt. everyone addressed as "Ray",
 S-3 of the 2nd Battalion of the 135.
 I wanted to know what changes
 had occurred, & what the enemy-
 friendly troops situation was. He
 said it was still "tactically
 unsound" to put a platoon of
 infantry ahead of us! Then I
 was concerned for the security
 of the platoon. The hill ahead
 of us I had been told was
 ours. It was not. And while
 we were well concealed, there
 were track-marks all over.
 And they always lead to a
 vehicle. I found positions
 within the town of Montiquila
 to our rear, just inside the infantry,
 where we could cover the valley
 ahead just as well. Luckily, I ran
 in to Col. Barney in the town. After
 discussing the situation with him,
 he ordered me to move into town.
 Just as soon as it was dark, but
 before the moon came up, I led
 out. As we swung into town via
 the north-west road (not on the map)
 someone with a German mg. started
 cutting capers. We pulled into
 the places how I had deemed
 best, & spent a night much more
 securely than the last one. There

was harrassing fine in the town,
but they seemed to be
able to hit only four spots.

10 November

McIntire & Scott's security sections
stood guard last night as usual. I
had them awaken me at 0600,
but let the gun crews sleep until
0700. I think it was in the early
afternoon that four rounds dropped
in near Olson's destroyer. Sidebottom
& Olson got it. I won't write the
details. The destroyer was knocked
out by one round which hit about
four feet directly behind the vehicle.

The 3rd Bn., 135th - Medics were
right there, & did a good job.

Two Italians were hit bad. There
is much screaming & wailing going
on. I wonder why these
people stay here? After dark Shear
came up & removed the M-10. I
sent Eoadokie, Hannenburg, & Wuttke
back. We holed up as best we could
for the night. No place feels safe.
The harrassing fire all went over us.

11 November

Up at 0600. There is a bit of sunshine.
Scouted around a bit. Shaved off a
six day beard. This is armistious
day. I know how the men in the
trenches felt when the last war was
pronounced done. I hope I can last
this one out. The officer replacements

are pretty poor. What would happen to the platoon? Last night and tonight we had some great "bull-sessions" with the infantry boys. I am sleeping in a house with some boys from Co. "G" 135th I. Their stories of Fondouk are jewels. Furness cooked us some beef the Capt. sent up to us. It was delicious. It is local. The frozen beef the U.S. sends us has been scarce & not as good as it should have been.

12 November, 1943.

Rumor is strong that the 34th is going to get relieved. However, we have had similar rumors so often I hesitate to hope. A short, short Chinese^(Chu) boy is telling a tale of woe. There were two fellows in fox-holes about 8 feet apart. He was standing between them, upright. A shell lit right alongside him, wounding the two men in the holes, but leaving him unscathed. He said, "What the hell am I going to do? I can't get sick. I can't get hit. And I can't walk any more! It's not enough that I have to carry that damned pack, but now it gets cold & I have that heavy overcoat!" Then they showed him an article about soldiers being sent to Yale for two years to learn Chinese. And this boy is a U.S. College grad.

major in Math. with 8 years school in China behind him. He read the article & hit the sky. The article in "Stars & Stripes" saying that the troops don't want to go home until the war is won has caused a great deal of comment. The general gist being, "What do they know what we feel? Why don't they ask the combat troops?" All ~~the~~ Tolson & Walter Winchell are very popular with us these days. We are getting pretty exhausted. There are enough fresh divisions available in the U.S. to relieve us all, and more. We are willing to go through all this. What angers the boys are all these articles about "What the Soldiers Think", or "How the Soldiers Feel", or "How Our Boys In the Trenches Eat". What do those writers know about it? We never see any of them up here! Went down & saw John & Jess. They say I will have a few days in Naples. coming in a couple of weeks. All the org. is to go, 5% at a time. I'd like to buy some Christmas gifts, however I'll believe it when I'm there. My back has been bothering me all week. Today I can hardly get around, yet if I check in to the doc they will think I am trying to "weasle out". Anyhow, they will probably give me a pill & say,

"O.K., let me know if it bothers you again". And that's that. An Italian man, wife, & little boy moved in with us this evening. We are in their house. We have nice to them, but it is too cold to sleep outside when a house is available.

13 November, 1943.

Up at 0600. Back still tricky. Day clear but cold. The rumor of the moment is, "There is a four-power conference in Spain between the U.S., Britain, Russia, & Germany to settle the peace terms." It is pathetic how some men try to believe that the war is almost over, & we will soon be on our way home. I still figure next July will do it.

16 November, 1943.

The last few days have been rainy and cold. All of us have been able to be in out of the weather. These Italian homes are very primitive. However, the fireplace draws, & the roof is solid. The "dagos" are living upstairs except when they cook. We have treated them well, and give them food. Nevertheless, they are growing impatient with us. The Germans would keep them intimidated. Some of the infantry boys have Christmas presents already. None.

have come through to us. It must be the difference in A.P.O. Our food, "U"-ration, is excellent. German prisoners trickle in each day. Booby-traps continue to take their toll, even though we are not pushing. (Corps has taken up a defensive position.) Moral is good. This rest is great after so much pushing. [Bull session notes: In Africa 109th Engineer laying mines - Germans following & picking them up. In Italy: All set to shoot up advancing 40 man enemy combat patrol - turns out to be Co. "G". Rain so bad men (jokingly) say they are looking for Germans (to capture them?) Hell no! To surrender! - Pondoux: Div. withdraws leaving a platoon to hold!] 34th's only contact with enemy is arty. 504th Parachutes had some excitement late this night.

27 November, 1943.

Still a period of intermittent downpours, with occasional short periods of sunshine. The snow on the mountains ahead is deepening. The radio says we are "improving our positions", and that there is "heavy patrol activity", all of which means nothing. We moved from Montequila on the 22nd. We are now in the valley of the T. Ravindolla (river). I was in Naples on the 20th & 21st. The weather, unfortunately, prevented me from getting photographs, although Capri, & Vesuvius were visible.

Britz, McCulloch, and DeKock were with me. We stayed at the Minerva. Via Roma is an interesting street. The best champagne sells for 150 lire (\$1.50) maximum. A shave is 4 lire, but a near-ice-cream is 10 lire.

The Italians are very friendly, doing their best to separate us from our cash at all times. Ate at a Ciro's. The contrast between old and new sections is great. The older buildings are of a style that is difficult to date. The oldest and newest are dated fairly well.

In Naples there are countless people, ranging from small boys to old men, all working advertising agencies; "Spagetti, beefsteak, good champagne, cognac, nice signorita, barber shop?", and any number of other things, is their cry. The 3rd Div. has been relieved by the 36th.

The war has settled down to a heavy duel between artillery units. "Gerry" is throwing it back with more vigor than ever before. He seems to be particularly interested in the bridges and Venafro. Have taught the HQ platoon how to play Russian Bank while Lou & Jess are in Naples.

Gunnerson, Mahogen, & McIntyre are friends for it. Hutchens is also, but always gets beaten, and is sad. Peter won't play any more, he gets so mad.

7 December, 1943.

Today we have been at war two years. After a protracted stay, Lou, Jess, and Mishkin returned from Naples. Peter & I had moved a battery a bit south to fire up the valley to the west. I ran the survey & lay them in. A flip of the cards made Peter, the loser, battery commander. I went back to the CP house to compute the data, and ran into the Naples visitors, who had just returned. Since they apparently were sober, and without hang-overs, I put it in their hands.

Things plodded along. We fired 36 rounds an hour for days. I'm afraid we are ruining all the roofs in Cerasuolo, which is bad if we move in later. 1700 yards S. is a four knotted hill. The 168 has had quite a time there. Rough! Jerry has his holes 8 feet deep, blasted in the stone, has covered them with logs, and then hid them beautifully. The mud, and running supplies to Henningsen's battery on the Isernia side of the Volturno has been hard on vehicles. Hannenburger's vehicle has been replaced, which is just as well, because the men were beginning to call it a "jinx" vehicle. No amount of reason can kill that type of foolishness either.

The T-2 recovery vehicle developed a bad clutch so "B" sent their T-2

down to tow ours to ordnance. They went back to Pratella on the 28th & spent the night. The next morning they started on back. For unknown reasons they put both vehicles on a pontoon bridge between Dragoni & Alife. The bridge tilted and broke. Our T-2 turned and lay top down, all but a few inches under water. Toxstead, our driver was drowned. I was unable to get into the vehicle until the afternoon of the 30th. We, Skar, Buchman, and I removed him from the T-2 & turned him over to Eddelson. Eddelson & I then took him to the cemetery at Capriati.

I made a trip to Naples to try & locate Sgt. Deuy. Brown, & Corp. Sprague. The first had left the 300th Gren. & evacuated to Africa. No trace of the second. Took a good shot of Veravins, and unsuccessfully tried to buy photo finishing equipment. Didn't have much time. Long drive back with one early next morning.

B-25^s bombed air echelon & Hains shelled there immediately afterwards. I missed it, being on the way back from

Naples. Hundreds saw it. Out of 61 casualties our Bn. lost 6, of which one, a Recon. man, was killed. This was around the 2nd of Dec.

Using X-ray developer, Mishkin, Dutton, and I developed my 35mm film. The "dutch" roll we were so curious to see was completely light-struck. Though grain is bad, I have about 75 photos. Drove, with Peterson, to Cajazzo after some 14-10 parts on the 6th.

(On 19 October I wrote and ask Carol if she would wear a ring. On Nov. 5 she wrote, suggesting we wait until I came home. I received the letter Dec. 5, 1943) And so, we are back to the 7th of December. It is raining naturally.

I am down at the battery relieving Peter. Everything else, even hash, is dehydrated these days. How about some dehydrated rain? We are now firing our 3rd thousand rounds from this six-gun position. One F17 Bn. is firing 45 tons a day. There are many battalions. This must be hard on Jerry. Recent strong rumor had the war ending at 1700, day before yesterday. The 939th with their 4.5 rifles and ego, the latter of larger caliber, have succeeded in stirring up a great deal of discontent among the Italians right here. The Italian people have been very good to us, letting us use their homes, etc.

9 December, 1943.

It is 1430 and has not yet rained! It is getting more cloudy, though. Our planes have been active over German forward areas yesterday and today. Jerry tried a bit of an attack last night without success. The men on radio watch got those "night-guard anxieties" and kept thinking the German automatic weapons were sounding closer. One infantryman described the U.S. mgs. as "apologysing". German artillery has been "moaning" over us more than usual today. I traded my German .32 auto. for a Zeiss Ikonax with Novar-f.3.5 lens. The number engraved on the bottom is: H. 92754. The shutter needs repair. While on the subject of numbers, my Voigtlander "Vito" is: . My 6x30 Hensoldt binoculars are

The .32 is now in Reece McCulloch's possession, and the luger mentioned in the African diary has gone to the navy. The #2 pair of binoculars I traded to Henningsen for a Zeiss rifle scope. I still have the 1.2x.

10 December

Last night from 1700 to 2000 we and the artillery really faced

out some rounds. Then we went back to our round-every-four-minutes as usual. Then about midnight for a period of an hour or so, they returned the complement. The enemy barrage fell short of us, landing up the valley to our west. This morning, of course, it is raining. I made some toast for a change for breakfast, and then checked ammunition on hand. The ground is an awful mess of mud. My feet are cold. I hope the 'dutchmen' are wet.

11 December, 1943.

Received notice that we were attached to the 2nd Moroccan Div. The memorandum was dated 9 Dec.. The 34th, with whom we have fought to date, has been relieved, but not the good old 776th. Col. Barney says we can consider it an "honor" to have been "selected". The officers going home are to be picked from the married officers only. Those who are single are not even being considered - Battalion policy. Heavy air activity today. We ceased firing about noon today. How come down to see us for a while.