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JAN. 1941 - AUG. 1945



An aerial black and white photograph showing a rugged mountain range. In the foreground, a prominent mountain peak is visible, with a stone wall and a target area marked on its slopes. The terrain is rocky and uneven, with some cleared areas. In the background, more mountain ranges stretch across the horizon under a clear sky. A portion of the aircraft's structure is visible on the right side of the frame.

BRENTO
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*Aerial view of Mt. Adone from the east.
Battalion target area and "stone wall" be-
fore the Fifth Army for seven winter
months of 1944-45*

EIGHT HUNDRED and FOURTH TANK DESTROYER BATTALION 1941 • 1945

A History



COMPILED AND EDITED AT NORTH CAMP HOOD, TEXAS,
SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER, 1945

By

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DEDICATION

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| PFC. DALLAS C. ANDERSON | PVT. ROY M. JOHNSON |
| SGT. ROSCOE J. BROWNING | SGT. CHARLES H. LINDSEY |
| S/SGT. THOMAS R. CARNES | PVT. TRANQUILINO MARTINEZ |
| PFC. JOHN C. CARR, JR. | T/5 GEORGE E. MCCULLOUGH |
| PVT. BILL D. CURTIS | 2ND LT. CARL MUELLER, JR. |
| PFC. OLIVERIO DORRANCE | CPL. W. A. NELSON |
| PFC. PORFIRO J. ESCOBAR | T/4 ALBERT J. PINE |
| SGT. RICHARD T. ESSLINGER | PVT. VINCENT H. SCHANHAAR |
| PVT. JOHN R. GALLITANO | 1ST LT. JACOB SCHNELL |
| SGT. NEY C. GALWAY | SGT. WAYNE W. SHOWALTER |
| 2ND LT. WILSON E. GWYN | SGT. JAMES R. SLATER |
| SGT. ALEXANDER HARMON | CPL. HAROLD WHITE |
| CPL. VINCENT B. HERNANDEZ, JR. | PFC. ALFRED C. WIDENER |
| | 1ST LT. JAMES D. YURK |

To these men who gave the ultimate in sacrifice, we, their fellow soldiers, dedicate this history. May we face the future as bravely and unselfishly as they faced the enemy, remembering always the outstanding example of patriotism and devotion to duty which was theirs.

WALLACE L. CLEMENT,
Major, Cavalry,
Commanding.



A Mission

On the 6th of January 1941, the War Department ordered into active duty Battery A, 158 FA Battalion, a New Mexico National Guard unit from Roswell, New Mexico. This unit had a record of five engagements in World War I. Shortly thereafter under the Army's gigantic expansion program, it was quickly converted into the 104th Infantry Anti-Tank Battalion, part of the 45th Infantry Division. Newly organized units from New Mexico soon joined it; a headquarters battery from Santa Fe, B battery from Raton, and C battery from Tucumcari. Lt. Col. Edward Purdy of Roswell assumed command.

The Battalion soon moved to Fort Sam Houston for six months, conducting individual and small unit training while there; then later participated in the Louisiana-North Carolina Maneuvers for five months with the 1st Army in North Carolina and later the 3rd Army in Louisiana. At the outbreak of the war, the unit was rushed to the west coast, where at Camp San Luis Obispo, California, it was reorganized in January, 1942, as the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Three weeks in Camp San Luis Obispo and the newly organized Tank Destroyer Battalion moved to March Field, California for three months, acting as airdrome security. The next move for the Battalion took them into the Desert Training Center near Brawley, California, for a month's intensive training; then to La Mesa, California, for two months training and coastal patrol. Here the Reconnaissance Company of the Battalion was organized. The newly organized Tank Destroyer Center at Camp Hood, Texas, was the next stopping place for the Battalion, and two months were spent there training as a combat organization.



"The Early Days," March Field, California, Spring 1942



Training back in '42 and '43

Construction had just been started on the camp at this time, and the Battalion moved into tents in the vicinity of Copperas Cove. There were five Battalions here in all at this time, the first group to train at the camp.

On July 29, 1942, the unit boarded the train at Gatesville, Texas—destination Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, a staging area. Here all records for staging were probably broken; thirty-six hours after arriving the Battalion was entrained again and started en route to the New York Port of Embarkation. Formations were so fast and furious at Indiantown that one man was injected for typhus three times before he could get out of the line.

August 6th found the unit on the army transport "Thomas H. Barry," with half of the men below decks and half above; every six hours there was a complete changeover. And then we hit some bad weather, to add to the discomfort of all. What a miserable trip that was—yes, war is hell. On the 17th of August we dropped anchor, at Belfast, Ireland. Here the Battalion debarked and entrained for Camber, County Down—famous for its Irish whiskey.

There were many things to get accustomed to now—rain, shillings and pence, blackouts, right hand drive, rain, beer and skittles, the Irish mile, and more rain. The Battalion was attached to the 34th Division here for training and administration. Physical conditioning was foremost on the program. After about two weeks at Camber the unit moved to Crom Castle, near Newtown Butler on the Irish border. It was the first castle most of us had seen, and a few days were spent on tours throughout the place. Battalion Headquarters was set up in the castle, and Nissen huts were used as barracks. The next four months were spent in an intensive review of basic training, with a great amount of

dismounted work. A short term of guard duty broke up the routine for a little while. Equipment was not available for training with our primary weapon—the 75 mm gun mounted on the half-track. We had only a few jeeps and 37 mm guns on Fargo mounts, but we got a maximum of use from these vehicles.

Then, late in November, came the move to England—Stoke-on-Trent near Newcastle-under-Lynn. We quartered at Keel Hall; a large estate and residence turned over to the government for our use. This was a most decided relief and a welcome change. There were several large towns in the neighborhood and passes were plentiful. London was only a few hours away by train. No, we won't forget our short stay in England.

Early in January 1943, an advance detail accompanied the 34th Division advance detail to Africa to prepare for the later arrival of the Battalion, and on 15th of January the Battalion sailed from England, arriving in Oran, Africa, 1st of February.

Who can forget our staging area outside of Oran—"Goat Hill"; and the first taste of fresh fruit in many months. From "Goat Hill," the unit moved to "Mud Flats" about thirty miles from Oran. Here the Battalion was attached to the 1st Tank Destroyer Group, bivouacking with the 813th and 894th Tank Destroyer Battalions. A few weeks here, and then the move to Chanzy, Algeria, about 90 miles away. Chanzy was probably the best training area we had seen. It was a beautiful spot, and not too far from Sidi-bel-Abbes, headquarters of the French Foreign Legion. We had had our equipment for several weeks now, and training was continued with new vigor. It was here that a cadre of Free French officers and enlisted men was sent to the Battalion for training, and they proved to be apt pupils. After a month in this area, under VI Corps,

the unit moved further south to Sebdou, Algeria. Fifth Army was establishing a Tank Destroyer Training Center here, and the 804th was the first unit to attend. Meanwhile several officers and enlisted men left for an observation tour with units engaged in the fighting in Tunisia. Our advance party with the 34th Division returned and regaled us with tales of the early fighting in Tunisia, in which they had taken part.

Then came the wind-up of the Tunisian campaign and with it thousands of Axis prisoners. This resulted in a prisoner guard detail, and trips to England and back to the States, during July, August and September.

In October, 1943, the Battalion was together again and back at the old camp site at Sebdou. Here instruction in artillery methods were reviewed. The routine was broken by frequent gazelle hunting expeditions near El Aricha, far to the south, and trips to Tlemcen, the nearest town of any size.

In January, 1944, the Battalion was attached to the 88th Infantry Division commanded by Major General John E. Sloan, just recently arrived from the States and training at Magenta. The gun companies were made part of the RCT's for training purposes, and a thorough course in artillery methods supervised by Division Artillery was undertaken. The close contact with the infantry and artillery units of this division paid dividends later on when the unit went into combat with them. Each understood capabilities and limitations of the other, and a feeling of mutual trust and confidence sprang up which was never lost. We came to appreciate the fact that close contact and knowledge of personalities in the units for which we worked insured teamwork and the best results.

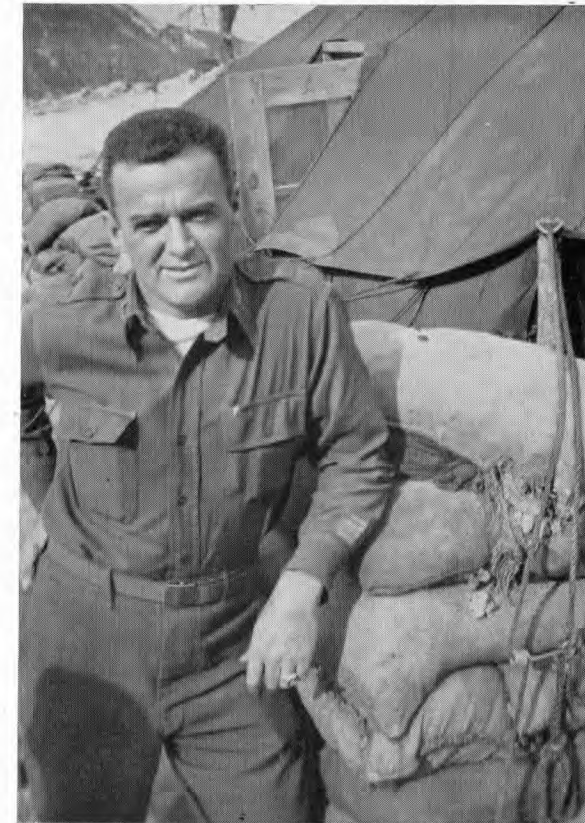
In January, 1944, the Battalion was alerted to Italy with the 88th Division, sailing 1st of February from Oran and landing at Naples, Italy,

8th of February. Preparations were then made for the outfit to go into the line near Minturno, about 40 miles to the north.

THE GUSTAV LINE

The enemy was dug in along the foothills of the Aurunci Mountains and the Solacciano Ridge to Santa Maria Infante. Between our positions was a narrow valley less than a half mile wide. On 5th of March, 1944, the Battalion moved into an assembly position near Carinola to make last minute checks on equipment, preparatory to going into indirect firing positions. Reconnaissance Company meanwhile departed for Mondragone to act as beach patrol and to guard the Minturno Bridge over the Garigliano. By 9th of March A, B, and C Companies were in firing positions; A near Cellole, B on the south bank of the Garigliano near its mouth, and C near Fasani. The following day C Company fired several rounds for registration and then threw 60 rounds of HE at the enemy in a night harassing program. The Battalion was in action!

The mission of the 88th Infantry Division, to which the Battalion was attached, was to break the Gustav Line and eventually to take Rome. To the Battalion then was given the job of aiding the Division Artillery in a softening-up process while the Infantry Regiments were preparing for the attack. Lt. Col. Purdy at this time was hospitalized and Major Fred G. Rowell also of Roswell, New Mexico, assumed command. Throughout the rest of March, April, and part of May, the big guns of the Battalion threw thousands of rounds of HE at the enemy positions, disrupting lines of communication, knocking out their fortifications, and harassing them by day and night. Meanwhile Reconnaissance Company was busy patrolling the beaches and clearing mine fields. Head-



Top: Lt. Col. Fred G. Rowell, commanding officer, March 1944-June 1945. Bottom: German "88," Lt. Yaworsky, and Col. Rowell. Gun captured by Lt. Yaworsky and Hq. Platoon of "B" Company.

quarters Company, of course, had to attend to the needs of the Battalion as a whole, supplying food, ammunition and fuel to the other companies within the Battalion. The enemy was also busy, for several men were killed and wounded by the counter-battery dropped into the various company positions during this period.

Finally on 11 May at 2300 hours, the great artillery barrage began and the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion joined in with the Long Toms, the 240mm Howitzers, 105's and 75's, pouring tens of thousands of rounds of HE at the enemy position—the long awaited attack had begun! As the Infantry Regiments moved forward under the protective covering of the barrage, the firing companies of the Battalion quickly moved up for direct fire support of the Infantry Regiments to which they had been attached—Company A supporting the attack of the 349th Infantry Regiment, Company B for indirect firing missions, attached to the 338th FA Battalion, Company C supporting the attack of the 351st Infantry Regiment with one platoon alerted to repel a possible hostile armored attack. Meanwhile Reconnaissance Company, with the exception of one platoon, was sent forward with the firing companies for reconnaissance and liaison work. The 3rd platoon of Reconnaissance Company, with three 81mm mortars, was attached to the 350th Infantry Regiment for support. Once the attack had begun there could be no let up.

As the Infantry moved forward slowly, the Battalion's destroyers followed closely, neutralizing enemy machine gun nests, blasting at strong points, and smashing the enemy at every possible chance. Company A soon moved forward to the vicinity of Hill 100, Ceracoli, and Cerri to support an armored attack up the Ausente River; Company B had been called out of their indirect fire positions and was also supporting the drive near Cerri; C Company was supporting a Tank and Infantry attack

towards Castellonorato from the vicinity of Santa Maria Infante. Reconnaissance Company moved out of Observation Posts near Castleforte and Domiano and acted as liaison between the Infantry and the Battalion, moving forward with the Infantry. By the 15th of May, 1944, the Gustav Line was broken!

A short break near Spigno, and then Reconnaissance Company was ordered attached to the 85th Infantry Division to patrol the beach sector from Terracina to Sperlonga, while the rest of the Battalion moved forward, first to Teri, then to Priverno. On 26 May the companies again moved into firing positions, A Company firing from Amaseno, B Company near Priverno, while C Company went forward with the 752nd Tank Battalion through Roccapora to cover the road network from Carpineto. One platoon of C Company, while there, was requested by the French to overwatch a French armored movement up the valley to Carpineto.

It became increasingly evident, now, that the enemy would not be able to offer more than delaying action between our positions and Rome. The Battalion started moving rapidly up Highway 2 towards Rome and on the 4th of June, 1944, its leading elements entered the Eternal City! The enemy had abandoned the city and the Battalion pushed on north to approximately 30 miles beyond. There they, with the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron, and the 756th Tank Battalion were organized into the Ellis Task Force to hasten the II Corps advance northward. By the 10th of June the mission of the Ellis Task Force was completed and the Battalion moved into an assembly position near Campagnano. A few days later the Battalion again moved, this time near Albano for a much needed rest and maintenance period.

However, the rest period was short; the 24th of June found the Battalion, this time attached to the 34th Infantry Division, with orders to move up to the vicinity of Follonica, preparatory to furnishing direct support to its regiments. Two platoons of A Company were attached to the 442nd Infantry Regiment (Nisei) and the other platoon was at-

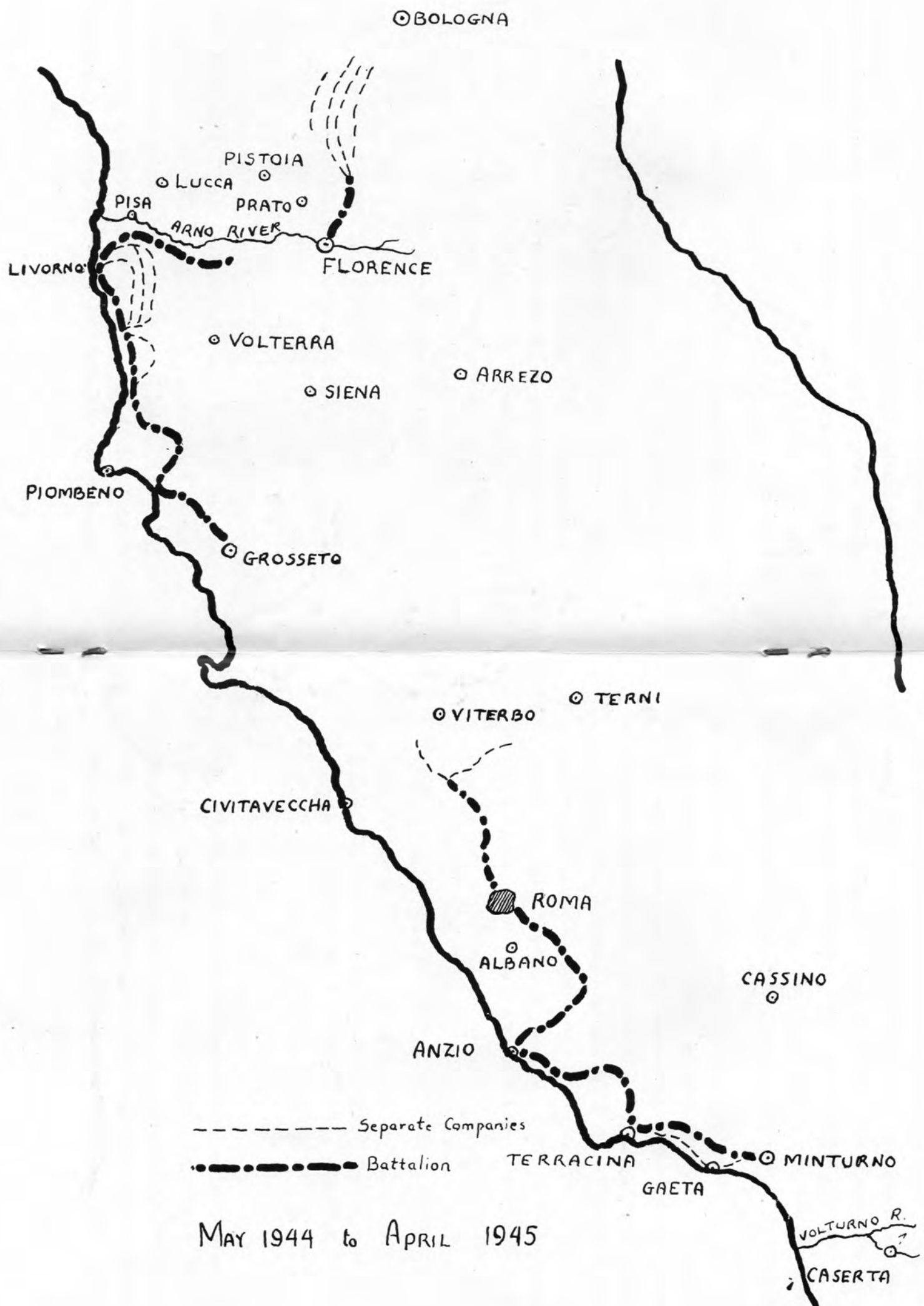


Top, left: "Shorty" Moore and Sergeant Eastland ran "C" Company's Second Platoon. Top, right: Members of "B" Company and M-10 in indirect fire position. Bottom: Platoon of "A" Company in the Alps just after German surrender.

tached to the 168th Infantry Regiment. B Company was initially placed in reserve to support the 34th Division Artillery, and C Company was attached to the 133rd Infantry Regiment. Reconnaissance Company was split up among the firing companies for reconnaissance and liaison work. The 34th Infantry Division had the mission of continuing the hammering at the enemy forces, taking up where the 88th Infantry Division had left off.

The line companies soon became involved in a hotly contested battle, and on the 26th of June, killed and captured large numbers of the enemy forces near Cecina. B Company was soon pulled out of reserve and ordered to support the 135th Infantry Regiment near Carducci, and a day later on the 28th of June, A Company was attached to the 168th Infantry Regiment. As the attack progressed and as the need for the guns of the Battalion developed, the line companies were quickly transferred from one Infantry Regiment to the next, to hammer at stubborn points, blast out machine gun nests and neutralize anything that might hold up the Infantry's advance. From the 26th of June to the 21st of July, the companies worked with the 168th Infantry Regiment, the 135th Infantry Regiment, the 442nd Infantry Regiment, the 752nd Tank Battalion, and the 34th Division Reconnaissance Troop. By the 2nd of July, C Company had reached Vada and established a road block.

Lt. Col. Rowell, the Battalion Commander, was then ordered to protect the left flank of the Division and was placed in command of a force composed of C and Reconnaissance Companies of the 804th, the 34th Division Reconnaissance Troop and the 91st Reconnaissance Troop. This force succeeded in beating off several attacking enemy forces, established road blocks at dangerous points, and on the 10th of July entered and secured the town of Castiglioncello against enemy opposition.



⊙ BOLOGNA

PISTOIA

⊙ LUCCA

PRATO

PISA

ARNO RIVER

FLORENCE

LIVORNO

⊙ VOLTERRA

⊙ ARREZO

⊙ SIENA

PIOMBENO

⊙ GROSSETO

⊙ TERNI

⊙ VITERBO

CIVITAVECCHA

ROMA

ALBANO

CASSINO

ANZIO

----- Separate Companies

..... Battalion

TERRACINA

⊙ MINTURNO

GAETA

MAY 1944 to APRIL 1945

VOLTURNO R.

CASERTA