

**HISTORY of the  
86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY  
in ITALY**



**Charles Wellborn  
86th Headquarters Company  
1945**

**HISTORY of the  
86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY  
in ITALY**

**10 DECEMBER 1944 — 30 JUNE 1945**

**Digitized and edited by Barbara Imbrie, 2004**

## CONTENTS

	Page
DECEMBER 10, 1944 — FEBRUARY 28, 1945	1
MARCH 1, 1945 — MARCH 31, 1945	18
APRIL 1, 1945 — APRIL 30, 1945	31
MAY 1, 1945 — MAY 31, 1945	47
JUNE 1, 1945 — JUNE 30, 1945	52
ORGANIZATION OF THE 86TH REGIMENT	53
CASUALTIES OF THE 86TH REGIMENT	54
ROLL OF HONOR OF THE 86TH REGIMENT	55
MAPS OF THE CAMPAIGN*	
MAP 1. RIVA RIDGE	61
MAP 2. MT. BELVEDERE RIDGE	63
MAP 3. MARCH OFFENSIVE	65
MAP 4. SPRING OFFENSIVE	67
MAP 5. BREAKOUT	69
MAP 6. PO VALLEY SOUTH	71
MAP 7. PO RIVER CROSSING	73
MAP 8. ADVANCE TO LAKE GARDA	75
MAP 9. LAKE GARDA: THE FINAL BATTLES	77

\* Modified by Barbara Imbrie from original battle diagrams published by Armand Casini in 1945.



# HISTORY of the 86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY

DECEMBER 10, 1944 – FEBRUARY 28, 1945

The taciturn, almost sullen men of the U.S. Army Transportation Corps who checked the boat rosters at the foot of the gangplank saw nothing different about the long lines of soldiers moving past them. The American Red Cross ladies who served doughnuts and hot coffee had seen hundreds of other men in the same uniforms, dragging the same clumsy duffle bags, wind their way through the big shed and onto the waiting transports. To these men and women it was all in the day's work.

But to the men of the 86th Mountain Infantry, commanded by Colonel CLARENCE M. TOMLINSON, it was a red-letter day—one they would never forget. After months of training in the mountains of Colorado and in the hot Texas sun, they were headed overseas, the vanguard of the 10th Mountain Division.

It had been a fast, unexpected movement. Jerked from a scarcely begun maneuver, the men of the 86th had boarded trains at Camp Swift, Texas, and sped across the eastern United States to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia. There they had just had time enough to give equipment a last-minute check and make those all-important phone calls home. Some optimistic souls bought lipstick and soap at the Post Exchange—for possible barter purposes.

No one had much time to think that morning. It was the 10th of December 1944, and a cold breeze swept across Hampton Roads. Every man was busy with his equipment. It was a man-sized job to handle the overloaded pack and duffle bag that each man carried, to say nothing of the rifle, gas mask, and steel helmet. Somehow they managed to make it past the checker and up the slanting plank to the deck of the SS *Argentina*, a former luxury liner on the Caribbean run. Eventually each man found himself in a bunk and began to shed his equipment.

These bunks were to be home for the next two weeks. It was easy to see that the *Argentina* was no longer a luxury liner. There was barely room to move between the tiers of beds that stood in some places 10 and 12 high. Pity the poor fellow on the top bunk who rolled out of bed! It was a good two-story drop to the floor.

There was lots of bitching but most of the men took the crowded quarters cheerfully. Many of them slept on deck when the weather was warm, and almost everyone caught up on sleep.

All in all, there was quite a bit to occupy a fellow who really wanted to find entertainment. The first few days there was the newness of ocean travel—and probably a bit of seasickness. After that, there was a varied recreational program, organized by the permanent party aboard ship and the regimental Special Service officer, 1st Lt. SPENCER L. WYATT. There were movies on deck, or if you didn't care for that, boxing bouts on promenade deck aft. On board were two USO units, and every night in the big troop mess, they performed for capacity houses. Every day, from noon until 2000 hours, the ship's radio station, WARG, gave out with music, news and variety programs.

When there was nothing else to do, men read, played endless hours of poker, or walked the deck, watching the waves or the other ships in the convoy. And, inevitably, came the boat drills, when everyone donned life jackets and rushed madly on deck.

The decks were crowded when the ship sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar, and everyone strained his eyes and neck for a first glimpse of the "Rock." It was the first sight of land in eleven days. Even though it was foreign soil and a long way from home, it was land and it looked good.

Thirteen days after embarking and two days before Christmas, the *Argentina* sailed into Naples harbor. That night, as the ship lay at anchor in what had been called the most beautiful harbor in the world, and as Sgt. JAMES D. SULLIVAN and the 86th Band played their last deck concert, the 86th prepared to disembark.

Dec 23

Next morning, the mountain troops saw their first signs of war, as they gazed at rusty hulks of once-great ships that filled the harbor. They saw more of war's after-effects as they were whisked through the oft-bombed streets of Naples to their first stop, the half-completed buildings of an orphanage in Bagnoli, a suburb of the great city.

Bagnoli was a staging area, and the regiment was not to remain there long, for which most of the men were grateful. The marble floors they slept on were cold, and the rations were infinitesimal. Two days after the landing, on Christmas day, the First Battalion and Headquarters Company, minus the I & R [Intelligence & Reconnaissance] Platoon, left by train to serve as an advance party in a newly assigned area. The movement was delayed by a train wreck and had to be completed by truck.

On the 26th, the remainder of the regiment left Bagnoli by truck for Naples port. There they once more boarded ship, this time on an old Italian freighter, the *Sestriere*. Compared to this, conditions on the *Argentina* had been wonderful.

Fortunately, it was only a short trip up the west coast of Italy to Leghorn. At 1500, December 27, the regiment disembarked and loaded on trucks. Company K, under Capt. FREDERICK DOLE, was left to guard the equipment while it was being unloaded. Other companies proceeded to an advance staging area near Pisa. As the trucks wound along the road, almost every GI had a good view of the Leaning Tower of Pisa looming up on the horizon.

Dec 27

At Pisa a model bivouac was established. In record time, Major WILLIAM BOWERMAN, regimental S-4, contacted local authorities and made arrangements to obtain items that were short. The regiment was supplied with its organic transportation. Showdown inspections were held, and requisitions of equipment and clothing filled out. During the five days of the regiment's time spent at Pisa, several general officers visited the area; all commented favorably on the completeness of equipment and the exact knowledge of shortages.

Most of the men were still drawing additional equipment (the most appreciated of which were two additional blankets, for the Italian nights were unexpectedly chilly) when the advance party, consisting of two platoons from Company B and one from Company I, together with men from Headquarters, Service, and the Medics, moved out. At 1600 on the last day of the year, the regiment moved out in truck convoy for its new bivouac area at Quercianella, just south of Leghorn on the coast. At this time, the unit was released from the tactical control of the Peninsular Base Section and came into the sphere of the Fifth Army.

In Quercianella the regiment once more lived in tents. The rain poured down and, as the men slogged through the ankle-deep mud, they recalled the newsreels they had seen of fighting in the Italian rain. The line units engaged in routine training and men packed most of their equipment into their duffle bags, preparatory to storing it away.

Meanwhile the 86th was attached to IV Corps, which had big—and speedy—plans for the regiment. Colonel TOMLINSON attended a conference at IV Corps headquarters in Lucca on the

6th of January, and almost at the same time, the regiment received a warning order, preparatory to moving on to the line.

The casualties, which are the inevitable result of war, were not to wait until the 86th moved to the front. A bivouac-area guard walked off his assigned route along a railroad track, stepped on a German "S" mine, and blew himself into eternity. Excited soldiers who rushed to his aid detonated other mines in the area, and the resulting series of explosions killed seven men, including the Catholic chaplain, 1st Lt. CLARENCE J. HAGAN. [An eighth man, T/Sgt. CHARLES J. VADEBONCOEUR, died of wounds four days later.] To remove the bodies, five men from Headquarters Company 2nd Battalion volunteered to clear the minefield. For this dangerous and difficult work, Major General CRITTENBERGER, Commander of IV Corps, awarded the Soldier's Medal to 1st Lt. JACK C. CULBREATH, T/Sgt., WILLIAM F. BECHDOLT, Sgt. DAVID D. CURTIS, Sgt. CROSBY T. PERRY-SMITH, and Cpl. HENRY J. MCDONALD in an informal ceremony.

Jan 6

Field Order 1, 86th Mountain Infantry, signed by Colonel CLARENCE M. TOMLINSON, January 6, 1945, ordered the regiment moved to a position on the line. And so, just two weeks after disembarking in Italy, the 86th was on its way to the front. The advance party moved out of Quercianella January 7. They contacted Task Force 45, under whose control the 86th was to operate, and also the units to be relieved. On the 8th, the rest of the regiment began its departure from the bivouac area. By 1830 that night the three battalions were in their initial positions: the 1st Battalion in the vicinity of Castelluccio, the 2nd near San Marcello, and the 3rd in Bagni di Lucca.

The 1st Battalion completed the relief of units of Task Force 45 at 0706 the next morning. At 1300 the regimental CP [Command Post] was opened in San Marcello. By nightfall, communication was set up, and the 86th had begun to function as a combat unit, holding its sector of the line.

Jan 8

The sector of the line assigned to the 86th was one of the most rugged of the entire front, so far as terrain was concerned. The 1st Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel HENRY J. HAMPTON, was on the right, charged with holding the territory southwest of Mt. Belvedere and facing formidable Riva Ridge, from whose heights the Germans had perfect observation. The 2nd Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel DURED E. TOWNEND, occupied the valley to the north of San Marcello. Major JOHN H. HAY's 3rd Battalion was in mobile reserve, less one company at Bagni di Lucca.

The 86th remained on the line from 9 January to 2 February. During this period the front was generally quiet, but there was constant patrolling, and most of the men saw enough action to constitute a baptism of fire. What the 86th did during its first tour of duty on the line can best be explained by a detailed account of a few of the patrols and skirmishes that occurred.

One of the first assignments for the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon was a patrol, which because of the mission and terrain to be covered, called for the utmost in courage, skill and determination. The platoon, under the direction of 1st Lt. DONALD E. TRAYNOR, was ordered by the regimental S-2, Capt. DAVID PFAELZER, to send out a reconnaissance patrol deep into enemy territory and to cover almost the entire regimental sector from left to right, or roughly from southwest to northeast. The distance to be traversed was not excessive on the map, but the difficulties of travel, weather conditions, and the terrain made the trip an extremely difficult 20-mile journey. The entire distance was to be covered on foot or on skis, and most of the patrol route was known to be subject to direct enemy observation.

Lt. TRAYNOR chose four expert skiers to accompany him. The men—Sgt. STEPHEN P. KNOWLTON, Cpl. HARRY BRANDT, Pfc. CRAGG D. GILBERT and Pfc. HARVEY SLATER—were all veteran mountain troopers, prepared to cope with almost any phase of mountain travel. Realizing the difficulty of the assignment, Capt. PFAELZER allotted three full days for the trip. The mission of the patrol was two-fold: to observe enemy movements in their forward areas, particularly on Mt. Spigolino; and to determine whether there were adequate approach routes along which to move a reinforced company.

Equipment carried was at the minimum. Besides rations, each man carried only a sleeping bag, sox, skis, and his personal equipment. The trip was made from San Marcello to the little town of Spignana by jeep and weasel, and at 1630 on the afternoon of January 21, the patrol jumped off. During the first mile, they gained almost 1000 feet in altitude. As they approached the top of the ridge, it became evident that a storm was coming up. The patrol found shelter in a cabin occupied by British artillerymen.

Jan 21

While part of the patrol rested in the cabin, Lt. TRAYNOR and Sgt. KNOWLTON reconnoitered the top of the ridge in preparation for the next day's advance. After looking over the situation, they considered that it was best to travel by night, and so, at 0030 January 22, after tea and crumpets with the British, the patrol was once more on its way. Dressed in their camouflage whites, they were able to move with comparative safety up the nearly 2000 feet to the top of the ridge. The stiff wind that assaulted them as they neared the top discouraged any thought of breaks or rest periods.

From 0030 until 0530, no stops were made except to check direction and location on the map. On the far side of the ridge—the Abetone side—the patrol saw its first sign of enemy activity: fresh tracks in the snow. Cautiously they contoured along the side of the ridge, making their way with difficulty across the avalanche slopes. In snow they used skis, but frequent rocky areas made it necessary to be off and on the "boards" intermittently. By daybreak they had reached a point where they could observe easily both our own lines and the enemy's. The all-night grind had sapped their strength, but they pushed on.

As the patrol moved, the men observed. Pfc. GILBERT was the first to pick out a two-story building which looked to be a German OP [Observation Post]. Now the men were in their element, for they could travel across the long open snow slopes with comparative ease. Skiing all the way, they headed through a pass and down into the valley that led to Vidiciatico and allowed observation of Mt. Spigolino. The terrain was confusing and difficult to place on the map, but Pfc. SLATER was able to orient the patrol and keep it on its course.

At 0900 Cpl. BRANDT spotted five men at the bottom of the valley. The patrol took cover, and two men moved forward to look over the situation. Investigation proved that the patrol was a friendly one, a combat patrol sent out by Company A, 86th Mountain Infantry. The Company A patrol informed the I & R men of something they already knew well, that they were under constant enemy observation and subject at all times to sniper fire.

By 1200 the patrol had reached the advanced listening post of Company A. From this position, they were able to pick out three Germans, far up on the ridge across the valley. By now the patrol was eager to conclude its mission. They had been traveling with little or no rest for 14 hours. They sped down the valley in plain view of the Germans and entered our lines at 1430.

The mission had been accomplished. Enemy installations in the vicinity of Mt. Spigolino had been observed, and the result of the route reconnaissance was a cautious report: that a reinforced company could be moved through the territory, only if they were expert mountaineers and prop-

erly equipped. And the amazing thing was, that of the three days that had been allotted them, the patrol had used just 22 hours—and a considerable portion of that time was spent in the cabin of the British artillerymen.

Not so grueling, but more exciting, was the action of Patrol 250, which gained for two of its members the award of the Bronze Star. This kind of fighting didn't make the newspaper headlines, but it was deadly serious to the men who were taking part in it. At 0100 January 25, Patrol 250 left Company F's CP. The patrol was led by 1st Lt. FRANK B. FOSTER of Company F and 2nd Lt. MOUNT G. WILD, 2nd Battalion S-2, who won one of the Bronze Stars for his part in the action. The mission was a routine one: a combat reconnaissance patrol with the objective of discovering if the enemy was using an OP previously located on Mt. La Serra, and if so, to destroy the OP. If the OP was not occupied, the patrol was to return by way of Campetti-Pianosinatico and locate the forward enemy position there. Prisoners were to be taken if possible.

Jan 25

The patrol ascended Mt. Orlando and finding no one there, continued to the summit of La Serra, arriving there at 0600. The patrol found one empty fortified enemy OP. They remained on la Serra for over an hour, but seeing no sign of enemy action, returned to Quercia to make contact with a friendly patrol, which was prepared to support a withdrawal from la Serra in case of trouble there.

Considering the foggy, misty weather, perfect for ambushing and taking of prisoners, Lt. FOSTER and Lt. WILD determined to divide the patrol into two groups. Each commanded a group and the two parties moved cautiously into Pianosinatico. Lt. WILD's patrol led the way, with Lt. FOSTER's men prepared to support the leading group in case of a firefight. The two groups moved past Campetti and crossed an open clearing to the next ridge. Suddenly Pfc. WENDELL H. CHENEY and Pfc. PAUL BUCHANAN heard talking and pointed out the direction to the two officers. About 100 feet to the front of the patrol was a dugout in the side of the hill. Smoke curled from a stovepipe at the top.

The officers silently withdrew their men and made plans for the attack. It was decided that a four-man covering force under Sgt. ARTHUR THOMPSON would cover the open space in front of the pillbox and also protect the rear so that the patrol could not be cut off. Lt. WILD and Pfc. BUD M. COX were to assault the position from the rear and capture prisoners. COX was armed with a submachine gun. The remainder of the patrol under Lt. FOSTER was to cover the hill behind the pillbox.

The covering group went into position while the flanking force began its encircling movement. When the flanking force reached its position, Lt. FOSTER called for a smoke concentration on the village of Pianosinatico. Almost immediately mortar fire began landing.

Lt. WILD and Pfc. COX started forward to assault the position. When they had gone only about six feet, two men came out of the pillbox. The two enemies did not see the attackers. Just as the Lieutenant and COX started to move forward again, a third enemy came around the corner of the dugout. He was only about 25 feet from the Americans and saw them instantly. Just as the German let out a cry of alarm, Lt. WILD opened fire with his carbine on the first two Krauts, while COX put three bursts of submachine gun fire into the third enemy. Lt. FOSTER and the flanking element also opened fire.

The German reaction was instantaneous. Intense machine pistol fire opened up, and hand grenades began landing in the midst of the attacking forces. One bullet went through Lt. WILD's sleeve, while a hand grenade, which landed directly in front of Pfc. WILLIAM A. CRUMP, did nothing except remove CRUMP's glasses from his nose.

The Krauts quickly maneuvered to surround the Americans. Enemy began to move up the hillside from the north. The patrol was reluctant to withdraw, but it would have been suicide to charge the pillbox through the crotch-deep snow. COX attempted to crawl forward but was soon floundering in the soft white powder. It was his courage here that was to result in the award of a Bronze Star. Mortar shells began to land in the midst of the patrol. Lt. WILD determined that it was time to go home.

Lt. WILD and Pfc. COX withdrew first, and then served as a covering force while the flanking element under Lt. FOSTER retreated past them to the cover of an empty pillbox. Pfc. DON E. ARDINGER, the radio operator, was unable to move with any speed through the snow while carrying the heavy radio, so the officers ordered the radio destroyed. Sgt. GEORGE MOTZEN-BECKER used his M-1 to put the radio out of action. Despite heavy mortar fire, followed soon after by artillery, the patrol withdrew to safety without casualties.

It would require a volume to detail all the patrols and skirmishes in which the men of the 86th engaged during their first three weeks on the line, but the two previously described are typical and exemplary. Mention should be made of Technical Sergeant HAROLD J. HALL, whose Company B patrol was ambushed. Though mortally wounded, he continued to direct the actions of his patrol in their attack on the ambushing forces. After he died, Staff Sergeant DONALD G. HAIGHT took over the patrol and directed its withdrawal to safety. The withdrawal was largely made possible through the heroism of Pfc. HAROLD LLOYD, who stood erect to draw enemy fire away from his withdrawing buddies.

Early on the morning of January 28, the 86th was relieved from Task Force 45 and passed back into the control of the 10th Mountain Division. On February 2, the 86th was relieved by elements of the 87th and 85th regiments and reverted to Corps reserve. The troops were withdrawn to a training area in the vicinity of Lucca, and a CP was opened in a beautiful villa in the little hamlet of San Cassiano di Moriano.

Feb 2

As the regiment rested and trained in its rear area near the old walled city of Lucca, there was a suspenseful and somewhat grim expectation in the air. The first short tour of duty on the line had been too calm and uneventful. This was not the kind of war Ernie Pyle wrote about. There must be something more important, more exciting, more deadly in the future. And most of the men took a hint from their day-to-day activities that the "future" was not far off. They were right.

While the 86th was still holding a sector of the line, the plans had been brewing. Operation "X," it was called. Colonel TOMLINSON, Lieutenant Colonel ROBERT L. COOK, executive officer, Capt. PFAELZER, and Major DONALD C. ALLEN, S-3, had carefully looked over the terrain, the estimated enemy strength, and the objective to be taken. Lieutenant Colonel HAMPTON had figured importantly in the planning. Their reports had gone back to Division. And now, at any moment, they expected the order to move back to the line and participate in the actual operation—an operation which was to give the 86th Mountain Infantry its first test as a combat unit—an operation which could make or break the outfit in the eyes of other units in the theater and, most, most important, the still dimly realized enemy "up there."

At last the order came. Field Order 9, Headquarters, Task Force 45, was the hottest of "hot poop" and "top secret." In it was outlined the mission of the Division: "Attack on the Mt. Belvedere-Mt. della Torraccia Ridge." But most important to the men of the 86th, who were not yet privileged to know it, would have been the news that it was on the 86th that the first brunt of the attack was to fall. To the southwest of Belvedere, the principal divisional objective, ran a rugged

line of snow-capped peaks, the Mt. Mancinello-Pizzo di Campiano Ridge, later called Riva Ridge. If Belvedere was to be taken and held, American forces must first secure this ridgeline, for it flanked Belvedere and furnished a magnificent observation point. From it the Germans could see every action of the American and Brazilian forces facing them. As long as the enemy held the ridge, the movements of the Allied troops on the inadequate road-net in the valley below were necessarily limited. It was not likely that the Germans underestimated the importance of the ridge. S-2's information placed elements of the German 232nd Infantry Division on the ridge. And these troops were prepared to fight. Four times Belvedere had been taken and four times strong German counterattacks had forced the Allies back.

To the 86th in its first real combat mission fell the difficult job of securing this strategic terrain feature. It was a tough nut to crack. Against the obvious disadvantage of terrain, weather, and well-dug-in German positions, the 86th could marshal one factor—but, as later events were to prove, that one was decisive. The Germans considered the ridgeline virtually impregnable to any large body of troops because of its natural ruggedness. The steep icy cliffs would have discouraged any "flatland" outfit. Unluckily for the "Tedeschi," the 86th was no flatland outfit. The cliffs below Serrasiccia and Cappel Buso were rugged, but to trained rock climbers and mountain men they were far from impassable. Therein lay the American advantage, and the undoing of the surprised Germans, who were to wake up one morning soon with the men of the 86th virtually on top of their positions.

Field Order 9 had come February 15. Close on its heels was the Regimental Field Order 3, which was published February 16, 1945. Here the plans were given in more detail. The mission of the regiment was "to attack, seize and hold Campiano Ridge, Pizzo di Campiano south to Chingio Bure [Cingio del Bure]." In addition to this, the 3rd Battalion, commanded by Major HAY, was to relieve the left battalion of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force and thus be in a position to protect the right flank of the Division.

In the fore of the attack was to be Colonel HAMPTON's 1st Battalion. From their assembly areas at the base of Campiano Ridge, they were to attack and seize the ridge from Campiano to Mancinello by 0515, February 19. The attack to the east on Belvedere was to jump off at 2300, February 19. It was imperative that the 86th gain its objectives before that time.

Colonel TOWNSEND's 2nd Battalion was to furnish one company (with attached weapons) which, after moving through Vidiciatico and Madna dell'Acero, was to occupy the ridge south of Mt. Mancinello. This action was necessary to protect the left flank of the 1st Battalion and to prevent enemy movement to the north and east. After taking the objective, these troops were to be prepared to attack north along the ridge. Another 2nd Battalion company was to relieve the left company of 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry, and from this position move up to protect the right flank of the regiment. One heavy machine gun platoon was assigned to operate .50-caliber machine guns in support of the 1st Battalion attack.

Once the order had reached the battalion commanders, there was plenty of activity. Men were stripped to the bare essentials of fighting equipment. Duffel bags were turned in and stored. Everything was made ready to move. On Sunday, February 13, the initial reconnaissance for CP's bivouac areas, etc. had been made. On February 14, advance parties began to leave and move north into the new areas. On February 15, Capt. PFAELZER established the forward CP at la Ca. From the CP building, one could look almost directly up at the Germans who commanded the heights in a semi-circle all around the narrow valley held by the Americans. Already at the CP were Lt. TRAYNOR and half of the regimental I & R Platoon, who were selecting and establishing OP sites for the coming operation.

The main body of the troops was to move on the afternoon and night of February 17. At 0900 on that morning Colonel TOMLINSON left San Cassiano for la Ca. Stopping at the Division CP in Lizzano, he received his final instructions. By 1550 that afternoon, all the battalions had cleared their old areas, and the regiment was moving up. Only scattered elements of Headquarters Company and Service Company remained behind. At San Cassiano, 1st Lt. SPENCER L. WYATT and Warrant Officer DONAVAN A. OWEN commanded a rear CP which was to move within a few days to Maresca, near Campo Tizzoro.

Feb 17

The 1st and 2nd Battalions detrucked in the vicinity of Castelluccio and moved out immediately. By midnight the long lines of trudging soldiers in the 1st Battalion had cleared Vidiciatico. Above their heads, piercing the pitch-black darkness like long fingers of molten steel were the powerful searchlights playing relentlessly on the slopes of Belvedere and Campiano. Between the columns of men rolled a steady column of jeeps and trucks, as supplies, ammunition and equipment moved up. All identifying marks on the vehicles had been covered. All movement had been made at night. Blackout regulations had been strictly enforced. It seemed incredible to the men that the Germans watching from their OPs on the hill did not know what was transpiring below them, but all were hopeful that much of the preparation had escaped the notice of the Boche S-2s.

At 0500 on the morning of the 18th, the 3rd Battalion completed the occupation of its positions on the right flank. An hour and a half later, the 1st Battalion opened its CP at Farne. Shortly thereafter the 2nd was in place. By daylight the whole regiment was in its rear assembly area.

The 18th of February was a busy day, for officers and men alike. To maintain the element of surprise, men must stay under cover, but there was plenty to keep them occupied. Weapons were checked and double-checked, ammunition issued, equipment inspected. By now, every man knew "this was it." Nobody had to tell the rifleman to see if his M-1 was in working order. This was no "spit-and-polish" affair; this was life and death.

Colonel TOMLINSON assembled his battalion commanders for a conference in la Ca. Present were also the commanding officers of the 751st Tank Battalion and the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion to coordinate their plans with those of the regiment. Liaison officers from the 605th Field Artillery and Company A, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion participated. Together the officers welded their individual planning into one integrated schedule.

Busy, too, were the supply personnel. Major WILLIAM BOWERMAN, S-4, was in and out of la Ca all day, coordinating his efforts with those of the 10th Quartermaster Pack, arranging for ammunition, sleds, camouflage nets, and all the millions of other articles which a modern infantry regiment requires for a major operation.

It was Major BOWERMAN's job to insure that the 86th was "thar fustest with the mostest." In the terrain where the operation was to take place, that was one of the most difficult of problems.

Captain PFAELZER made elaborate arrangements to insure that the CP could keep in touch with everything that went on during the action. Conferring with 1st Lt. WILSON WARE, 2nd Lt. MOUNT G. WILD and 1st Lt. DAVID BROWER, the three Battalion S-2s, he ordered positive information reported as it occurred. Negative reports were to be made every half-hour. Methods of PW evacuation had been worked out, and in order to secure more information on the spot about enemy action, Captain PFAELZER asked Division for a prisoner interrogator. An IPW team of two men was immediately attached to the regiment.

Feb 18

At 1629 on the afternoon of the 18th came a message from Major General GEORGE P. HAYS, the commanding general, to Colonel TOMLINSON, giving a last-minute summary of the mission and also certain amendments to Field Order 9. The changes were minor. The big picture remained the same: "seize and hold the Mt. Mancinello-Pizzo di Campiano Ridge prior to daylight February 19, 1945."

Things began to hum. No one in the regiment had plans for sleep that night. Officers were in and out of the CP. Captain WILLIAM NEIDNER, commander of Company A, which was to play an important part in the night's operation, stopped in for last-minute information. 1st Lt. PRESTON COURSEN, Liaison Officer with Division, brought photographs of Belvedere. Lt. ROBERT K. POTTER, Graves Registration Officer, arrived at 1830. His was the unpleasant job of supervising evacuation of the killed. Everyone fervently hoped that he would have little to do, but he and his staff were fully prepared for any eventuality. Lieutenant Colonel COOK was everywhere, straightening out last-minute difficulties.

Major BOWERMAN's supply situation was shaping up. A Quartermaster Pack company was attached to the 1st Battalion and already was being guided up to the battalion position. At 1900, six mules for the sleds to be used by the 1st Battalion, were guided into la Ca by M/Sgt. JOHN W. TAYLOR of Service Company. The use of the mules with sleds was something comparatively new, the result of extensive experiments carried out by 1st Lt. JERRY P. BOOKER in January during the regiment's period on the line.

H-Hour!! At 1930 B and C Companies moved out of their assembly areas to begin the long tortuous climb up Campiano Ridge. It was assumed that Company A had moved out too, though all communications with that company were out. The front was ominously quiet. The I & R Platoon had three outposts well beyond the lines, and all reports were negative. Only one German had been sighted—that one by the 2nd Battalion, who reported that he was walking leisurely along the ridge. It was the lull before the storm.

Slowly the assault platoons of the 1st Battalion, struggling under their burdens of ammunitions and grenades, worked their way up the cliffs. Company B was halfway up at 2142. A and C Companies were well under way. As yet, no opposition. The men toiling up the hills began to wonder whether there really were Jerries on the ridge. The suspense, the waiting, expecting any moment to hear a machine pistol open up, was almost as bad as an actual firefight. Everyone began to understand the real meaning of the term "sweating it out."

The plan of attack, largely worked out by Colonel HAMPTON, was not a complicated one. Company A, Captain WILLIAM NEIDNER's company, less one detached platoon, was to move west and take Mt. Mancinello. Company B, commanded by Captain KENNETH SEIGMAN, had as its objective Mt. Cappel Buso. Captain WORTH MCCLURE's Company C was assigned to occupy Mt. Serrasiccia. Supporting the attack was Company F, under Captain PERCY RIDEOUT, former Dartmouth ski coach, with the mission of attacking Cingio del Bure. Also supporting the attack was the heavy weapons company, Captain ERWIN NILSSON commanding, which was everywhere. The plan sounded almost too simple; it turned out to be near-perfect strategy.

To understand the magnitude of the task before them, the men of the 1st Battalion had only to look at the terrain. The ridge rose 1500 to 2000 feet from the valley, and from the bottom it appeared unclimbable. Most of the trails were icy, and if they were not icy, they were either rocky or muddy. Bending almost double under full field packs, the men scrambled up, cursing in whispers when they slipped and fell. Two columns had to use ropes. Slowly but inexorably the battalion worked its way up.

At 0030, even the officers began to wonder where the Krauts were. Repeated negative reports had come from the three observation posts. B Company reported that its assault platoon was on the crest of the ridge at Cappel Buso. True, the first casualty was occurring at 0045, when Captain GORDON STIMSON, Munitions Officer, phoned that one of his drivers had been injured by artillery shrapnel near Porretta Terme at 2330. This was not the news the OP was waiting for.

Feb 19

At 0045 Company A was on the ridge at Mancinello. Company F had already crossed the river that flowed through the gorge just below its objective. Company B was moving along the crest of Cappel Buso. Then came what every man had expected—and dreaded—all night.

Sgt. WARREN D. JOHNSON and Cpl. DAN BAKER of I & R, manning OP #3, reported German machine guns, small arms, and mortar fire south of Cappel Buso. The direction of fire was northeast. A minute later, at 0111, Sgt. STEPHEN KNOWLTON and Cpl. HARRY BRANDT of OP #2 confirmed the report. Almost before Captain PFAELZER could phone the information to Division, the whole story began to come in from Company B, 400 yards from their objective. The assault platoon had made contact with the enemy. Now they were engaged in a fierce firefight.

The calm was over. This was the storm. Since our men were on the ridge itself, the giant searchlights were now a liability; they were extinguished. In the blackness, Company B moved in on the Germans, who were caught by surprise. The flashes of their rifles and machine guns outlined the top of the ridge and the crackle of fire reverberated down the valley. In an hour it was over. All of the company was on top of Cappel Buso. They had suffered one casualty [Pfc. ELLERY J. POTTER] and the Germans had been forced to withdraw. Expecting the inevitable German counterattack, Company B was digging in.

Meanwhile, Company A was advancing north along Mancinello Ridge, still without opposition. At 0259 they reached their objective and immediately began to organize the position. Approximately an hour later, Company F reached Cingio del Bure and established contact with Company A. At 0505 Company C, which had the longest and hardest climb, finally settled down on Mt. Serrasiccia.

The objectives were reached—with little fighting and with almost complete surprise. A few grenades tossed into earthen pillboxes, a few pasty-faced trembling German prisoners, and the ridge that “couldn’t be taken” was ours. Now the problem was to keep it.

The original attack plan included the withdrawal of Company F as soon as the ridge was consolidated. As it developed, however, it was Captain RIDEOUT’s company that drew the first counterattack. At 0853 mortar and machine gun fire opened up on the positions of Company F’s mountain platoon at Le Piagge in the vicinity of Serra dei Baichetti. By 0925 they had suffered two casualties. 2nd Battalion mortar fire began to drop on the enemy. At 1151 the company took the offensive and moved on to Baichetti, killing one German and capturing another. But the Krauts were stubborn, and the intermittent firefight continued.

At the same time, the detached platoon from Company A, which had been assigned the mission of occupying Pizzo di Campiano, was in the first phases of an action which was to win recognition for every man in the platoon. Under the command of 2nd Lt. JAMES W. LOOSE, the platoon took its objective at 0544. It had required nine hours to make the climb and they had taken the position only after facing small arms fire and trip-wire grenades, which rolled down the steep slopes on them. Almost immediately after reaching the summit, the platoon was counterattacked by an enemy squad in a thirty-minute firefight. With the first light of the morning,

Lt. LOOSE located a group of enemy in a house southwest of his lines. The enemy commanded the terrain with automatic weapons. Lt. LOOSE organized a patrol which approached the house, wiped out its occupants, and captured the weapons. At 0830 the enemy again counterattacked. Once more Lt. LOOSE and his platoon sergeant, T/Sgt. THOMAS P. BOYD, directed the platoon in a successful defense, which culminated in an attack on the enemy force, inflicting several casualties. At 1000 the platoon received a twenty-minute artillery barrage. One man was killed and one wounded.

Things were quiet until 1500 when once again the artillery began to fall. At 1700 about 20 enemy made their way up the southwest face of Pizzo di Campiano onto the high ground between Lt. LOOSE's position and that of Company B on Cappel Buso, thus isolating the platoon. At 2000 another twenty enemy approached from the northwest and launched a coordinated attack, which continued without relenting throughout the night. In his last message to his battalion commander before all communication was cut off, Lt. LOOSE radioed: "Where's that artillery support? If it doesn't get here soon, you'll have nothing left to support." At 0200 American artillery began to fall among the enemy, but they continued to attack. Once the Krauts actually reached the cone and began scrambling up it, heaving hand grenades. The artillery observers ordered artillery directly on the position. It did the job, catching the exposed Krauts on the walls of the cone but doing little damage to the Yanks, deep in their foxholes on the top. At 0800 on the morning of February 21, after ten hours of fighting and with virtually all of their ammunition exhausted, the platoon finally broke up and routed the attacking forces. In all, it had repelled seven vicious counterthrusts, killing twenty-six Germans and capturing seven, while suffering few casualties among its own group.

Relief came in the form of reinforcements, 2nd Lt. FLOYD P. HALLETT's B Company platoon, guided by battalion commander Colonel HAMPTON, which finally fought their way through to the isolated platoon at 1700 on the 21st. Without food, water, or communication for 36 hours, the platoon had withstood repeated artillery barrages and attacks. Its supplies replenished, it remained in its position until relieved on January 22 by HALLETT's platoon.

Back at the CP on February 19, the first prisoners had begun to arrive for questioning. At 1400 three Germans, one wounded, were brought in. Captured by Company A, they were the first of a steady stream who were to furnish valuable information about the German units. The prisoners seemed to be of two classes: the elite mountain troops of the 4th Mountain Battalion, who were mostly Austrian and Bavarian; and a sad-looking lot of old men and kids from the 1044th Regiment. From the first captured men, the IPW team was able to obtain the German passwords for the next four days.

While the prisoners were being brought in, Company C on Mt. Serrasiccia was fighting off a 40-man German counterattack. Forced to pull back off the crest, they called for artillery support, and the resulting barrage, including 83-mm and 60-mm mortar fire, temporarily broke up the attack. It soon began again, and now the Germans brought out the first of many underhanded ruses that were to rouse the fighting ire of the men of the 86th and make many a Jerry wish he had never heard of the American ski troops. A large group of Germans came out of cover with hands raised high as if in surrender. Captain MCCLURE's company held their fire and the Germans drew close to their positions. At the bottom of the little ridge on which Company C was dug in, the Germans suddenly fell to the ground, brought out their weapons, and opened fire. Company C had not been fooled, and the Germans gained nothing but numerous casualties from the trick.

The Krauts were beginning to pour artillery into our positions. Le Piagge, Campiano, Baichetti and Farne were receiving heavy mortar and artillery fire. These were but the first of many German barrages which were to teach the Americans a healthy respect for the Jerry artillery. In comparison with artillery casualties, the number of dead and wounded from small arms and hand-to-hand fighting were negligible and would remain so throughout the first phases of the campaign.

Company A on Mt. Mancinello was busy, for the Germans had launched attacks up and down the line. Captain NEIDNER's men had killed four and captured eight and the fighting continued. A Company was fighting mad, for the Germans had killed an aid man as he attempted to treat the wounded. The Air Force gave strong support as it bombed troop concentrations slightly to the rear.

It is impossible to describe the difficulties of supply during this period of the operation. Supply was carried almost entirely by mules and on human backs, though weasels could be used in some localities. As soon as the battalion was in position, 1st Lt. WALTER TREVOR, 1st Battalion S-4, immediately requested 36 more mules to carry supplies up the winding mountain trails. The carrying parties, under the general direction of 1st Lt. DYSON DUNCAN, did a magnificent job. One group, led by 1st Lt. SPEROS BOUDOURES of Company D, ran into an enemy machine gun. Lt. BOUDOURES was wounded almost immediately, but Pvt. MICHAEL BOSTONIA, a replacement in the regiment, took over the party, routed the Germans, and covered the withdrawal of the party, assisted by Pvt. ALVIE SWEARINGEN. Minutes later, both men were killed in an artillery barrage. 1st Sgt. URIEL V. CARPENTER and his men from Service Company earned the highest praise and commendation from Lt. Col. TOWNSEND for their work in supplying Company F. Despite all difficulties the supplies came through.

Intermittent firing and counterattacking continued. The artillery fired 168 rounds in support of Lt. LOOSE's platoon on Campiano. But the important job now was to insure maximum support for the attack on Mt. Belvedere by the 85th and the 87th regiments. A battery of seven .50-caliber machine guns was moved to Plinardo [1 km east of Farne] to support the attack. Two 75-mm pack howitzers also moved into approximately the same positions.

Major HAY's 3rd Battalion was in the process of moving into its forward positions on the right flank of the division. At 0345 Capt. WILLIAM D. DRAKE, Battalion S-3, reported that they had reached their objectives with only one casualty. Two enemy machine gun nests had been taken care of. Wire teams, in particular, were under heavy fire, and men of the A & P Platoon had been pressed into service as litter bearers. Colonel COOK, executive officer of the regiment, directed Capt. DRAKE to move his Company L under Capt. EVERETT BAILEY right along side of the 87th as they advanced and to maintain contact. This was done throughout the remainder of the operation. At the same time Company F was finally pulled from its positions on Bure and moved to Poggio Forato by order of General HAYS. One squad of Company A was sent to outpost Bure.

Throughout the day, the 86th outposts and CP anxiously watched the progress of the attack on Belvedere, which they could see clearly. Hundreds of civilians lined the hills around Lizzano and Vidiciatico to watch the battle, as if it were a circus. As the day wore on, it was evident that both the 85th and 87th were running into considerable opposition. At 0820, February 20, G-3 instructed Major ALLEN to send one company of the 3rd Battalion to assist the 1st Battalion 85th in attaining its objective. Major ALLEN relayed the order to Capt. DRAKE, who reported that Company L would coordinate its attack with the 85th.

Feb 20

All day on the 20th, the 1st Battalion repulsed German attacks. Twenty-six dead piled up in front of one B Company position. Seven prisoners were taken, six of them mountain troopers. The evacuation of casualties from the Company B positions on Cappel Buso was especially difficult. Some litter cases took as long as 20 hours, but the litter bearers of Major JOHN K. ME-NEELY's Medical Detachment worked night and day to get the wounded back to the collecting stations. First Sgt. EDWIN THIVRIDGE of B Company was able to issue the first rations to the men on the night of the 20th. No water was available, but the men ate snow.

On Mt. Serrasiccia, Company C battled furiously. The artillery dropped 84 rounds on the enemy in that area with telling effect. Air support aided too, as planes swept down to bomb enemy installations not a hundred yards from the American lines, especially in the Rocca Corneta area. Our own .50-caliber machine guns were placing deadly fire on buildings in that vicinity—so deadly that 4 Germans emerged from the buildings and surrendered without a fight. Five more Germans were caught in single file by a Company H machine gun squad and mowed down.

After withdrawing Company F from Bure, Colonel TOWNSEND moved the 2nd Battalion to Vidiciatico, taking over the billets vacated by the 3rd Battalion 87th. There they constituted Corps reserve. Major BOWERMAN and 1st Lt. BRADFORD BOYNTON, 2nd Battalion S-4, had already issued orders for the transport of the battalion from the front line assembly area to Vidiciatico.

At 1300 on the afternoon of the 20th, Company C jumped off in a new attack along the Serrasiccia ridge. Despite the strong enemy resistance, partly shattered by a 15-minute artillery barrage including effectively timed fire, Capt. MCCLURE gained his objective in 28 minutes, killing 4 enemy and forcing the remainder of the German force to withdraw. Several prisoners were captured to add to the steady stream now flowing through the CP. There was more work than the two interrogators could handle. Most of the PWs were thoroughly stunned. Even after losing the ridge, they had not really been dismayed. They had lost those positions before. It was not until after they had thrown their artillery and counterattacked that they actually realized that the 86th meant business and that it actually intended not only to take the ridge but to hold it as well.

At 0600 that morning Company L had moved up on the right flank of the division, suffering fairly heavy casualties but everywhere reaching its objectives. They were slightly to the right of Mt. Belvedere and were pinned down several times by enemy artillery and machine gun fire. When they reached their objective at 1600, they had captured 33 prisoners. During the advance, a number of men distinguished themselves by their heroism under fire. Staff Sergeant EDWARD A. LISCIANDRO crawled across open territory under intense fire to give aid to wounded. Sgt. SAMUEL R. BULKLEY and Pfc. THOMAS J. PATTI selected a route for the advance of the company across unprotected terrain. PATTI was mortally wounded, but continued to advance for 200 yards.

Company L expected to be relieved by elements of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, but at 1707, Colonel TOMLINSON ordered Captain DRAKE to remain in position until relieved by an order from IV Corps. Later he instructed Major HAY to move into his final objective and remain there during the night, protecting himself with heavy weapons.

At 1855 the first estimate of casualties was reported to Division G-1. In the light of what had been accomplished, it was amazingly light, though nonetheless serious. Killed: 1 officer, 6 enlisted men; wounded: 2 officers, 25 enlisted men. The officer killed was 1st Lt. JOHN

MCCOWN of Company C, a veteran mountain climber whose rambling bow-legged gait and contempt for army red tape had made him a well-known figure to almost every man in the regiment. He had been riddled by a German machine gun as he made a reconnaissance patrol.

There was no doubt that the enemy had suffered many times as many casualties. Even as the report was going in, the body of a German captain was found, a victim of our artillery. In his possession were found documents, maps, etc. of great value to Capt. PFAELZER. At 1037 the first estimate of enemy dead was available. There were 80 bodies in the 1st Battalion area, 23 in the 2nd's area, and 20 in the 3rd. This was, of course, in addition to wounded and prisoners. The casualty score was definitely in favor of the mountain men from the 86th.

The night of the 20th was comparatively quiet, with the regiment in full command of its positions. Only Company L received a minor attack, which was repelled with ease. Forces on Campiano received their nightly sniper and harassing fire.

Next morning plans began to develop for the relief of the 1st Battalion, which had now been in continuous action since the night of February 18-19. The 3rd Battalion was ordered to remain in its positions for another day and at 0830, Capt. DAVID ROSENDALE alerted the 1st Battalion for relief. Before relief could be effected, Company B on Cappel Buso took the worst artillery shelling of the operation. After six minutes of the German fire, there were eight casualties including two dead.

Feb 21

By 1700 the 10th Reconnaissance Troop and the 10th Anti-tank Battalion were beginning to relieve the 1st Battalion. The Recon troop was to relieve our positions on Mt. Mancinello and Mt. Serrasiccia, as well as those on Cappel Buso and Campiano. At 2300 the Anti-tank men began to move in, and at 0705 the next morning the entire battalion, with the exception of one platoon, had been replaced. The dirty, unshaven soldiers who half fell down the trails were not the same persons who had struggled up those trails a few nights before. Up there on the ridge the men had been separated from the boys. On the night of the 19th they had been rookies, with their combat abilities yet to be proved. Now they were veterans who had done their jobs well. But there were no smiles on these men's faces. Up there on the ridge they had left their buddies, men they had lived with and worked with, many of them almost two years. They were bitter and mad, but they were also very, very tired. Some had not slept or eaten for more than three days. Many were heroes, recommended for combat decorations. Despite their bitterness and their weariness, they were proud of each other and proud of themselves. In the words of General MARK CLARK, they had done "a damn fine job." Down from the hills, they were more than glad to get PX and beer rations, which was little enough reward for what they had been through.

The only men of the 1st Battalion who remained on the line were the 1st Platoon of Company B, led by 2nd Lt. FLOYD HALLETT, who had relieved Lt. LOOSE's men on Campiano. The men were ordered to remain where they were until nightfall. At 0800 they suffered a full-fledged attack following a heavy mortar barrage. Two prisoners later stated that the attack was made by a German mountain company of approximately 70 men. The nature of the terrain allowed the enemy to approach fairly close to the defensive positions under cover. At the start of the attack the Germans hit and immediately killed the squad leader, the BAR gunner, and seriously wounded the machine gunner of the left flank squad. There was imminent danger of a breakthrough in that section of the line. Pfc. ALAN ROSE, in his foxhole between two dead men, held his ground, and though wounded in the cheek, placed heavy rifle and grenade fire on the enemy. Pfc. EDWARD A. KOSKI, a rifleman, noted that the machine gun was unmanned. Jumping from his foxhole he traversed open ground to the gun and put it into action. S/Sgt. ROBERT THOMPSON, seeing the gap in the lines, quickly led his squad through a hail of fire to reinforce the posi-

tion. Standing erect as bullets kicked up the dust all around him, Sgt. THOMPSON threw grenade after grenade at the enemy at such close range that it was necessary to hold the grenades a couple of seconds after releasing the safety lever in order to prevent the enemy from throwing them back. Pfc. RICHARD DOUGHTY, in another section of the line, manned his light machine gun so effectively that a German machine gun squad withdrew in confusion, leaving their gun. Dashing into the open, DOUGHTY captured the German gun and turned it on the fleeing enemy. Through quick thinking and action such as this, the attack was beaten off with heavy German casualties and two prisoners taken.

Over on the right flank of the division, the attack of the 2nd Battalion 85th had bogged down. Suffering heavy casualties, they were unable to advance. At 0947 February 21, G-3 ordered the 3rd Battalion 86th to prepare to concentrate in the vicinity of Mazzancana in the expectation of a supporting attack through the 85th. At 1018, as the situation steadily grew worse, G-3 ordered Major HAY to concentrate his battalion at Mazzancana without delay. The process of moving in this location was a difficult one, and at 2030 that night Major HAY requested engineer help on the Gaggio Montano-Morandella-Mazzancana road, having found that the passage of tanks had made it unsuitable for travel.

With only Lt. HALLETT's platoon left on the line, the remainder of the regiment was in the process of moving to Gaggio Montano where the new CP was to be set up. At 0920 February 22, Colonel COOK, along with 1st Lt. MELVIN KAYLOR, regimental communications officer, had moved into Gaggio Montano to establish the new CP. They were followed by Colonel TOMLINSON, Captain WILLIAM H. HARD, regimental adjutant, and Captain PFAELZER. At 1530 the CP in la Ca was closed.

Feb 22

Evidently the Germans were suspicious of Gaggio Montano for at 1549 the first of several artillery shells fell within 50 yards of the CP building. At 1740 the CP and aid station were shelled again. Two casualties resulted, and even the most dignified of the regimental staff assumed the prone position, especially after one shell hit the corner of the building. At 1825 the town was shelled a third time, and everyone agreed that the Jerries knew entirely too much about the movement to Gaggio Montano.

Feb 23

Next morning, February 24th, Lt. HALLETT and his men were still on Campiano. They had been reduced from 1 officer and 34 men to 1 officer and 23 men through enemy action. General ROBINSON E. DUFF, after inspecting the position, recommended that they be relieved immediately. A platoon of Company A took their place on the ridge.

Feb 24

The 3rd Battalion had made contact with the 2nd Battalion 85th and was now in a rear assembly area at Mazzancanna. At 1155 Colonel TOMLINSON received orders from General HAYS. Major HAY's battalion was to effect relief of the 2nd Battalion 85th on the night of 23-24 February with the mission of seizing, occupying, organizing, and defending Mt. della Torraccia, maintaining contact with the Brazilian Expeditionary Force [BEF] on the east and with the 85th on the south. This was the area in which the 85th had been stopped and had suffered such terrible casualties from the German artillery fire. It was the 3rd Battalion's job to move through the 85th and take the objective. One company was sent forward immediately to act as a mobile reserve in support of the 85th.

To direct the attack on Mt. della Torraccia, Major ALLEN and Captain PFAELZER opened a forward CP at Mazzancanna. At 1905 on the night of the 23rd, the 3rd Battalion moved forward to an advanced assembly area. The plan of attack, as approved by division commander Major General GEORGE P. HAYS, called for Company I, commanded by Captain ROE D. WATSON, to

relieve Company G 85th at 2200. Company K, under Captain FREDERICK DOLE, was to be in a forward area, while Company L, under Captain EVERETT C. BAILEY, was to be in reserve. At 0650 February 24, the division artillery was to barrage della Torraccia. At 0700 Company I was to attack to the right, and Company K, passing through elements of Company E 85th, would attack to the left. Air support was to be furnished. The objectives were the mountain itself and spurs that jutted out 500 yards to northeast and northwest. The attack began right on schedule. Almost immediately Company I and Company K met heavy automatic weapons fire. Despite this fire and intense artillery, the battalion took its original objectives at 0857, and the objective was then broadened to include two more hills. At 1125 these also had been taken and positions on them were being organized. At 1210, Company I, then at Le Borre, was ordered to take another hill. It accomplished this final mission at 1215. The ground was taken, but at heavy cost. Company K, for instance, had suffered about 12% casualties.

The battalion immediately dug in: Company I on Hill 991 and at Le Borre; Company L with one platoon at i Felicari and the remainder of the company on the reverse slope of Hill 1079 near Le Grotte; and Company K on the left, on Mt. della Torraccia.

The Germans were not happy about losing this ground. All night, artillery fell on the Americans. Some casualties resulted, but the men burrowed their foxholes further into the cold dirt to escape the flying shrapnel, and when morning came, most of them were still there.

Back at Gaggio Montano plans were already afoot to relieve the battalion with Colonel TOWNSEND's companies. But before the relief could take place, the Germans hit Torraccia with everything they had.

At 1620 on the afternoon of the 24th, the Boche attacked Company K's left flank, supported by artillery. At 1850 it appeared that the attack had been effectively repulsed, but at 2325 new attacks had to be beaten off and 60 more rounds of artillery fell. At 0020 Major HAY reported to the CP that they were holding their own but that "artillery was everywhere." Support was called for from Company C, 84th Chemical Battalion, which fired 175 rounds.

At 0110, Major ALLEN phoned Major HAY, asking, "Have you anything to report? Do you need any help?" To which Major HAY replied, "Hell no, we don't need any help here. We're doing all right."

Feb 25

Though the 3rd refused to move back an inch, it was suffering heavy casualties. Major HAY requested all available litter bearers and aid men. The 2nd Platoon of Company B was dispatched to aid in evacuation of the wounded. The men gritted their teeth as they carried aid men who had been shot through their Red Cross-labeled helmets.

At 0230 the situation, which had admittedly been serious for a time, was well under control. Major HAY requested an IPW team, as many prisoners were being taken. There was no enemy to the right; the enemy in the middle sector was withdrawing; while many of the Germans on the left were surrendering.

The attack continued spasmodically throughout the night, with heavy mortar and artillery fire, but the enemy never seriously threatened again, and by 0700 the next morning, the attack was definitely over, the enemy having done no firing for 45 minutes.

The results of the attack were impressive. Thirty-seven prisoners had been taken, including a German captain and all that was left of his company. Information given by these prisoners revealed that the attack had been made by four companies of the Mittenwald Mountain Battalion, supported by light field howitzers. One thousand rounds of artillery had been hurled into the

Yank front lines. The German captain in particular was amazed by the resistance he had met. After the artillery barrage, he had expected to walk in and take the objectives without trouble. When he found instead an aggressive enemy still firmly entrenched, he saw nothing else to do but surrender. The Germans had thrown the best they had at the men of the 3rd Battalion and had failed.

As the month of February came to an end, it was evident that the line was still far from static. The 10th Division was not through advancing. The 1st of March found the 3rd Battalion still on Mt. della Torraccia, with the other two battalions drawn up behind them in the vicinity of Gaggio Montano.

## HISTORY of the 86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY

**MARCH 1, 1945 – MARCH 31, 1945**

In the first sunlit days of March, the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment under the command of Colonel CLARENCE M. TOMLINSON was firmly entrenched on the rugged peaks of Mt. della Torraccia. From their foxholes and dugouts, the mountain fighters could look back down the deep winding valley that leads to Silla and Porretta—territory that the Germans had only recently commanded from these hills. To the west they could see Mt. Belvedere, conquered by their sister regiments, the [85th and] 87th, and beyond it, the crags and rocks of Pizzo di Campiano, Mt. Mancinello and Mt. Serrasiccia which make up Riva Ridge.

Even as they rested from their victories of February, commendations poured in. *Time* magazine told the people at home of their exploits, comparing the tactics employed by the 86th 1st Battalion against Riva Ridge with those used successfully by the English general, James Wolfe, at Quebec during the French and Indian War. Quick praise for the 10th Mountain Division came from Field Marshall HAROLD ALEXANDER, Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean Theater, General JOSEPH T. MCNARNEY, commanding U.S. Army forces in the Mediterranean, General MARK CLARK, commanding the 15th Army Group, Lt. General LUCIAN K. TRUSCOTT of the Fifth Army, and Major General WILLIS D. CRITTENBERGER of IV Corps. And from home came a deluge of newspaper clippings, sent by proud fathers, mothers, wives and sweethearts. Most of these clippings brought wry smiles from the men who had battled the Germans on Riva Ridge and Mt. della Torraccia. The newspapers spoke of "elite soldiers," "Blue-Blood Troops," "Alpine Division." Most of the men had forgotten the glamorous days of "ski trooping." Now they were prouder to be known as "Mountain Infantry." They had fought from rock to rock and tree to tree in ground combat against the enemy, and the most meaningful decoration for them was the blue and silver Combat Infantryman's Badge, which almost every man in the regiment was now entitled to wear.

The last nine days of February had seen strategic peaks and territory wrested from the Germans. The 86th's 1st Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. HENRY J. HAMPTON, had taken Riva Ridge, beaten off savage counterattacks for three days, and following relief, now lay in division reserve near Gaggio Montano at Gabba. Here they set up bivouac areas and rested. Morale was surprisingly high, "even bordering on cockiness," according to Captain KENNETH SIEGMAN, whose Company B had played a large and important part in the first operations.

Lieutenant Colonel TOWNSEND's 2nd Battalion had constituted Corps reserve at Vidiciatico throughout most of the February action, but had moved into a portion of the 3rd Battalion sector on the line on the 26th and 27th of February. It now held the left section of della Torraccia, while Major HAY's 3rd Battalion had contracted its sector until it now held about half the frontal area it had occupied during the hectic night of the 25-26 February when it had beaten off the most vicious and determined effort of the Germans to recoup their losses. On the left flank was the 87th; on the right flank was the third infantry regiment of the division—the 85th.

Below Gaggio Montano the regimental command post had been set up in tents in a natural grassy bowl, protected by a ring of steep knolls. Here Headquarters Company and CP personnel dug deep covered foxholes, for the Germans had developed a nasty habit of dropping huge shells from 170-mm guns in the area surrounding Gaggio.

On March 1, in preparation for the continuance of operations, Colonel TOMLINSON, Lt. Col. COOK, Capt. HARD, Capt. PFAELZER, Major ALLEN, M/Sgt. JOHN T. EVANS and M/Sgt. WEATHERBEE LAMSON moved up to a forward OP on the slope of della Toraccia. So close was the Command Post to the front lines that it was necessary to carry on all activities in dugouts constructed by S/Sgt. WALLACE ROSS and his men from the regimental band. Just over the ridge was the enemy. When told that the I & R Platoon was maintaining three observation posts, Colonel TOMLINSON ironically ordered one of the discontinued. "We don't need all three of them," he smiled, "the CP itself is an OP." Such close-in direction of operations was characteristic not only of the regiment but also of the division. It was a source of constant amazement to officers and men from other outfits. One veteran quartermaster outfit officer refused to believe his eyes when he saw the CP location. "My God," he exclaimed, "you'd think regimental headquarters was holding a sector of the front."

The February operations had been only the beginning of the planned attacks on the Germans by the 10th Mountain Division. Now it was hoped to drive north, capturing Mt. Terminale, Iola, Sassomolare and other strategic German strongpoints. Specific objectives were laid out and designated Able, Baker, Charlie, etc. Each company was assigned one or more of these objectives. The success of the attack, as always, depended upon the complete and thorough cooperation of the division, its flanking elements, the artillery, and the supporting air force. Not one echelon could fail or the entire operation was subject to collapse.

On February 28, the battalion commanders had been oriented by Col. TOMLINSON on the respective parts they were to play in the coming attacks. At first scheduled for early on the morning of March 1, the operations were postponed to March 2 by division order at 1645 on February 28,. At 1805, March 2, the operation was again postponed for an additional 24 hours.

The periods of delay were not wasted. Preparations for the attack went on steadily. Aggressive American patrols stabbed the enemy lines, probing for weak spots. Two men from Company K, Staff Sergeant GEORGE H. DENKER JR. and Pfc. STANLEY A. SLIVON, worked their way in behind the German lines on the night of March 1. Their aim was the capture of, or intelligence about, a German 90-mm gun. On the route they observed a house in which there was considerable German activity. Walking boldly up to the house, they shouted to the enemy that they were surrounded. Six Germans surrendered. Since they were the personnel of an artillery OP, they were able to give valuable information about the enemy defenses.

On the morning of March 2, a Company K patrol ambushed 20 Germans. That night, a G Company patrol moved into the vicinity of C. Romito, with the mission of knocking out an enemy stronghold in the path of the coming advance. Moving forward in the darkness, their approach was discovered and they were met with a hail of machine gun and mortar fire. While most of the patrol laid down a base of fire, Pfc. LEON C. WITKOWSKI and Pvt. FREDERICK J. JUDSON JR. circled the house and approached it from the rear. Engaging the enemy, the men drove them from the house. JUDSON kicked in the door, but the enemy inside immediately threw out a grenade, knocking JUDSON to the ground. Another Kraut with a submachine gun appeared around the corner of the house, but JUDSON engaged him with fire until he withdrew. The rest of the Germans then fled the house to a covered position, suffering a number of casualties in the process. Having cleared the house, the squad began its withdrawal. Heavy mortar fire fell in the area, and WITKOWSKI was struck in the face. JUDSON administered first aid to him, and then together with Technician Fifth Grade JOHN W. DICKINSON (radio operator in the regimental I & R Platoon who had volunteered to accompany the patrol as a communications man) remained in an exposed position to cover the withdrawal of the remainder of the squad.

Mar 2

The battalion commanders continued their conferences with the colonel and his staff. Ever on the alert for the order to attack, the men sat nervously in their foxholes, cleaning weapons, checking ammunition, and dodging enemy artillery. Captain HARD, in an attempt to make up for losses suffered in the first phase of the attack, requisitioned replacements: 171 riflemen, 8 ammunition and pioneer men, 5 medical aid men, and 1 radio operator. Division G-1 could only promise 50 riflemen and 5 medics.

At 1704 on the afternoon of March 2, the uncertainty was over. From division came the order that the operation would take place on March 3, in accordance with previous plans. The battalion commanders were immediately notified. At 1900 Col. TOMLINSON held his final conference with his staff. The plans were complete. Everything depended now on the men themselves. Thus far the Germans had not been able to halt them, but the deeper the 86th pushed into enemy territory, the more stubborn and desperate the resistance became.

The plan of attack was a leapfrog strategy. The initial attack would be made by 2 battalions. Lt. Col. HAMPTON's 1st Battalion on the left was to take the high ground east of Monteforte and Hill 928. This was Objective Able. On the right, Lt. Col. TOWNSEND's 2nd Battalion was charged with the capture of Objective Baker: Mt. Terminale and Iola. As soon as this ground was secured, Lt. Col. TOWNSEND's men were to attack Objective Dog: Hill 921. From Hill 921, the 2nd Battalion would move on to Hills 916 and 879, the two peaks on either side of Il Monte which constituted Objective Fox, while at the same time the 3rd Battalion would move from its reserve position to the left of the 2nd Battalion and assault Campo del Sole, Objective George. By this time the 1st Battalion, having taken Objective Able, would be relieved by elements of the 85th Regiment and would be prepared to push through the other two battalions and launch attacks on Sassomolare and Mt. Grande d'Aiano, Objectives How and Jig. The 1st Battalion had relieved the 3rd Battalion two days before, so all was in readiness for the attack.

In the dim light of dawn the next morning, the fields and roads appeared deserted and quiet. By 0630 the personnel of the rear CP were awake and waiting for the first roar of artillery. Some men still lay in their blankets; others stepped outside their tents to watch the skies. At the front, there had been little or no sleep all night. Now the men crouched in their dugouts gripped their weapons and waited. On the right, many of the 2nd Battalion men "sweated out" their first big push, since only Captain RIDEOUT's Company F had actively engaged in the first operation, the remainder of the battalion having been held in reserve. On the left, the 1st Battalion, seasoned "veterans" of Riva Ridge, knew again the tightening of chest muscles, the dryness of throat, and the hot and cold shivers, which precede the jump-off. Drawn up close behind the other two battalions on the slopes of della Toraccia was the 3rd Battalion, commanded by its newly promoted leader, Lieutenant Colonel HAY.

Mar 3

At 0640 it began—that always impressive and frightening artillery barrage. For twenty long minutes there was not a second that a gun did not roar. Every caliber of piece available, heavy and light, belched forth its lethal cargo over the heads of the waiting Yanks and into the front lines and carefully prepared defenses of the Tedeschi.

Two hundred yards in front of the last Company F outposts, Sgt. WARREN D. JOHNSON and T/5 JOHN E. SHAHAN JR. had just taken over the I & R OP. Hardly had they settled into their covered dugout when the artillery began to whistle over their position. Suddenly, around the corner of a nearby and supposedly deserted house, came three Germans, their hands held high. The artillery was too much for them, and the two I & R men sent back the first three prisoners in the day's bag—first of a number which was to be appraised by a Corps officer as the greatest ever taken by any unit during three days on the Italian front.

At 0700, before the last shells had landed, the men were out of their holes and advancing across the fields. On the left, the 1st Battalion moved against Objective Able, the high ground east of Monteforte. The forward elements of Capt. WILLIAM E. NEIDNER's Company A moved past Hill 1011 at 0728. Capt. SIEGMAN's Company B paralleled their advance. Company C, Capt. WORTH MCCLURE commanding, followed in close reserve. The advance was speedy but by no means simple. The Germans poured artillery, mortar, and machine gun fire onto the attackers. But the first phase of combat operations had taught the 86th a vital lesson: never let the Germans pin you down. Keep moving. Once pinned down, you are an easy target for Jerry artillery. Despite a hail of fire, the companies moved up.

At the same time, Lt. Col. TOWNSEND's 2nd Battalion on the right was fighting its way up the slopes of Mt. Terminale. Company G was assigned the mission of taking Hills 952 and 953. The night before, in preparation for the attack, Capt. RIDGEWAY FAUST, company commander, had led reconnaissance patrols under direct enemy observation to discover the best routes forward. The next morning, he moved the company up these routes through mortar fire that threatened time and time again to pin the men down and stop the advance. Capt. FAUST remained with the first elements, directing the advance personally and by radio. The platoon led by 2nd Lt. FREDERICK S. EYERLY JR. was the first to reach the objective. Almost immediately Lt. EYERLY was wounded by shrapnel, but he refused to stop for medical treatment, remaining with the company and leading his platoon throughout the remainder of the day and night.

The 2nd Platoon of Company G had been pinned down by heavy machine gun fire in the vicinity of C. Romito (559210). Disorganized, the platoon split up, and S/Sgt. WILHART R. ETELAMAKI found himself alone with 12 men under his command. Moving rapidly across the slope, he personally took care of two enemy snipers. He then dispatched Pfc. MARTIN L. MURIE and two other men to flank the machine gun that was holding up the advance. MURIE crept to within 30 yards of the position and threw in two grenades. Without hesitating, he moved into the nest, bayoneting two Germans and capturing four others. With the machine gun out of action, the squad moved on to their objective, capturing some 40 prisoners.

At 0747, Company E was reported halfway up Mt. Terminale. By 0800 its forward elements were atop the mountain, and by 0827 1st Lt. GORDON E. RANDALL had moved three of his platoons to the top of the objective, securing the peak completely by 0840.

Supporting the Company E attack on Mt. Terminale was a platoon of heavy weapons from Company H, led by 1st Lt. VICTOR P. CASPERSON. On the two days previous to the attack, Lt. CASPERSON had made reconnaissance patrols to select his positions for guns. On these patrols, he had advanced to within 100 yards of the enemy, firmly entrenched at C. Romito and la Crezia. He then had led a third patrol into enemy territory at the base of Terminale on order to select his targets for the attack. On the morning of the attack, when he led his platoon into position, they were able to quickly engage the enemy and support the attack. In order to even better support the assault, a heavy machine gun section led by S/Sgt. PHILLIP R. BERREY displaced into exposed positions. Observers called the positions untenable, but the two squads led by Sgt. BYRON R. WARDLE and Sgt. ARTHUR M. ARENIUS, stuck to their guns and refused to be dislodged. The positions held. The attack went on.

The 2nd Battalion's attacking echelons, Company E and Company G, did not hesitate on Terminale, but moved rapidly on, while Company F assumed a reserve position on the mount. The new objective was Dog—Hill 921. Before taking the hill, Company E was faced with the difficult task of clearing the town of Iola which lay in the path of the advance. Company G moved rapidly, but Company E found rough going in Iola. At 0933 they moved into the town, and at

1000 they were struggling in a hand-to-hand, house-to-house fight with the Germans. Company F followed closely behind Company G on the right.

In the early stages of the attack, the 1st Battalion had expected trouble with an enemy mine belt, but according to the first prisoners captured by Col. HAMPTON's men, they somehow had passed through the belt without casualty. At 0830 the battalion moved onto Hill 956. Rover Joe filled the skies above with planes which bombed and strafed Monteforte in advance of the attacking troops. Company A overran an enemy strongpoint at 558217, capturing fifteen prisoners. By 0937 the forward elements of the battalion had reached 558225 and were still moving forward. The 1st Battalion CP at 544202 was under constant shellfire, as the Germans tried desperately to halt the assault. At 1052 the final objective, Hill 928, was reached by Company A. Objective Able was conquered. For the 1st Battalion the first phase was over.

The successful assault had been a costly one. One platoon of Company A was pinned down for many minutes by an enemy machine gun. In an attempt to relieve the situation of the platoon, Sgt. TORGÉR TOKLE, internationally known American ski jumper (he held the American record), and Pfc. ARTHUR K. TOKOLA, a bazooka gunner, crawled into an exposed position. Just as they fired, an artillery tree burst killed them both. But they had accomplished the mission and the advance went on. The hill was taken and Company A began to dig in. Enemy artillery put "typewriter" fire on the ridge, dropping shells in a staccato rhythm up and down the slope. The forward artillery observer attempted to call down counter-battery fire but his communication wires were out. Pfc. EVERETT R. GRIFFIN, a radio operator, left his protection in order to operate his radio. Despite the shrapnel that whistled around him, he continued to send messages until struck and killed. He succeeded in contacting our artillery which blasted the enemy guns and saved the day.

Supporting the advance of the 1st Battalion was Captain ERWIN G. NILSSON's heavy weapons company. Time and time again, it was the merciless fire of the heavy machine guns and 81-mm mortars, which forced the enemy back. Staff Sergeant GERHARD LUST was painfully wounded by shrapnel, but he rallied his disorganized and panicky machine gun section and inspired them to successfully complete their mission. He refused medical aid and evacuation until forced to return to the rear area with infection of his wounds. Sgt. LAWRENCE WHITE of the same Company D section, though mortally wounded, continued for some minutes to command the squad and withdraw them from an exposed area to safety. In the same action, Sgt. LEO D. AMES was wounded and later went into shock, but he successfully moved his squad out of the deadly fire which rained upon them.

So rapid was the advance of the troops that communication was a tremendous problem. Repeatedly the communications sections laid wire, only to have it blown asunder by artillery and mortar bursts. Pvt. JAMES PAYTON SR. of Company D had the job of repairing breaks in the sound power wire between the leading rifle company, A, and its mortar support. So heavy was the artillery that PAYTON found it necessary to repair nine breaks in the wire in the space of 20 minutes.

With Objective Able and Baker firmly secured, the attackers did not hesitate. The 1st Battalion was speedily relieved by the 3rd Battalion 85th, and moved into an assembly area at the base of Mt. Terminale, prepared to support the further attack of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. The 2nd was already moving against Iola and Hills 920 and 921, Objective Dog. The 3rd was soon to assault Objective George—Campo del Sole. The tactics and the operation required a sort of battalion rotation, with first one and then another battalion moving from reserve into the attack.

In Iola, Company E hit the toughest opposition of the day. Just as the attack began, the company commander, 1st Lt. GORDON E. RANDALL was wounded. The executive officer, 2nd Lt. JACK R. YOUNG, took over the company and directed its attack. He reorganized under heavy enemy fire and moved into the town. The Germans were barricaded in every house and fought to the last man, forcing the Americans to drive them from their holes with bayonets and grenades.

Both assault platoons advanced slowly, but the right platoon, with assistance from tank destroyer units, moved far ahead of the left element. With both flanks exposed, the platoon was pinned down by machine gun fire and could not advance. The artillery fell with terrible accuracy upon the men crouched in ditches and behind low walls. Lt. YOUNG committed the support platoon, personally leading an assault upon the enemy gun position. The platoon captured or killed all occupants of the enemy strongpoint including an officer who had been directing artillery and mortar on the entire area. The attack moved on, and all enemy resistance in the town was eventually destroyed. Thirty prisoners were taken, including a German battalion commander and his staff. The cost to Company E was terrific. Almost an entire platoon were killed or wounded. But the town was taken.

That Iola was taken was due to the heroic efforts of many men. During the earlier attack on Terminale, the squad leader of Pfc. HOWARD C. WELLS's squad was wounded. WELLS took over the squad, led them throughout the remainder of the day, and attained all objectives assigned him. Pfc. WALLACE HEINEN saw an unmanned BAR gun, put it into action, and was almost immediately struck by shrapnel and knocked unconscious. When, after a few minutes, he regained consciousness, he put his gun back into action and continued to fire throughout the attack. Pfc. EARNEST H. WARD, when his platoon radio failed to function, made his way through heavy artillery fire to a rear area to obtain a new one and returned with it to the front line. Pfc. ROBERT G. THIEMAN and Pfc. BERNARD HOLZER volunteered to remove four wounded men from an evacuation jeep in the midst of heavy artillery fire. The list could go on for pages, but one more incident only will be cited. S/Sgt. JOEL S. COFFIN alone captured six enemy and an officer as he moved from house to house before he was killed.

The rapidity of the action made it difficult for the commanders to follow it. OP #2, from which Captain PFAELZER was observing, displaced to the slope of Terminale at 0945. The 2nd Battalion CP moved to 563216 at 0900. Even earlier, at 0842, OP #1 had moved up. From its new location, Technician Fifth Grade ARNOLD C. HOLEYWELL, topographical draftsman in the I & R Platoon, phoned a routine report to regiment. "No enemy activity at the moment," he reported. Just then an observant enemy sniper let go a few rounds that peppered in around HOLEYWELL's foxhole. "They were too damn close," he commented. "I amended my report." Later in the day the Germans dropped mortar rounds on the OP. They put three shrapnel holes through the telephone, ruined a binocular case, and broke the stock of a rifle on the edge of the OP.

Colonel TOMLINSON followed the action closely, moving his forward CP into a hedgerow west of Iola even before the town was taken. At 1248 he phoned his communications officer, 1st Lt. MELVIN E. KAYLOR and ordered him to run wire to his position at 562218. This position was the location of the new CP. The 1st Battalion CP on Terminale was at 565213.

By 1122 the first Company G soldiers were on Objective Dog. The right platoon of Company E was just short of Tamburini, while the left platoon was held up by fire from a house that was in the process of being destroyed by tank destroyers. At 1135 Company G consolidated its positions on the west end of the objective and by 1223 had moved onto Hill 930. Company E was still

having trouble 250 yards northeast of Iola at 568221. Colonel TOWNSEND committed his reserve, Company F, in the attack on Tamburini. At 1346, they pushed onto the objective, while Company E cleared out scattered resistance near Iola.

General HAYS had ordered the 3rd Battalion pushed immediately through the other units in order to attack Objective George—Campo del Sole. As fast as possible, Colonel HAY moved his battalion into its assembly area. At 1530 he jumped off in the new attack. Just 22 minutes later, the 2nd Battalion, which paused on Dog only long enough to reorganize, attacked Objective Fox: Hill 916 and Hill 879 on either side of Il Monte.

The 3rd Battalion functioned smoothly and efficiently. At 1745 they occupied the objective, taking two field pieces and capturing over 100 prisoners. The 3rd Battalion CP displaced forward between 1900 and 2000. Col. HAY requested additional forward artillery observers and help from a collecting company to take care of his casualties.

At 1800 the 2nd Battalion had moved up on the high ground of Objective Fox. Company E reported killing two "Germans" who upon investigation turned out to be Italian women wearing German uniforms. "I guess they forced the women to put on the clothes and go out in the street," commented Pfc. ALBERT EJEM. "We felt sorry as hell when we realized what had happened, but what can you do when they fight like that?"

Scattered resistance continued at Il Monte until 2100. "We were moving so fast that the Jeries had a hard time zeroing in on us," said Sgt. JAMES LAWSON of Company E. "Their mortars kept falling where we had been." More than 200 prisoners were taken.

Nightfall. The 86th had taken five of the seven objectives assigned to it. During the night, plans were coordinated for the morrow's attack by the 1st Battalion against Objectives How and Jig—Sassomolare and Mt. Grande. The attacks were to be fully supported by tanks and artillery.

Throughout the night, few men relaxed. Only too well the men remembered the vicious counterattacks they had faced after previous gains. No one doubted that the Germans would repeat their performance and make a desperate effort to regain the lost ground. Contact was established between the 86th and 87th, which had moved up on the right in similar gains. Company C of the 87th which had moved into the regimental sector, was placed under the operational control of the 86th for the night. At 1830 the 2nd Battalion had established contact with the 85th on the left. The defensive line tightened up.

The most outstanding thing about the first day's operations appeared to be the number of prisoners taken. From the time the first three Krauts surrendered to the I & R men just as the attack started until nightfall, the prisoners came through the IPW station in a steady stream. Eighteen were taken by the 1st Battalion in the early stages of its advance; thirty were taken in Iola by the 2nd Battalion; 110 by the 3rd Battalion on Campo del Sole, 200 at Il Monte. They came from diverse units, the first three being from the 11th Company of the 721st Regiment, while among the last prisoners taken was one who said he came from the 444th Regiment, a new unit on the front. The total count for the first day was well over 400, while the division total was near 1000.

Next morning at 0745, a new artillery barrage opened up, and at 0800 the 1st Battalion was off again, this time toward Sassomolare. At 0839 Col. HAMPTON reported the situation progressing well and rapidly. Companies B and C were attacking on line. At 0910 the advance was held up just south of Hills 892 and 859 by small arms and automatic weapons fire. 1st Lt. JOHN K. RANCK of Company B led a squad to within grenade range of the Germans. Charging the

Mar 4
-------

position, the party killed one German, wounded one, and took four prisoners. Lt. RANCK continued the advance 200 yards farther, taking four more prisoners. Finally he neutralized the gun position, personally killing the gunner while his squad finished off the rest of the occupants. Sgt. FRANK ELKSNIN, who had been left in a rear area, crept and crawled through heavy sniper fire to join his squad. Arriving at the assault area, he killed two Germans, helping to lift fire from his pinned down comrades. Staff Sergeant AL ALCARAZ led his mortar section forward so as to be able to better support the 2nd Platoon. The Germans dropped a heavy mortar barrage in the valley that he had to cross, but he maneuvered his men across without a casualty.

By 0950 the battalion was once more moving ahead, Companies B and C were still abreast, while Company A had not yet been committed. At 1034 the left half of the objective was taken. Rapidly the position was overrun. Captain ROBERT KRUMM, battalion S-3, stood on a tank to direct fire on the houses, shouting through the turret to the gunners. The Germans streamed out of the town, and, above them as they poured along the road to Natalino, the ever-present planes bombed and strafed.

At 1109 Sassomolare was completely ours. The battalion rapidly reorganized. Col. TOMLINSON moved forward into that village in the midst of harassing mortar fire from the right flank, where the 87th was still attacking the high ground of Objective King—Madna di Brasa. When the regimental commander arrived in Sassomolare at 1130 he found that at least one of the mortar shells had hit its mark. Lt. Col. HAMPTON, battalion commander, was badly wounded. Since the beginning of the operation, Col. HAMPTON had flirted with injury or death by staying constantly in the forward areas in order to direct his troops. At last his luck had run out.

When Col. HAMPTON was evacuated, Major GRAHAM ESPEY took over command of the battalion. He was called forward from the rear CP and arrived at 1200. Immediately he and Col. TOMLINSON planned a coordinated attack on the next objective, Mt. Grande. Company B was to attack on the right, Company C on the left, with Company A following C. Company D was to support from the high ground at Sassomolare. The attack was to jump off following a 27-minute artillery preparation.

Inevitably, some things went wrong. The attack was delayed by more harassing fire from the right flank. At 1315, 12 minutes ahead of schedule and while friendly artillery still fired, the battalion jumped off. Despite these initial handicaps, the advance proceeded. The artillery continued to pour heavy fire on targets of opportunity, and Rover Joe strafed the reverse slope of the objective. By 1400 Company C was advancing up the slope of Mt. Grande. Company A in reserve, was receiving heavy artillery. At 1525 the objective was taken. Company B took 40 prisoners on Hill 842 and quickly dug in; Company C was on Hill 854, and Company A on Hill 879. The battalion had taken over 100 prisoners during the day. Pfc. CHARLES LE WECK of Company C explained the method of capturing prisoners. "Every time we got some Germans out of a house, we'd grab the meekest looking private and make him tell us where the next bunch was. We did that all day long."

With Mt. Grande taken, the advance was virtually over. The 86th had accomplished its mission. Opposition had been stiff. From 1st Sgt. DOUGLAS TRAIL of Company D came a concise summary: "These last two days have been a bunch of hell."

Not only at the front had the situation been uncomfortable. The Medical Detachment had had its share of danger and hardship. Major JOHN K. MENEELY moved his men up on the first day of the attack. Conditions of the terrain were such that it was necessary to pack all equipment

for the last four miles. The medics were shelled all the way. Some vehicles were destroyed. The shelling continued without interruption for over 10 hours, while in houses and dugouts the doctors and aid men labored over their patients.

By mid-afternoon on March 4, the 3rd Battalion held Objective George on the left of the regimental sector, while the 1st Battalion was firmly ensconced in the right sector. The 2nd Battalion had moved into Sassomolare just as the 1st moved out. They almost moved in too early, and 2nd Lt. WILD, battalion S-2, found himself in the midst of the fighting. At 1515 the 2nd Battalion was set up in Sassomolare. The entire front was tightly held.

Division G-2 warned Captain PFAELZER that the enemy was capable of counterattacking with a strength of two battalions. Another sleepless night loomed for the men on the line. At 1545 the 2nd Battalion was ordered to tie into the left flank of the 1st Battalion and the right flank of the 3rd Battalion. A strong patrol was dispatched to reduce the remaining resistance on the right flank between Sassomolare and Madna di Brasa. At 1600 Col. TOMLINSON and an advance party displaced forward to the new regimental CP in Il Monte, and at 1700 Captain PFAELZER closed the old CP in Iola.

The expected casualties had occurred, though they were not nearly so heavy as they might easily have been. Captain HARD requisitioned replacements from division: 8 platoon officers and a communications officer, 200 riflemen, 43 heavy weapons men, 12 wiremen, and 5 medical aid men.

The long night went by. At midnight, by order of Col. TOMLINSON, Major HAROLD GREEN, executive officer of the 2nd Battalion, assumed command of the 1st Battalion in place of Major ESPEY. The dawn came and the Germans had not attacked. Why they did not attack that night or later remains the prime mystery of this series of battles.

Mar 5

The counterattack had not come on the night of March 4, but there was no guarantee that it would not yet come; the regiment took no chances. Next day the artillery registered in all defensive fires. Col. TOMLINSON accompanied General HAYS on a rapid ground reconnaissance of the tactical terrain. That the Germans were still around was quite evident as seven rounds of enemy mortar fell near the CP at breakfast-time.

In order to fill in the gap between the 1st and 3rd Battalions, the 2nd Battalion placed strong-points: one platoon at Natalino and one at Piani di Sotto. Outposts maintained contact with the front-line companies.

Meanwhile, in the 1st Battalion area, Company C had found isolated pockets of enemy resistance on Hill 954. They spent the morning cleaning out the area. 1st Lt. LLOYD O. WADLEIGH of Company A was wounded in the hip but remained with his platoon until the mission was complete. At 1430 they discovered that an enemy detachment had worked its way up their flank and was now pouring automatic weapon fire upon them. This firefight was the only serious threat that the Germans were to make in the nature of a counterattack. All afternoon it continued. At 1630 Major GREEN reported that the position was becoming increasingly difficult to hold due to the close proximity of the enemy. Col. TOMLINSON ordered the hill reinforced and held. The reinforcements turned the tide, and though the battle continued for another two hours, the Germans were eventually forced to withdraw.

Position consolidation continued, though the men were constantly harassed by enemy artillery. Supplies were largely carried by mules. Pfc. HANS MEVES and Sgt. ROBERT A. MCELROY of Headquarters Company 1st Battalion directed the activities of the 17th Company,

Alpini Quartermaster Mule Pack Battalion, Italian, which was attached to the 86th. The Service Company carrying parties continued to do yeoman work, carrying supplies on their backs. Cpl. PHIL J. GULLIFER continued to portage though he had tremendous blisters, which eventually sent him to the hospital. Cpl. STANTON D. YOUNG was given three days rest by the medics after exhausting himself, but he refused to take it and returned to his job. Staff Sergeant JOHN C. THOMPSON made four trips up and down the long mountain trails without stopping except to unload and reload. Theirs was a thankless job, but they did it well and uncomplainingly.

Captured enemy artillery, including two 88s, two 105-mm howitzers, and one 75-mm field piece, were either removed or destroyed. Plans went rapidly forward for the laying of mine fields in the areas 565234 and 568230. The 126th Engineers could give only technical advice; the mines must be laid by the infantrymen. In order to further button up the front, contact was made with the 87th on the right on the even hours all night.

At 2125 on the night of March 5, Col. TOMLINSON finally gave way to the illness that had been plaguing him throughout the attack, and he, along with the Sergeant Major, JOHN T. EVANS, was evacuated to the hospital in Gaggio Montano with high fever. Command of the regiment was assumed by the executive officer, Lt. Col. ROBERT L. COOK.

In the early morning hours of March 6, it appeared at last that the Germans were preparing to attack. Light flashes could be seen and vehicles heard at Montalto. Company A reported that tanks to its front were bringing harassing fire to bear. Sirens could be heard, and between 0400 and 0500 a small-scale firefight broke out in the 1st Battalion area. The Americans were quick to retaliate. Heavy artillery concentrations were fired on all possible avenues of attack. Chemical mortar fire fell on the road junction at 588269 where enemy trucks were reported concentrated. Air attacks on Villa d'Aiano and la Rivola were requested. But to the intense relief of all concerned, the German attack did not materialize.

Mar 6

At noon on March 6 occurred one of those unavoidable tragedies which often make the headlines at home, but which can easily be understood by anyone acquainted with the situation. The Rover Joe planes were out again, strafing possible enemy positions. Up on the ridge and down another the planes went, beating the ground with their machine gun fire. On the ridge running down from Mt. Grande, the 1st Battalion men sat on the edge of their foxholes and cheered the planes as they did their deadly work. Suddenly one plane headed directly for the 1st Battalion positions and dived low, continuing its fire. The men below sat stunned for a moment and then leaped for cover. Some didn't make it. The pilot, confused by the sight of similar ridges below him, had misjudged his terrain. He was immediately notified of his mistake.

The regiment settled down to the old familiar task of making their positions stronger and stronger against possible enemy attack. All civilians were evacuated from the area. Company E set up trip flares. Second Lt. PAUL E. MIZE led a Company E patrol out in the vicinity of Piani di Sotto. The company commander, 1st Lt. GORDON E. RANDALL, organized a relief party from the cooks, clerks, and headquarters personnel to destroy an enemy machine gun.

Division once again repeated its warning that the regiment must be on constant watch for a counterattack. The 114th Reconnaissance Battalion, 300 "superman" strong, was now located in a bowl northwest of Montese. This unit could either be employed for a strong counterattack or used for a diversionary attack. But the night was a repetition of those that had preceded it. Enemy artillery fell, but once again no attack.

With the front lines so close together, Captain PFAELZER determined to try a different sort of warfare. With a unit from Psychological Warfare Section, he moved into the Company I area

and beamed a long propaganda harangue into the enemy lines. The most concrete reply from the enemy was a heavy German artillery and mortar barrage on the 3rd Battalion area. Only one German surrendered, but his report was encouraging, since he confessed that many of the Germans who wished to surrender were prevented by fear for the safety of their families. Evidence of the polyglot nature of the opposing forces came that same night as a Russian slave laborer escaped from the enemy lines. Questioning by Cpl. MARTIN HAMMER, Russian-born 86th orientation chief, elicited little information from the man, who was either stupid or afraid.

It was evident to all that offensive action for the time being was at an end. The regiment could now settle down to what in many ways is a more nerve-wracking and uncomfortable job than attack: the holding of a sector of the line against a constantly vigilant and watchful enemy. That the enemy was on his guard no one could dispute. Early on the morning of March 8, an intelligence crew from the 1st Battalion, digging in an OP, ran into heavy and accurate machine gun fire. Intermittent machine gun fire swept the entire 1st Battalion front almost every night. And of course the artillery continued to fall, killing one man here and wounding another there. One officer and nine men were wounded on March 7. The men in the foxholes sweating it out, seeing each dawn with the relieved realization that another night had passed without a shell in their particular dugout.

Mar 7

To compensate for losses incurred in the drive, the regiment received the replacements it had previously requested. On March 7, 8 officers, 42 heavy weapons men, 12 wiremen, 5 aid men and 250 riflemen reported to Warrant Officer DONAVAN A. OWEN at the rear CP. The men had a rousing reception. Two replacements in Company B were wounded before they could be assigned to squads.

The great advantage in material and equipment possessed by the Americans showed itself most during the day. Not a German could move along the front without bringing down a hail of fire, and few enemy even tried. From the OP high on a hill just above Il Monte, the observers could look across at Montese, whose deserted streets and bomb-shattered buildings showed no sign of life. All along Montalto, the high ridge that loomed across the valley from Il Monte and Sassomolare, there were Germans. Everyone knew they were there because at night the machine guns opened up from its forward slopes. To the watchers in the OP who searched the slopes daily with high-powered binoculars, the Germans' whereabouts were largely a mystery. Occasionally a possible OP or gun position was spotted. Minutes later, the boom of artillery or the pop of mortars would be heard and the position demolished. It was an unhealthy locality for Tedeschi.

Mar 9

On March 9 began the shifting of troops, which was designed to give each battalion in turn a rest from its duties on the line. At 0206 March 9, the 2nd Battalion 87th completed its relief of the 3rd Battalion 86th. At 0300 March 10, the 2nd Battalion 86th moved from division reserve into a new sector on the right of the 1st Battalion and went into position in the vicinity of Hill 744.

The 3rd Battalion moved to a rest area at Campo Tizzoro where for the first time in days the men enjoyed a long uninterrupted sleep and a hot shower. Mr. W. Speer, regimental Red Cross director, had provided facilities for clean clothes, haircuts and shaves. Signs pointing to the "Stork Club" were all over town. Coca-Cola, unrationed, was sold for a nickel a bottle. Stationery and reading materials were easily available. Phonographs played full blast to appreciative audiences. Deck chairs lined the sidewalks, and soldiers lolled in the afternoon sun. The movie-houses were filled for afternoon and evening performances with an average attendance of 350 to 400 men. In the evening there were dances with *signorinas* and their chaperones brought in from all the neighboring towns. Double PX rations were issued by Technician Fifth Grade RICHARD

SICCHIO, special service noncom. Many of the men drank their sixteen bottles of beer at a single sitting. The men were paid, and approximately 250 men went to Florence in army vehicles to spend the money. The men made the most of their short rest. On March 12, the battalion moved from Campo Tizzoro to a division reserve area in the vicinity of Crocetta di Sotto.

Up on the lines some 30 miles away, the situation was unchanged. The 1st Battalion held its original positions, while the 2nd Battalion actively engaged in patrolling. On March 11 there was a light counterattack of the 2nd Platoon of Company A which was repulsed without casualty. The 1st Battalion motor pool was heavily shelled, wounding one man. General DUFF inspected the forward areas, but more important to the men was the fact that 10-in-1 rations, with their added variety, were substituted for the tiresome C-rations.

Mar 11

Company C, on Sasso Baldino, beat off an enemy combat patrol on March 12, but was constantly forced to contend with enemy snipers who infiltrated behind the lines and fired on positions from the rear. "Let the snipers alone," advised one GI. "They'll keep the visiting brass away." Company C was fast finding that every house was heavily booby-trapped; for the first time, the 86th had to deal with that particular German specialty. The best solution seemed to be to stay out of the houses until they were cleared by the experts.

March 13. Pay day. What good would money do the men on the front, no one knew, but 1st Sgt. WESLEY LASSELLE of Headquarters Company reported numerous card and dice games. Money changed hands quickly but it helped to pass the time away. Meanwhile contact patrols constantly maintained touch with the 85th on the right flank. Never for a minute could the outfit relax its vigilance against attacks. This was the kind of war the 86th had first encountered back in January around San Marcello.

Mar 13

Quotas of officers and men left periodically for Montecatini, Florence, and Rome. In Florence the men strolled down the old-world streets, inspecting the cathedrals and peering curiously into the narrow shops along the Ponte Vecchio. But it was probably the little Italian resort town of Montecatini that the soldiers would remember longest.

Montecatini was the nearest thing to a line soldier's dream—a wide-open town where the MPs were tolerant, the champagne and cherry brandy flowed like water, and there were ample facilities for amusement. Not the least of the attractions was the Club Trianon, a rowdy night-club with a hot swing orchestra and a shady burlesque show. The men crowded into the movies and bars, met Montecatini's pretty girls, took a look at its famous marble mineral baths, and generally tried to forget all about the war.

The enemy refused to forget the war however, and the front line game of hide-and-seek went on. Colonel TOMLINSON had quickly recovered from his illness. He spent two days touring the hospitals with Major BOWERMAN and Major PFAELZER who had recently been promoted. The three officers tried to see all of the regiment's wounded personnel.

On March 14, 160 more replacements arrived. Since the regiment was now largely up to strength, it was decided to establish a replacement pool at Service Company to supply any call for men. At Bombiana, where Service Company was now located along with rear CP, 112 of the men were placed in a training program under the general direction of 1st Sgt. URIEL V. CARPENTER and Tech. 5 ARTHUR E. RILEY.

Mar 14

On the night of March 15-16, the 1st Battalion left the line, replaced by the 3rd Battalion, which moved from division reserve. The relief was completed at 0042, March 16, and Lt. Col.

HAY at that time assumed responsibility for the sector. The 1st Battalion moved far back to the division rest area at Montecatini.

German artillery was an ever-present problem. Sixty-five shells fell in the former CP area between 1200 March 17 and 1200 March 18. Just as Tech. 5 RUSSELL HUNT and Tech. 4 PETER SCHMITT of Headquarters Company reached the front tent in the breakfast chow line, an 88 shell smacked into the side of the hill just above them. Everyone hit the ground, including the cooks, and when the excitement ended most of the men had to go back and start their breakfast all over again.

The front line positions were unchanged. Most patrols failed to make enemy contact. One raiding party fought briefly with the enemy, killing one. Four Americans were wounded. Another patrol discovered a minefield. The 2nd Battalion made contact three times nightly with the 3rd Battalion 85th.

In Montecatini on March 18, General DUFF presented the entire personnel of Lt. JAMES LOOSE's Company A platoon with Bronze Stars. The 39 men had made the memorable stand on isolated Pizzo di Campiano during the February push.

On March 19 the 1st Battalion left the Elysian Fields of Montecatini to become division reserve at Pietra Colora, closing in there at 1423. The battalion CP was established. Troop rotation continued on March 20 when the 1st Battalion moved back onto the line, relieving the 2nd Battalion. Relief was completed without incident at 0013.

Mar 19

On March 23 the touring Congresswoman, Clare Booth Luce, visited the regimental CP. She talked to the enlisted men, had her picture taken cutting bread in the Headquarters Company kitchen, and looked at enemy territory from the path leading to the regimental OP.

Civilians moving through the lines were a problem, but also a constant source of information. On March 21, forty-nine civilians moved through Company A. On March 29, fifty-four Italians and a pregnant cow made their way into the Company C sector. From these civilians and from captured Germans the S-2 learned the positions of the German units facing the 86th. Reported on Montalto, the ridge directly to the front of Il Monte, was the 1st Battalion of the 741st Regiment together with portions of the 721st Regiment.

In the last days of the month, a regimental training area was set up at Prunetta. Lt. Col. HAY, whose battalion was the first to move into the new area, made his initial reconnaissance on the night of March 23. That same night the division order was issued which directed the 3rd Battalion to proceed to Prunetta on the night of March 26 after being relieved by the 2nd Battalion. On the 31st of March, the 3rd Battalion was to revert to division reserve at Pietra Colora.

As the 3rd Battalion prepared for its relief on the night of March 25, 240 rounds of artillery fell on its positions. Casualties were heavy. In Company K, two were killed and seven wounded. Early on the morning of March 26, the battalion S-2 requested counter-battery fire to search the area.

Mar 25

The 2nd Battalion had moved from Montecatini to Pietra Colora on March 24. It now relieved the 3rd Battalion, completing the change at 0200, March 27. As March drew to a close, the 1st Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Battalion 87th which came under the temporary operational control of the 86th. The 1st Battalion moved to a training area while the 3rd Battalion reported to division reserve at Pietra Colora.

## HISTORY of the 86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY

**APRIL 1, 1945 – APRIL 30, 1945**

**B**efore coming to Naples almost every man in the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment had seen pictures and newsreels of the Italian campaign. Invariably they portrayed the American GI in Italy as knee-deep in mud, plodding his way through a driving rain. Naturally this was the kind of weather the men had expected when they entered the country. But they had been agreeably surprised by the mildness of the climate.

Especially was this true during the first half of April—the climactic month of the war for the 10th Mountain Division. The front lines were quiet, and the men of Col. CLARENCE M. TOMLINSON's command stretched on the grass and sunned themselves. Of course, foxholes were handy, for across the valley from Il Monte, Sasso Baldino, and Sassomolare—positions where the regiment was entrenched—were the Germans of the 741st Regiment, still dangerous and unbeaten despite the setbacks they had already suffered at the hands of the 10th Mountain Division.

With the weather so perfect and with the situation in Europe rapidly reaching its climax, it was natural that the men would expect the beginnings of a push in Italy. All winter they had been talking of the spring offensive, which was to wrest from the grasp of the enemy, the rich Po Valley. The only question now was the date of "D-Day." It was bound to come, but as the men lolled on the Apennine hillsides, they looked upon every day of inactivity as a sort of reprieve—one more day of grace before the jump-off.

April 1 found the 86th in a fairly static tactical situation with one battalion holding a sector of the line, one battalion in division reserve, and one battalion in a training area. The 2nd Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel DURED E. TOWNSEND, was on the line, having relieved the 3rd Battalion in its positions on March 27. On their right was the 2nd Battalion of the 85th Regiment; while on the left was the 1st Battalion of the 365th Regiment, 92nd Infantry Division. The 3rd Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel JOHN H. HAY, lay in division reserve at Pietra Colora, while Major HAROLD L. GREEN's 1st Battalion worked in the division training area at Piastre, 8 kilometers southeast of San Marcello.

The policy of rotating the battalions on the line, which had been in effect through most of March, continued. On April 4 at 0345, the 3rd Battalion completed its relief of the 2nd Battalion and assumed responsibility for the front line sector. Major GREEN moved his battalion into division reserve at L609219, closing into that area at 1048.

Apr 4

By April 6 it was evident that something big was in the wind. The shifting of sectors, which forecasted the beginning of an operation, started as the 1st Battalion moved forward from its division reserve area to relieve the 10th Mountain Anti-tank Battalion at Riola (L636256). This move presaged the shift of the entire regiment into that area.

A glance at the map reveals the importance of this terrain. It encompasses the high ground to the left of and controlling Highway 64, the principal route from the south into Bologna. Before any viable force could move up that highway, this rugged mountainous ground would have to be occupied by friendly forces. It soon developed that this was the primary mission of the 10th Mountain Division in the "Big Push."

Troop movement continued rapidly. Behind the lines, Service Company, including Replacement Pool, S-4, Motor Pool, Post Office and the Rear Command Post, moved north of Silla on Highway 64. In preparation for the coming operations, Captain DYSON DUNCAN's Transportation Platoon picked up 150 mules in Montecatini and led them the 60 miles up to the front lines. The mules were vital equipment; once again the regiment consisted chiefly of men and mules.

For the time being, the 2nd Battalion remained in its training area at Cione, near San Marcello, while the 3rd Battalion still held the original regimental sector, extending roughly from Sasso Baldino (L582253) to Mt. Grande d'Aiano (L582256). On April 7 the forward CP moved from Il Monte (L580252) to Riola (L636256) and that afternoon Colonel TOMLINSON began the series of staff meetings to orient the staff and battalion commanders on the operational plans.

In the following two days, the regiment was rapidly deployed into the positions selected for it at the beginning of the attack. The 2nd Battalion left Cione on April 9 and moved into the vicinity of Coniali (L624236). On April 10 the 3rd Battalion was relieved on the line by elements of the 10th Anti-tank Battalion and closed into the vicinity of Riola. The 1st Battalion was relieved in its positions by the 6th Armored Infantry Battalion, 1st Armored Division, and also moved into bivouac in the vicinity of Riola. The entire regiment was at this time concentrated in a small sector. All was in readiness for the attack.

The jump-off was originally planned for dawn on the morning of April 12. Circumstances and the weather decreed otherwise. For two to three nights preceding the scheduled assault, the regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon had been far out into enemy territory, searching for roads over which tanks might be employed. They had found roads destroyed or heavily mined, roadblocks erected, defenses carefully prepared. Once, 1st Lt. DONALD E TRAYNOR's men had come face to face with German sentries. Quick-thinking Pfc. HERBERT SCHNEIDER spoke to the sentry in German, and the man let the patrol pass. But no route forward for tanks and armor was found.

The weather, too, failed to cooperate. Mild and sunny for so long, it suddenly became overcast, cutting down the possibilities of air support. Late on the afternoon of April 11, with these factors in mind, the attack was postponed 24 hours.

Next morning the 3rd Battalion was relieved from its responsibility as division reserve and reverted to Colonel TOMLINSON's command. He was ordered to move the battalion to the vicinity of S. Maria di Labante (L639235), and Colonel HAY's troops closed into that area at 1515. Shortly afterward, the operation was again postponed 24 hours. Clouds still hung low and visibility was poor.

Colonel TOMLINSON and Lieutenant Colonel ROBERT L. COOK, executive officer, made good use of the extra time, holding almost continuous conferences with staff and battalion officers, liaison officers and special staff officers. Over and over again the coming offensive was discussed. Every detail had to be letter-perfect. Orders issued by every major commander in the entire theater had made it clear that this was the supreme effort to crush the Germans in Italy. Colonel TOMLINSON was determined that the 86th Regiment would fulfill its mission.

Only one battalion of the regiment was scheduled to be committed on the first day of the attack. Col. TOWNSEND's 2nd Battalion was to follow the 87th Regiment as it attacked on the right half of the division sector. The other two battalions were to remain in reserve until the first phase had been completed. The course of the attack was to be judged by the progress of the attacking echelons past certain major terrain features, numbered and known as Check Points.

Apr 14

At 0758 on the morning of April 14, the uncertainty and delay was over. Division informed Col. TOMLINSON that "H-Hour" was to be at 0945 that same morning. The artillery preparation at 0910 would follow the air bombardment beginning at 0830. Quickly giving his final instructions to his subordinate officers, the regimental commander and Major DAVID A PFAELZER, S-2, left for the forward OP in order to observe and direct the action.

Promptly at 0830 the airplanes began to circle lazily over the front lines, to be greeted with shouts and waves from the troops below. The planes moved over the valley and let loose with firebombs over Rocca di Roffeno. Great geysers of flame and heavy black smoke rose up to 200 feet in the air, and the concussion could be felt 3000 yards away.

When the planes had finished, the artillery opened up, seemingly pounding every spot that the Air Corps had missed. In a few moments the valley was almost completely obscured by a fog of gray, black, and white smoke. The bursting shells started rockslides on the shale slopes of Rocca di Roffeno, and buildings were reduced to irregular piles of rubble.

The infantry attack jumped off on time, and at 0951 April 14 the 2nd Battalion was in position to follow the 87th across the line of departure. Col. TOWNSEND lost communication with the supporting 605th Field Artillery and requested through regiment that the artillery continue its devastation fire on Roffeno, his principal objective. Opposition in the 86th sector was light at first. Once in the lowlands between the two ridges, the men moved rapidly and encountered no Germans. They ignored heavy enemy mortar fire and at one point covered a mile in ten minutes. By 1045 Company F was at L623275, near Torre Iussi where the 87th had met unexpectedly determined opposition. So far there had been no complications, but by 1110 the 87th was very definitely pinned down on Hill 860 (L619272) and the 2nd Battalion 86th was held up behind them in the vicinity of Mt. Acquaretto (L622268).

Major JOHN E. SEAMANS, executive officer of the 2nd Battalion, contacted the 87th to learn their plans for dealing with the impasse. He was told that the 1st Battalion 87th was to move back off Torre Iussi and allow the artillery to lay in a new barrage on the enemy positions. Shortly after this information was obtained, the divisional commander, General HAYS, informed Col. TOMLINSON that the 1st Battalion 87th was to bypass Torre Iussi and head for Hill 903, fire from which was hampering the 86th's 2nd Battalion attack on Rocca di Roffeno. Company F was to draw the tough assignment of cleaning up Torre Iussi after it had been flanked.

Almost immediately the 2nd Battalion began to move again toward its main objective, Rocca di Roffeno. Company F ran into severe resistance on Hill 695 (L627269) and in Torre Iussi itself, but by 1513 Capt. PERCY RIDEOUT's men had cleaned up the little mountain village and were headed toward Hill 847 (L635277), their next objective. The main body of the battalion had moved past them, and at 1600 Capt. JACK D. CARPENTER's Company E had captured Hill 868 (L638272) on Rocca di Roffeno. Shortly thereafter, Company F also moved onto the hill. F Company had suffered heavy casualties—46 killed and wounded. Among the wounded was Capt. RIDEOUT who was hit in the face with a bullet. The enemy was still resisting fiercely; only 18 prisoners had been captured by 1610 that afternoon.

As the infantry units advanced, the engineers moved in behind them to build roads and bridges so that tanks and armor could be moved up. The enemy raked every approach route with his artillery, hampering the work of the engineers and impeding supply. Mule trains labored up the steep slopes. When shelling fell close to the road, the mulemen hit the ground, holding fast to the lead rope while the mules stood placidly.

At 1622 the Corps commander, General CRITTENBERGER, called Colonel TOMLINSON in regard to his consolidation for the night. He advanced plans for the taking of Mt. Pero in the morning. In turn, Col. TOMLINSON called Major SEAMANS. He ordered the 2nd Battalion to contact the 87th so as to tie up the defense for the night.

The battalion had continued the attack. Supported by fire from Company E on Hill 868, Company F attacked Hill 847, and occupied it at 1738. By 1800 they were pushing on to Hill 846 (L637277). Company E dug in on the east slope of Rocca di Roffeno, and Col. TOWNSEND set up his advance CP at L633272 near Le Ville.

The 2nd Battalion had suffered damaging casualties in the day's action. Capt. RALPH LAFFERTY, battalion S-3, and Lieutenant RICHARD BLICKENSTAFF, battalion S-2, had both been wounded and evacuated. In addition, two company commanders, Capt. RIDEOUT and Capt. CARPENTER of Company E had been wounded. Late on the night of April 14, 1st Lt. TRAYNOR of I & R was sent forward to the 2nd Battalion to take over the job of S-2. The direction of the I & R Platoon was assumed by the platoon sergeant, Technical Sergeant WILLIAM IGLEHEART.

The night was an apprehensive one, for a strong German counterattack was expected, particularly on Hill 868. Information from S-2 was that the enemy had all of his battalions on line, with about 10 men in reserve for each battalion. The regimental commander ordered active patrolling of the flanks of all positions.

The attack was to continue next morning, with the 87th carrying out its original mission, followed by the 86th's 2nd Battalion. Tanks had already been moved to Pradalbino (L651264) and they were to be pushed on to Suzzano (L664281). Mt. Pero was to be taken, while the 2nd Battalion was to eventually work forward to a predetermined assembly area. Tanks attached to the 86th were to move up to Hill 543 (L649267). This was the general operational plan for the 15th of April.

Next morning, April 15, the preliminary artillery barrage began at 0635. Company E jumped off in the attack at 0710 to attack Hill 840 (L641285). Moving generally northeast, they were slowed down at Lamari (L638278). They ran into every conceivable type of German booby trap and mine, from "Toff" glass-topped mines to mined binsfuls of chestnuts. Shortly after passing through Amore (L645283), Company E captured the company commander of the 1st Company, 756th Regiment. The German captain told the IPW interrogator, "All we have left now is our honor, so don't expect me to give any military information." Nevertheless he talked, revealing to most people's surprise that his company had suffered heavily from small arms fire but comparatively little from the artillery barrages.

Apr 15

Company F had begun its advance toward Hill 787 (L658288) at 0730. Moving only slightly behind Company E, they were halfway up the slopes of Mt. Sette Croci by 1130. At 1138 they were ordered to veer off to the left of Hill 787 and occupy Hill 804 (L667297). They took the hill without casualties.

Still leading the battalion, Company E moved rapidly and at 1207 occupied their objective. By 1330 the battalion CP had moved forward to Amore (L644282), while the supply point, slowed up by mules, followed. In the afternoon Company E moved once again, this time due east, to take Hill 860. Company G, which had been in reserve all day, moved on Hill 775 (L659293) at 1600, and took it 50 minutes later. Company F drove toward Hill 804 (L668299), the peak of Mt. Mantino.

The day had been a successful one for the 2nd Battalion. They had captured 55 prisoners, taken their objectives, and lost few of their own men, except for Company G, which ran into a minefield at Lagazzuoli (L660292), losing 29 men.

With these objectives firmly in the hands of the 2nd Battalion, the first phase of the attack, so far as the 86th was concerned, was over. Col. TOMLINSON, in a staff meeting at 1512, ordered the entire regiment to displace forward. The objective was an assembly area at Ca di Bello, on the slopes of Mt. Sette Croci. The 1st and 3rd Battalions, in reserve all day, were ordered forward. The men in these organizations had had little knowledge of the progress of the battle. They had rested, sunned themselves, read and played cards. Not one of them complained about the delay in commitment.

The new regimental CP was established at L654285 at 2000 that night. The 1st Battalion moved into an assembly area just south of Mt. Sette Croci. The night was a busy one, for the commander sensed that they were beginning to crack the German defense. The principal obstacle to a new advance was a heavily mined field just past the proposed line of departure. When General HAYS delivered his attack order to Col. TOMLINSON at 0140 April 16, he directed him to advance in the general direction of Tolè, determining his own "H-Hour" and coordinating his own artillery support. Col. TOMLINSON informed the commanding general that his entire assembly area, together with the road from Cereglia (L63283) to Tolè, would have to be swept for mines before the attack. H-Hour would therefore be delayed. Sweeping had already started and was to continue all night. All engineers were being used to facilitate the employment of supporting armor.

Apr 16

The enemy was bracing himself for the coming assault. The Germans moved at least 1000 men from the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division into Vignola (L735347). These men—the 100th Regiment—could either counterattack or set up defenses, possibly at Tolè, though the commanding officer of the 90th Reconnaissance Battalion (German), captured early in the morning of April 13, revealed that only 60 to 70 men had been left to defend Tolè.

The mine belt delayed operations considerably. At 0800 on the morning of April 16, General HAYS ordered the regiment to attack as soon as possible, since the 87th had surprised elements of the 94th Division and was now on that unit's flank. The 86th was ordered to attack if possible before the enemy could bring up reserves.

Colonel TOMLINSON, accompanied by Major PFAELZER and Colonel HAY, went forward on his reconnaissance. Just south of Tolè, small arms and machine gun fire opened up on the group, and Colonel TOMLINSON was seriously wounded in the arm and back. Evacuated under fire by the other two officers, he was carried to the hospital. Command of the regiment was assumed by the executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel ROBERT L. COOK.

At 0955 General HAYS entered the command post to confer with Colonel COOK. He urged the regiment to push vigorously without waiting for armored support. Col. COOK called his battalion commanders, and by 1030 they were on their way to their battalions, prepared to begin the attack. At 1127 the 3rd Battalion moved out, with Companies K and L on the line and Company I in reserve. The plan of attack was for both the 1st and 3rd Battalions to attack through the 2nd, with the 1st on the right and Col. HAY's men on the left. The 3rd quickly moved northeast slightly beyond Ca di Bello, followed by Major GREEN's battalion.

At 1500 the attack finally jumped off in force. It proceeded rapidly as resistance was bypassed and the Germans appeared disorganized. A German tank pinned down Company L, but a flanking element quickly disposed of the tank with a bazooka and anti-tank grenades. More

serious opposition was encountered at Monzuno (L683337) where both K and L Companies were held up by small arms, two self-propelled guns, 88s and a tank. Planes knocked out the position, and the advance went on. Check Point 30, Monzuno, was taken at 1945, and the 3rd Battalion dug in. The entire advance had been made without armored support, though the battalion had continually called for that support during the advance. All efforts to move armor up had been delayed by slides and craters in the road.

The 1st Battalion had made rapid advances also. Company A had reached its final objective, la Predosa (L685331), at 2030, having taken 26 prisoners. Company C advanced two and a half miles without casualty, captured 5 prisoners, and occupied its objective at Coste (L685331). The 2nd Battalion, in regimental reserve, following the other two units, advanced slowly and easily to the vicinity of Locari Scuola (L664303) where it halted and dug in.

The new regimental CP was established on Hill 832 at L666304 by 1630. At this point, Major PFAELZER oriented the commanders of the 751st Tank Battalion and the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion on the next day's attack. At the conclusion of the day's advance, the enemy was in a position to exert pressure on the regiment's left flank and Major ALLEN ordered the 751st tanks to move up on the left so as to relieve this pressure. In order to accomplish this movement, one squad was ordered back from the 1st Battalion position at C. Bartolani (L373323) to meet the tanks at Check Point 28 at Bacucchi (L367320) and guide them forward.

During the night, the officers were briefed on the continuation of the push scheduled for the next day. The 3rd Battalion had established its CP at L684336, and was to launch its attack from that position in coordination with the 1st Battalion at 0630. The 2nd Battalion was to follow the 1st Battalion to the crossroads in the vicinity of Check Point 31, then seize the high ground north-east of Montepastore (L712340), Check Point 36.

The attack on the morning of April 17 was beautifully planned and coordinated with precision. The 3rd Battalion crossed its line of departure at 0630 and advanced 800 yards in the next 24 minutes. Rover Pete, the air support for the regiment, rocket-bombed and strafed all roads leading north, catching fleeing Germans in their trucks and wagons and scattering wrecked vehicles along the roads. By 0715 Company K, commanded by Capt. FREDERICK DOLE, had taken Check Point 35. Company I was slightly east of Check Point 35.

Apr 17

By 0846 Company A had reached Check Point 31 and Capt. KENNETH SIEGMAN's Company B was on Check Point 32. Fifty prisoners had been taken, many of them from the 190th Reconnaissance Battalion of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, who said that they had only arrived in the area the night before. The 1st Battalion sent out strong patrols to its front as it advanced forward.

By 1000 April 17, the 2nd Battalion had moved from its reserve position to occupy the town of Montepastore. The Germans withdrew from the town, and as they fled, were strafed and bombed. Two hundred prisoners were taken. Captain RIDGWAY FOUST and Company G were the first into the town, accompanied by the battalion commander, Colonel TOWNSEND. As Colonel TOWNSEND moved among his men, supervising the defense set up around the town, he was hit by artillery fragments and seriously wounded. Command of the battalion went to the executive officer, Major JOHN E. SEAMANS. Captain RIDGWAY FOUST was killed later at Montepastore while shooting azimuth on an 88 firing direct fire.

An hour after troops entered Montepastore, the first civilians were returning, greeting the Americans warmly, finding the medics if they had wounds, and estimating the damage done to their homes by artillery. The troops were incredibly weary. The 2nd Battalion had been continu-

ally in motion for four days. Wherever the men dropped their packs, they fell asleep. In the town they slept in barns, cow stalls, bedrooms, anything they could find. After a rest, they looked for food, found chickens and onions, captured German cheese and bologna. Fires sprang up all over town, and soon the men were eating their first food, other than K-rations, in four days.

At 1053 the 1st Battalion halted its advance for the time, setting up a CP. It had advanced with no organized resistance other than snipers, and had suffered only one casualty. The 3rd Battalion CP was established on Check Point 35.

At noon the advance began anew. The 1st Battalion pushed on to la Palazzina, then to the high ground at Check Points 38 and 39. By 2015 on the night of April 17, Company A was on 38 and 39; Company B was on 34 and 37, while Company C was on Point 33. Captain WILLIAM E. NEIDNER's Company A had captured 63 prisoners, while so many PWs had fallen into the hands of Company B that they were simply disarmed and sent to the rear without guards. Four hundred prisoners were in the regimental cage. Many of these men were from the 361st Regiment of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division, marking yet another regiment which had been crushed by the advance. As a result of the day's attack, the regiment now held Hills 701, 695, 660, 690, Mt. Vignola, Mt. Tramonto and Poggio Castellarso.

Plans were afoot by now for the relief of the 1st Battalion by the 337th Infantry Regiment of the 85th Division, which was moving up on the right flank of the regiment. At 2125 on the night of the 17th, two officers from that outfit met with Colonel COOK to discuss plans for relief and boundaries. Captain DONALD MARBURG, assistant S-3, was sent with them as guide to the 1st Battalion, and the relief was consummated.

The attack was gaining momentum now. Every day brought the troops closer to the long-sought-after Po Valley. Already the peaks were a little less rugged. But hard fighting remained before the Germans were to be pushed out of the Apennines. In the early hours before dawn on April 18, the CP displaced from its position to Casa Costa. The attack plan for the day was given to the battalion commanders by Colonel COOK. The 3rd Battalion was to attack from its position on Check Point 35 towards Objective 61 in the vicinity of Monte San Pietro. From its area 1000 yards north of Montepastore, the 2nd Battalion was to drive towards Check Point 63 at Mt. San Michele. The 1st Battalion was to attack from Vignola towards Check Point 45 at San Chierlo. At that point they would hold up until flanked by the other two battalions, reverting then to regimental reserve. This plan placed the 3rd Battalion on the left, the 2nd on the right, and the 1st roughly in the center.

Colonel HAY's men began to move at 0900 on the morning of the 18th. At first they advanced rapidly with little or no opposition. Italians reported that the Germans had pulled out the night before. Only three prisoners were taken, and for a time it appeared that the Italians had been right. Then at 1110, near Check Point 50, the battalion eliminated slight resistance. Insignificant as it was, this resistance signaled the beginning of another determined stand by the enemy forces. At 1210 the point of the battalion advance was stopped 300 yards northwest and 400 yards west of Check Point 50 by heavy mortar, artillery, and machine gun fire. As Colonel HAY maneuvered his men into the attack, the supporting elements speedily coordinated their efforts. Rover Pete was requested to strafe and rocket the road running northeast from Point 62. Lt. Colonel JAMES P. PEARSON JR. of the 605th coordinated his artillery fire so as to secure maximum support of the 3rd Battalion. Receiving heavy artillery fire from the direction of C. Barlete, Colonel HAY requested an air OP to search for gun positions there.

Apr 18

By 1430 the troops were once more pushing slowly forward. Tanks were employed extensively and were running low on ammunition. At 1703, Major ALLEN ordered the 1st Battalion to consolidate for the night's defense and make contact with the 2nd Battalion on the right. At this time the 3rd Battalion was 600 yards short at Check Point 50 and set up its CP at Salarolo (L702385).

From Montepastore, Major SEAMANS' 2nd Battalion had crossed its LD [Line of Departure] (L718364) at 1020 on the right of the 1st Battalion. The first part of the advance was similar to that of the 3rd Battalion, with no resistance encountered. At 1330 the 2nd Battalion was even with the 3rd Battalion, which had just begun its assault on the German main line of resistance. The head of the battalion column was at L712392. At this point, the enemy opened up from the high ground. The battalion S-3 called for artillery fire to relieve the pressure. During the remainder of the day, the two front-line battalions moved forward slowly abreast. By 1645 the 2nd Battalion was generally between Check Points 44 and 51, running from L710388 to L718388. The bulk of the troops remained in this area, but Company F, under Lt. FRANK B. FOSTER, pushed on to Objective 52 (L723397) before halting. The men, veterans by now, rode tanks into the attack, talking, smoking cigarettes, resting. Major SEAMANS's Company G moved on line with Company E behind Company F and consolidated for the night. Company G's move forward was accomplished only after some hand-to-hand fighting in which Germans were bayoneted and driven bodily from their houses. After they reached their area, Major SEAMANS established his CP at L730403.

In the initial attack plan, the 1st Battalion had been assigned the task of attacking San Chierlo. Major GREEN commenced the advance at 1130. At 1240 his troops entered Borgo, just 300 yards southwest of Check Point 45, and at 1325 they moved into San Chierlo. Having accomplished their mission, the battalion reverted to regimental reserve, and Major ALLEN ordered them to clean up the area from their position north to the main highway running east and west. They were to contact Company F on the left flank and consolidate for the night. They slept that night in the vicinity of L731374.

Twice that day the regimental CP had displaced forward, first to Montepastore at 1040 and then to Pilastrino at 1623. This rapid movement of the regimental command post was but a sample of what was to come, once the attack became a rout.

For three straight days, the 86th had been in the attack. On April 19, therefore, they reverted to division reserve. The 1st Battalion of the 85th passed through the 2nd Battalion 86th, while the 1st and 3rd Battalions of the 87th were to move through the 3rd Battalion 86th. The regiment was ordered to assemble between Badia di Sopra and Mo. Oca, in the vicinity of L714396, and then proceed northwest along the main road in the rear of the attacking echelons.

Apr 19

Captured Nazis revealed that the 2nd and 3rd Battalions had come to grips the day before with the famed 200th Regiment of the 90th Panzer Grenadier Division. Made up of fierce and determined fighters, the regiment had battled our armor to the last man and had to be machine-gunned out of houses that had already been reduced to piles of rubble by shelling. This was the organization that had covered the German withdrawal from Sicily. It had high morale, tradition, and reputation.

In order to furnish a mobile reserve for the division, the 1st Battalion was mechanized with Quartermaster trucks. The mules, having outlived their usefulness, were sent to the rear. The entire regiment was rested as much as possible to prepare for an all-out push into the Po Valley

on April 20. Many of the men got little rest however, as the Germans continued to rain mortar and artillery fire on the rear areas.

By 1500 on the afternoon of April 19, the forward regiments had broken up the enemy resistance, and the 86th received its orders for the next phase. The regiment was to move up to the left flank of the 85th Regiment at Ost (L779455). There the regiment would move into line with the 1st Battalion on the right, the 3rd Battalion to the left, and the 2nd Battalion in reserve, echeloned to the left rear. The direction of attack was northwest, and its ultimate aim was to break into the Po Valley and cut Highway 9, one of the main supply routes from the north to Bologna.

At 1800 the regiment began to move forward. The situation was extremely fluid, for the whole front was breaking up. The road was crowded with vehicles and marching soldiers, and the white dust filled the air so thickly that at times it was difficult to see. The regiment seemed to be in good spirits; the men laughed and joked as they marched. They carried their rifles, ammunition, and little else. Some wore handkerchiefs around their noses and mouths to keep out the dust. Others were stripped to their underwear. The long columns moved steadily on until, at 2100, the I & R Platoon, which was serving as the point of advance, was halted 200 yards south of Check Point 77 by artillery fire. Shortly thereafter, the battalions were ordered into bivouac areas for the night: the 1st Battalion in the vicinity of Rosario (L760434); the 3rd at Campo Tradito (L754429); and the 2nd at Bell Aria (L750415). The regimental CP closed into l'Ospitale (L749411),

Colonel COOK and Major ALLEN immediately left for division to receive the General's order for the attack, and at 0300 April 20, the regimental commander oriented his battalion commanders. The regiment would attack due north, 1st Battalion on the right, 3rd Battalion on the left. Each battalion would be supported by a platoon of tanks and a platoon of tank destroyers. The regiment would move through the 85th Regiment.

Apr 20

Colonel COOK established his OP in a church steeple in San Lorenzo in Collina (L755464). From this point he could observe and direct the first phases of the attack. H-Hour, after two postponements to give the men much-needed rest, was set for 0830.

The 3rd Battalion on the left jumped off on time from Check Point 76 at C. Peli. In a half-hour they advanced 1300 yards without resistance. Then a light artillery barrage fell, followed by enemy machine gun fire. American tanks moved up to fire on the positions.

The 2nd Battalion cleared its LD at 0930 and moved out 800 yards behind the 3rd Battalion. The 1st was moving steadily ahead on the right. By 0958, all troops were 2700 meters north of 76. The OP at San Lorenzo was closed and Colonel COOK returned to the CP.

The slow but steady advance of the past few days was beginning to develop the proportions of a wild chase. Armored reconnaissance vehicles were ordered to advance in front of the regiment and seize the bridges, holding them until the infantry reached them. Tanks were also to precede the infantrymen.

At 1130 April 20, the Po Valley was in sight from the 3rd Battalion position 1000 yards north of Check Point 81. From the top of C. Tadolino, the last ridge in the Apennines, the troops looked down on mile after mile of fertile green valley stretching below them. The haze of artillery smoke obscured the view, but many of the houses appeared undamaged by shellfire. "Going into the Po is just like coming down from Hale into Denver," opined one 3rd Battalion medic.

The 1st Battalion moved into the valley at noon, and was quickly joined by the 3rd. At 1634, Company A was in Martignone. All of the 1st Battalion had passed Prati. The advance was going like wildfire. Strong armored support moved with them. At 1500 the 1st Battalion cut Highway 9, severing the main supply route to Bologna and dooming that outflanked city. Thirty minutes later, the 3rd Battalion also crossed the highway reaching a point 1000 yards northwest of Check Point 32 at San Lorenzo. By late afternoon, the regimental CP, moving and closing behind the forward elements, was also in the valley and at 1720 it closed into Ponte Ronca. An hour later, the CP moved up to San Almaso. Remaining there only 25 minutes, it was moved again to Castellaccio.

The magnitude of the breakthrough was difficult to comprehend. The enemy line had been wrecked. After the first stages of the attack there had been little opposition. The 1st Battalion had advanced 13 miles in 5 hours. Companies A and B had each taken 85 prisoners, besides field guns and truckloads of equipment. As night fell, Major GREEN settled his tired men in the vicinity of Cartara.

During the day, the 3rd Battalion had hit nothing more formidable than occasional enemy artillery. Colonel HAY had his men dig in in the vicinity of Ponte Samoggia. Company K alone had taken 138 prisoners and four field guns.

Germans, left behind in the rush to retreat, were eager to surrender. Pfc. RAYMOND ALPERT of Company B started back to the division stockade with one prisoner, and ended up with sixteen. The others "just accumulated" as he walked along. One prisoner who spoke English was quite willing to talk. He had been with an artillery outfit. When the Yanks broke into the valley, the German artillerymen were told they were now infantry. They were taken completely by surprise, amazed at the rapidity of the American advance.

The Italians in the Po Valley were for the most part completely and deliriously happy. Crowds stood at every crossroads, cheering wildly and presenting the amazed GIs with wine, eggs, milk, and bread. Young girls pelted the "liberators" with flowers. It was a day most men in the 86th would never forget.

The race had just begun. The regiment was ordered to advance on an azimuth of 350 degrees during the first phase of the day's attack, and on an azimuth of 335 degrees thereafter. The 1st and 3rd Battalions were to move abreast and seize the bridge at Bomporto north of Modena. The 2nd Battalion, now completely motorized, was released to the control of Brigadier General ROBINSON E. DUFF as the striking infantry of his task force.

After orienting Major GREEN and Colonel HAY on the attack, Colonel COOK moved his CP to Ponte Samoggia, arriving there at 0858.

Apr 21

The battalions began to move out at approximately 1100 on the morning of the 21st. The I & R Platoon men were placed at the heads of the attacking columns to maintain contact between them. The 2nd Battalion rolled ahead in its trucks, while the other two groups walked. BY 1230 the I & R men, in their machine gun-manned jeeps, were 400 yards west of Check Point 54 and had met no resistance. They were ordered to pick out a new CP and send a guide back to the old one.

The advance was rapid, although the troops at this stage were growing increasingly footsore (and wounded). The procession as they advanced grew more and more weird because of the odd assortment of German vehicles (trucks, motorcycles, Volkswagens, busses, kitchen trucks, and Fiats) that the Americans collected as they advanced. They also picked up riding horses,

draft horses, wagons and carts of all sizes and shapes. The infantrymen hitched up the horses and went whooping on towards the objective. Many men had large blisters on their feet, but they kept on walking. They knocked out snipers, and encountered some direct artillery fire, but kept advancing.

The 1st Battalion, which had moved out slightly behind the 3rd, pulled up even with it at 1300 near Check Point 54. Division reported that other regiments were meeting Fascist opposition and warned the troops to be on the lookout for Fascists either in Italian uniforms or disguised as Partisans.

At 1410 the CP displaced forward to San Bartolo, arriving there at 1432. Our forward elements were now in the vicinity of Ragni. So fast had the advance become that the I & R Platoon no longer had contact with either battalion. They were ordered to patrol north and south until they made visual contact.

Great numbers of prisoners were being captured, perhaps because it was easier to surrender than keep walking. The Germans had very little gasoline and their vehicles were being bombed and strafed on the roads. By 1500 the 3rd Battalion had taken over 300 prisoners. Unable to guard them, they sent the prisoners back guarded by men from the 337th British Artillery Regiment.

Again the regimental CP displaced forward, this time to Bomporto, the final objective of the day's push, arriving there at 2020. The regiment had expected to find the bridge over the Panaro River at this point destroyed, but it was still intact and the regiment crossed. The engineers pulled dynamite charges from under the bridge; the Germans had had no time to demolish it.

The 2nd Battalion under General DUFF had sped straight to Bomporto in a whirlwind twenty-mile dash, capturing dozens of prisoners. The 1st and 3rd Battalions had moved 12 miles. The 1st Battalion had stopped finally at Ravarino, while the 3rd Battalion was nearby at Casoni.

The plan of strategy for the attack on the 22nd of April was designed to reach the Po River and secure a bridgehead across it. The 2nd Battalion, still on trucks, was to leave at 2200 on the night of the 21st, and speed down the main road to San Benedetto on the Po River, setting up strongpoints at each bridge on the route of advance. The 3rd Battalion was to entruck at 0415 and proceed along the route secured by the 2nd. The 1st Battalion was to follow on foot until picked up by the 3rd Battalion trucks on a shuttle basis.

The attack went as planned. At 0920, April 22, the 3rd Battalion passed the 2nd. The regiment was once more on the move and the CP displaced forward. Up ahead, Colonel HAY found the bridge at Check Point 61 destroyed. He reconnoitered and found an alternate route forward. At 1037 the battalion ran into four enemy tanks supported by riflemen. Two of the four tanks were destroyed, and the riflemen driven off or captured. The advance went on. By 1130 the battalion had reached L630859. The one force of German armor was the only real resistance so far encountered.

Apr 22

Meanwhile, the regimental CP had moved to San Pietronella, closing in there at 1145. They had followed closely on the heels of the 3rd Battalion and had been followed in turn by the 2nd and 1st Battalions, whose forward elements were by this time at L648280. From time to time, intermittent firefights broke out along the column, but nothing seriously disturbed the movement forward until the column approached the bridge. The span was partly blown; jeeps could

pass over but not trucks. Engineers went to work immediately, and by 1350 loaded trucks were rolling across the bridge.

At the CP, which had moved to L632862, the staff watched anxiously as the advance elements neared the Po River, wondering where the Germans would make a stand. Their calculation and planning was temporarily interrupted as the CP was strafed by an American plane. Yellow smoke grenades popped everywhere, the sign of friendly troops. The 3rd Battalion, located at L600855, was having trouble with friendly planes too, and wanted the Air Corps notified of their position.

In the late afternoon, the CP took off on a series of quick moves designed to bring the command post up with the troops. At 1745 they were at L585866. Their stay lasted less than an hour, and at 2000 they established a CP at Castell.

As the long convoys wound their way through the Italian countryside, some of them were bound to run into trouble. So rapid was the sweep that formidable bodies of enemy troops were still operating in the rear areas. At 1950 on the night of April 22, the 1st Battalion encountered fierce enemy resistance at the crossroads. The Germans allowed much of the convoy to pass, then attacked with bazookas and machine guns just as the rear of the battalion pulled past them, scattering the convoy. Two enemy tanks then rolled forward and fired on the convoy, destroying jeeps and trucks. An American self-propelled gun, sent forward from the rear, failed to damage the tanks. 1st Lieutenant GEORGE AMMON of Company B organized the scattered elements of three companies into a firing line, with the help of Staff Sergeant JOHN WINCHESTER of Company B. Lt. AMMON then led a group of men, including Pfc. PAUL CLARK of Company B, 1st Sergeant EMERY MIDGET of Company D, and Pfc. JAMES L. GLAZIER of Company D, in a successful effort to drive the exposed vehicles back to safety. Effective mortar fire, directed by 2nd Lieutenant FRANK D. YUENGLING JR. and Staff Sergeant DAVID L. MEYER of Company D drove off the German riflemen, and the tanks eventually withdrew. Some fifteen Germans were killed in the firefight, which lasted over four hours.

The battalions once again settled down into bivouac: the 1st at Varagna, the 2nd near Monglia, and the 3rd Battalion in that same area. The advance had moved 13 miles. One of its most noteworthy accomplishments was the capture of 20,000 gallons of wine by Company K.

The advance was continued on the 23rd of April without incident. By noon the entire regiment had reached San Benedetto on the Po River. The CP closed in there at 1245. Here the regiment was in reserve to defend the south bank of the river, while the other two regiments established a bridgehead across the river. The battalions remained in readiness to cross the river on a two-hour notice. Colonel HAY was designated regimental executive officer, and Major WILLIAM D. DRAKE assumed command of the 3rd Battalion.

Apr 23

In the brief interval caused by the stop in San Benedetto, the regiment received replacements and the men rested. In spite of the bright moonlight, enemy planes strafed and bombed the bivouac areas. The rest was short-lived. At 1900 the 10th Anti-tank Battalion relieved the 86th in its defensive positions and the regiment prepared to cross the river. The 3rd Battalion was to go first, followed by the 2nd and 1st in that order. Captain DAVID ROSENDALE, adjutant, Sergeant DARREL C. STEBBINS, and Sergeant WILLIAM HAGEMAN formed the advance party to establish a CP. They left at 2000. Colonel COOK, Major PFAELZER, and Captain MARBURG, accompanied by their radio operator, T/5 JOHN E. SHAHAN JR., followed them at 2340. The 3rd Battalion was across at 0630; the 2nd at 0830; and the 1st by 1000. The crossings were made

in assault boats and DUKWs and were largely without incident. Only the 2nd Battalion drew slight artillery on its left flank.

Still in division reserve, the regiment set up defense areas in the vicinity of Governolo. By 1105 on April 24, the regiment had received its new assignment from the divisional commander. The 86th was to spearhead the drive toward the historic old city of Verona. Capture of the town would cut one of the major escape routes of the German troops still in northwestern Italy. Attacking at dawn on the 25th, the regiment was to advance in a mechanized column along the main highways north, bypassing airfields at Mantova and Villafranca. Supported by the 13th Tank Battalion, the 701st Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 751st Tank Battalion, Company B of the 126th Engineer Battalion, and the 1125th Armored Artillery Battalion, the regiment was to be completely motorized, utilizing captured German vehicles. It was planned to attack and seize Verona, holding that city until the arrival of other elements of the division. For the operation, the 86th would constitute the striking infantry of a task force under the direction of Colonel WILLIAM O. DARBY, former commanding officer of the famed Rangers.

Apr 24

The afternoon was spent coordinating plans, resting and ferrying troops across the river, where the bridge was still under construction. It was this bridge that was to delay the attack on Verona. Armored support was essential to the success of the operation, and the bridge was not finally fit for passage of heavy tanks and artillery until 1430 on the afternoon of April 25. Not until 1612 was the regiment ready to move out. At 2045, near Check Point 46, the armored elements joined the waiting infantry, and the thrust toward Verona began. By 2330 the regiment was in striking distance of the city. The regimental CP closed into Castelfranco. Civilians reported that there were no organized combat units in the city and that most permanent garrison personnel had been evacuated.

Apr 25

The advance into the city was largely without opposition. At 0820, the 2nd Battalion entered the suburbs of Verona. They had made slight contact with the enemy only once, at Check Point 71. They found the bridges across the river below Verona blown by retreating Germans. Bridge No. 7 was the least badly damaged, and engineers began work on it immediately. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions aggressively mopped up the town, and the 2nd opened its CP. But the advance did not stop. The 1st Battalion was assigned the mission of crossing the river with tanks, tank destroyers and artillery. They were to establish a bridgehead on the opposite side, seizing the town of Bussolengo. Major GREEN started his men across at 1100. Once over the stream, the soldiers loaded on tanks and pushed into Bussolengo. They took a few prisoners, including a Czech colonel and his staff, but the bulk of the German force had pulled out. When the battalion settled down in bivouac, they did not even dig foxholes for the first time in weeks.

Apr 26

Verona and Bussolengo were badly damaged by American bombings. Fascists had scrawled on the destroyed buildings "*Opera de liberatore*" (work of the liberators). But most of the people seemed glad to see the troops and anxious to find out whether they were American or English. The Germans had told them that the English would destroy everything, but they evidently said little about the Americans. Italian flags hung from the windows, and bands of Partisans roamed the city, picking up Fascists and carting them off to jail. One group brought to Company K a man dressed in Italian clothes but suspected of being German. First Sergeant EDWARD MELVIN said "Hands up!" in German. The man obeyed, and was quickly taken to the PW stockade.

With Bussolengo taken and the Germans evidently still in headlong flight, there was no reason to stop. The 1st Battalion was ordered to push forward to Fornace with the 1st Battalion 85th. The 2nd Battalion moved from Verona to Bussolengo and went into bivouac. The 3rd re-

Apr 27

mained in position in Verona until relieved by the 85th Division, and then they too moved to Bussolengo. By the night of April 27, the entire regiment was near Bussolengo. Plans were quickly formulated for the push across what remained of the Po Valley and into the foothills of the Dolomites. For this action, the division was to advance as a unit. Each regiment was to march 8 hours, then rest 16, while the other two regiments passed through. In this manner the troops would move north along the shores of Lago di Garda.

Late on the night of April 27, the regiment entrucked and moved north. The CP displaced with the troops. By 0330 the 86th had contacted the 85th. Detrucking, the regiment continued the advance on foot. No trouble was encountered until 0500 when a destroyed culvert held up the march. The regimental CP was set up at that point.

By this time, April 28, the regiment had advanced well into the mountains. It was here on the shores of the beautiful Lake Garda that the Germans had elected to fight their delaying action. The road ahead led through a series of tunnels, around which elaborate defenses had been established. The tunnels were prepared for demolition and much of the road had been destroyed. It was an ideal place for the German stand. The road ran directly along the shore of the lake, and above the road soared sheer cliffs, hundreds of feet high.

Apr 28

At 0845, as the 2nd Battalion, the leading element, approached Tunnel No. 1, the Germans exploded their demolitions and destroyed the tunnel, cutting off all further progress by the road. Prisoners taken by the 2nd Battalion revealed that the tunnel was held by 50 to 70 SS men, reinforced by a company of marines and infantry. To add to the confusion, enemy artillery moved down on the opposite shore of the lake and fired across it onto the American forces on the road. Colonel HAY's orders rushed tank destroyers to the scene and their fire silenced many of the enemy guns.

An attempt was made to send Company K around the tunnels on the ridge to the east, but the terrain proved so formidable that progress was extremely difficult and slow. At 1235, Division decided to send the 86th on its first amphibious operation. The tunnels were to be flanked by troops in assault boats and DUKWs.

By 1410, seven DUKWs carrying 1st Lt. PETER J. BORCUK and Company G were in the water. More followed rapidly. From across the lake, German 88s opened up on the boats. An air-burst killed two men in one boat; there were no other casualties. The shells threw up geysers of water fifty feet high, and the men crouched low in the boats "sweating them out."

The amphibious operations were successful. Slowly and carefully, the tunnels were cleared of resistance. Only No. 1 and No. 6 had been blown, but the road between No. 1 and No. 2 had been destroyed. The approach to Tunnel No. 1 had been booby-trapped. A wire, attached to a bazooka, stretched across the road.

By 1530, tunnels 1, 2, 3 and 4 had been cleared of resistance, and the 2nd Battalion, having moved around the blockade, was attacking Tunnel No. 5. By this time, the Germans had blown the road between No. 4 and No. 5. They were prepared to blow Tunnel No. 5, but the charge evidently exploded prematurely, killing at least 15 Germans. The advancing troops picked their way gingerly over the carnage.

At 1930 a new CP was opened in Tunnel No. 3 (A561967). From this point, Colonel COOK directed the difficult advance along the shore of the lake. Just after midnight, April 29, he ordered the regiment to continue its advance toward Brione (580053). At 0220 the regimental CP moved forward to Piano di Tempesta (A562987).

Apr 29

At 0440 on the morning of the 29th, troopers of the 1st Battalion climbed the hills above the lake and moved north toward Nago. In order to maneuver in the rugged terrain, Major GREEN had to lead his troops back a considerable distance and then forward again over the ridges and peaks. The mountain training of the men served them in good stead.

At 0600 the 3rd Battalion jumped off. The troops moved through Tunnel No. 6 with little or no trouble. By 1000 the rear of the 3rd Battalion and part of the 2nd Battalion Headquarters had reached Tunnel No. 5. The north end of that tunnel looked directly across the lake and into Riva (A549042), a German strongpoint.

With direct observation on the tunnel, the Germans tried for a lucky hit—and got it. They sent out three airbursts. The first two landed to either side of the tunnel. The third went ten yards into the tunnel, and then exploded. The concussion was terrific, ripping out both ends of the tunnel. Shell fragments ricocheted off the walls and the blast threw bits of rock that were as deadly as the shrapnel. Men who weren't hit were dazed. Amid the smoke and dust, the agonized cries of the wounded filled the air. Men crawled from the tunnel on their hands and knees, over the bodies of other men. Captain LAWRENCE ELY of Company H was killed immediately, along with four other men. Approximately 50 men, mostly from Company M, were wounded.

Supplies, ammunition, artillery, everything was being moved up by DUKW. German SP [self-propelled] guns in Riva kept up a constant barrage on the lake. The water was rough, and the speedboats used to evacuate the wounded had rough going. Rover Pete threw all their power at Riva. The Germans had guns hidden behind hospitals, but the 1125th SP artillery picked out the flashes and put direct fire on the position.

By noon the going was considerably rougher. Two battalion commanders, Major DRAKE and Major SEAMANS, were wounded and evacuated. Captain CARPENTER took over the 2nd Battalion and Captain EVERETT C. BAILEY of Company L assumed command of the 3rd. By 1230 3rd Battalion patrols were in Torbole (A577025). The 1st Battalion was 1000 yards short of Nago (A589032). The 2nd Battalion was in reserve.

The Germans were fighting fanatically and bitterly for Nago and Torbole. The advance was measured in yards. The Germans employed all of their available tanks and armor. Company I was held up by 2 tanks northeast of Torbole at A582028. At 1752 the Germans moved up SP guns, firing point blank at the troops. Both battalions were driven back approximately 800 yards. Artillery was called down and the battalions reorganized to attack again. At 2015 the attack began anew. This time the Germans did not hold. Despite fierce resistance, Company I pushed into Torbole at 2214 and the rest of the battalion followed. The 1st Battalion was just short of Nago. At 0055 the Germans launched determined counterattacks on both positions. The attacks were made by armor and supporting infantry. At 0125, General HAYS ordered Colonel COOK to pull his troops out of Torbole onto the high ground to the east. Colonel COOK and Colonel HAY were of the opinion that the battalions could hold their ground. They suggested a delay in withdrawal, and General HAYS approved.

Apr 30

The 2nd Battalion, in reserve, had been en route to the high ground east of Torbole. Colonel COOK ordered their bazookas sent forward and the remainder of the battalion to halt. By 0222, the force of the attack seemed to be broken, though elements of the three rifle companies of the 3rd Battalion were still battling at least 3 tanks and an unknown number of infantry in the streets of Torbole. The 1st Battalion had withdrawn to the high ground 1700 meters south of the objective, but they were holding at that point. Artillery continued to rain on the enemy. Artillery was sent into Torbole by DUKWs, and the wounded were evacuated in the same manner.

By 0900 the next morning the German artillery was beginning to constitute a real menace to the troops in Torbole and to the 2nd Battalion, now in the vicinity of A578023. Air OPs were sent up to find the gun positions.

The 1st Battalion finally occupied Nago at 1115 that morning. They had fought one of the most discouraging and difficult actions of the entire campaign. For 14 straight hours on the 29th, they had climbed up sheer cliffs, through ravines, and over slippery shale slopes. Finally at 1700 they had reached a high point from which they could see Nago. The only approach to the village was through a small cut in the rocks. The Germans had a strong final protective line, a 20-mm gun, a 37-mm ack-ack gun, one tank, and self-propelled guns. Not a man in the battalion believed they could advance through that cut. When night came, though every man was so tired that he could hardly stand, the battalion moved forward.

After a 15-minute artillery barrage, Company B moved through the ravine single-file. As the column wound its way over the rocks, a German plane dipped low and dropped eight personnel bombs on the weapons platoon, killing nine men, including 1st Lieutenant JOHN K. RANCK. The men were beaten physically and the air bombardment was the last straw. They were then approximately 200 yards from the town. They withdrew 500 yards at 0300. They spent the rest of the cold and miserable night in the hills under constant rain of shellfire. Next morning, a patrol from Company C made its way into Nago. The Germans had withdrawn during the night. As Company B moved into the town, a German armored vehicle sped down the street. Pfc. JOHN J. TRACEY and Pfc. EDGAR HENDERSON let go bursts of submachine gun fire and the car skidded to a stop. Out of the car and into the ditch jumped four German officers. A minute later, two of them were dead and two were prisoners.

With the back of the German resistance broken, the 2nd Battalion moved quickly into Riva. By 1420 they had occupied the town. The regimental CP moved into Torbole.

By 1750 that night, the situation was fairly quiet. At the CP in Torbole, Colonel DARBY, assistant divisional commander, talked with Colonel COOK. They stood on a stone walk near the edge of the lake. Near them were Lieutenant JAMES H. MCLELLAN and Master Sergeant JOHN T. EVANS, regimental Sergeant Major. A German shell exploded in the air above them. Sergeant EVANS was instantly killed. Colonel DARBY, mortally wounded, walked inside the CP, and died 45 minutes later. Both Colonel COOK and Lieutenant MCLELLAN were wounded, though only Lieutenant MCLELLAN was evacuated.

At 2115 the CP displaced forward to Riva. The battalions were consolidating in Riva and Torbole, expecting a well-earned rest. Rumors of peace and the end of the war were afoot, but no one took them seriously except the Italians. The 86th confidently expected to have to chase the Germans through the Brenner Pass. If Riva and Torbole were examples of the resistance they would face, they did not look forward to the job.

## HISTORY of the 86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY

**MAY 1, 1945 – MAY 31, 1945**

**M**ay was the victory month—for the 86th Mountain Infantry, for the 10th Mountain Division, and for all the Allied forces in Italy and in Europe. By the first of the month the tired troops of Lt. Col. ROBERT L. COOK's command, resting for the moment after the bloody battles in Nago, Torbole, and the Lake Garda tunnels, were beginning to listen more closely and even a bit hopefully to the rumors of peace and surrender that persistently circulated. Most of the rumors seemed to begin with the Italians. At first the GIs had ignored them; now they shrugged their shoulders and muttered "Maybe—but I'll believe it when I hear it myself on the radio, or better still, when I see the Jerries quitting."

Major HAROLD A. GREEN's 1st Battalion, badly scarred from that tragic night of April 29 on the rock slopes above Nago, was now bivouacked in that town. Captain JACK D. CARPENTER had moved his 2nd Battalion companies into Riva (A549042) where the regimental command post was also located. Around Riva to the north, in the little Alpine villages, the 3rd Battalion kept a watchful eye on the mountains where the Germans still lurked in unknown strength and numbers. Captain EVERETT C. BAILEY, acting battalion commander, had his CP at San Alessandro (A568045).

Shortly after noon on May 1, at 1240, General GEORGE P. HAYS, the division commander, discussed the situation with Colonel COOK. He ordered the 86th to rest as much as possible during the next four days, establishing roadblocks to the north and sending out patrols to determine if the enemy had established any line of resistance to the front.

May 1

Armor—tank destroyers and tanks—were brought into Riva and Torbole in expectation of coming action as fast as they could be amphibiously transported across Lake Garda. The Germans had done their usual methodical job of destruction on the bridges and tunnels around the lakeshore, and much of the road was still impassable. The 126th Engineers worked steadily to repair the damage.

By late afternoon on May 1, it appeared that the Germans did not intend to let the 86th rest, notwithstanding General HAYS's orders. A Partisan leader from Arco (A575082), the northernmost village in the valley above Lake Garda, reported that the Germans were massing to attack and recapture the town, now held by the local Italian forces. He asked for artillery support as well as an infantry detachment. His report bore out information that the regiment already had, and Colonel COOK began preparations immediately for the moving of troops into Arco.

In Riva, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were enjoying the colorful spectacle of a Partisan parade. Dressed in civilian clothes and bright red caps captured from the Germans, with German and Italian weapons of every description, the Italian patriots moved through the streets, singing spirited marching songs. Just as the parade ended, Partisans brought in 10 more Germans captured in the hills. In all, the Italians had taken 200 Germans and 22 Fascists in two days. They led men from the 86th to a huge German warehouse, filled with gray-green turtleneck sweaters and German blankets. Soldiers re-equipped themselves, making up for battle losses.

The regiment kept a close watch on Arco. At 1828 Colonel COOK ordered artillery fire on Arco, and at 2030, the regimental observation post, maintained by the regimental intelligence and reconnaissance platoon under Technical Sergeant WILLIAM IGLEHEART, reported automatic fire within the village. By 0330 the next morning, Company L, commanded by 1st Lt. WILLIAM

May 2

C. MCCLINTOCK, was moving toward Arco. Air cover for the approach march was requested, but Fifth Army overruled the request, one of the first concrete hints that something strange was in the wind. At 0910, when Company L had reached A572057, 1st Lt. FRANK B. FOSTER moved Company F out in the direction of Albergo. By 0930, Company L was at A572067, and at 0955, its leading elements moved into Arco without resistance. At 0955, two priests reported that American artillery shells were landing in Vigne di Arco and that two civilians had been killed. Since no Germans were now in that locality, the artillery liaison officer was notified to correct his fire.

Company F moved steadily forward without opposition. At 1010 they entered Via el Vira (A545059). By 1031 the company was 1000 yards southwest of Tenno (A537082), and Lt. FOSTER split his company in order to enter Albergo, Villa del Monte, and Tenno simultaneously. At 1055 the main body of troops entered Tenno. Company L had closed into Arco at 1015, searched the town, and found no enemy. Company F passed quickly through Tenno, and by 1145, elements were in Villa del Monte and Albergo. By 1300 the surrounding country had been combed fruitlessly for Germans, and Lt. FOSTER reported his mission accomplished and the territory secured. Lt. MCCLINTOCK in Arco had dispersed his men at A572085, A595093, and A607033 in defensive positions. Two tank destroyers were sent into Albergo and one tank to Company L in Arco to reinforce the infantrymen.

The advances into Albergo and Arco constituted the last offensive moves for the regiment in the Italian campaign. The second concrete indication that peace was in the air (the first having been the refusal of air support by Fifth Army) came at 1630, May 2, when General HAYS phoned the order that if any German emissaries approached American lines with white flags, they were not to be fired on, but were to be brought to Division immediately.

The climax of the day and of the five months the 86th had spent in Italy came quickly. At 1850, 1st Lt. STENNELL M. SHEPPARD, liaison officer, phoned the CP to state that an intercepted British broadcast had announced the unconditional surrender of the German armies in North Italy. Five minutes later, the British liaison officer from the 1125th Artillery relayed a report that the war in North Italy was over, and at 1900 came official word from General DAVID RUFFNER that the war was "finito" and that there was to be no further firing of weapons except in defense against attack.

The church bells in Riva rang wildly. Word passed quickly from official sources by word of mouth. The soldiers were, as a rule, undemonstrative. Some got wine and liquor, which the Italians brought out of hiding for the first time since the German occupation. Many bars opened and drinks were "on the house." Partisans and a few Yanks fired their weapons into the air. Largely, the men were sober about the news. They felt awkward, it seemed, and had little or nothing to say. The Italians were the real revelers. They sang heartily, danced in the streets, and kissed one another happily while American soldiers looked on. "We fought the war and they're celebrating the end of it," remarked one.

Blackout regulations disappeared. Jeeps drove madly through the streets with their lights on. Windows were thrown wide, and flares lit up the darkness.

"Now that we are finished here, I wonder what they will do with us?" was the question most GIs were asking. Most guessed they would end up in the Pacific, though the rumors were already starting that the 10th was headed back to the States to train at Camp Carson, Colorado. The men were relieved that the war in Europe was over, but dreaded the thought of fighting the Japs. Small groups of soldiers discussed the events of the last few days of the war, and remarked somberly, "Too bad Joe was wounded or Jim was killed just a few days before the war ended

here." And when two men met who had not seen one another for some time, they said, "Well, the war's over. We lived through it."

Pfc. ALBERT Y. ENGBRETSON of the Medical Detachment smiled, "I didn't believe it, but I got inside before somebody shot my head off in their exuberance. I figured it was too close to the end of the war to risk my neck." Pfc. ABRAHAM SCHWARTZ of Company B said, "I was lying around when all of a sudden we heard a hell of a lot of shouting and yelling. I grabbed my helmet, my rifle, and ammo and ran out to the road towards my foxhole, thinking a counterattack was coming. The officers said, 'Don't shoot anybody unless it's self-defense.' Couldn't figure it out until they told us the news."

And there were the stories and experiences to be told and retold. One of the most interesting concerned the capture of a German lieutenant general and eight members of his staff a few hours before hostilities ended. Included in the group of six men who effected the capture were three 86th personnel clerks, T/5 HARVEY GETTINGER of the Medical Detachment, Corporal GEORGE C. DURKOTA of Company H and T/4 JOHN A. SCHELL of Service Company. The men were in Bardolino when Partisans asked them if they would help bring in a German general and his staff whom the Partisans had surrounded in a house eight miles north of town. In a Partisan-driven truck, the clerks set out, and found out that the general, one Hildebrandt, was quite willing to surrender to any Fifth Army men.

The immediate problem presenting itself with the end of fighting was the quick disarmament of the Partisans. Just 20 minutes after the end, at 1930, Division ordered all Partisans to turn in their weapons. Col. COOK and Lt. Col. JOHN H. HAY, regimental executive officer, established a city arsenal in Riva. The disarming was without incident.

The surrender of the German armies involved the difficult task of collecting the enemy soldiers and their equipment and occupying the remainder of northern Italy. On May 3, Major GREEN was ordered to move to and occupy the town of Rovereto (A708038) where two German battalions were congregated. He was to take a small detachment. On May 4, Company C under 1st Lt. WALTER M. TREVOR moved into the town. Six roadblocks were arranged for the disarming of the Partisans in that area, and the Germans were segregated under the control of their own officers. There was no trouble.

May 3

Late on the night of May 3, Technical Sergeant WILLIAM IGLEHEART of I & R Platoon had come back from a patrol to Bolzano, north of Riva, to report that the commanding general of the German LI Mountain Corps wished to formally surrender his troops. At 1900, Major DONALD C. ALLEN and Major DAVID A. PFAELZER left for Malveno to receive the capitulation.

At 0845, May 4, Colonel HAY moved north with the 3rd Battalion as a task force to clean up the country up to the Austrian border. The battalion moved along Highway 9 and by nightfall had reached A750250. Continuing the steady occupation of the German-held territory, Company B moved into Trento (A7802320). The battalion continued to move slowly north, eventually settling down near Resia (V347097) where it remained in quiet occupation until May 13, 1945.

May 4

The regiment quickly settled down to a garrison routine, almost as if they were back at a training area in the States. Roadblocks had been pulled in on May 4, and only warning posts were maintained around each bivouac area. Reveille and retreat formations were held. During the day, regular training was carried on; in addition, German arms and ammunition were collected into dumps. In Trento, Capt. KENNETH SIEGMAN's Company B gathered all Germans in two areas and quickly and quietly disarmed the Partisans of the city. Yanks picked up souvenirs, most popular, of course, being Lugers and P-38 pistols.

On May 13 and 14, the regiment moved out of the Riva area toward the south. Their orders were to concentrate near Ghedi (F090510) and Bendecino (F130575), about 40 kilometers south of Brescia. There they were to receive and guard German prisoners and await further orders. The move was complete by the night of the 14th. The entire regiment set up in tents in a bivouac in the green flat fields near an abandoned German airport. Headquarters Company and CP were at Bendecino; Service Company at Ghedi. The 1st Battalion was at Bendecino; the 2nd Battalion, under Lt. Col. DURED E. TOWNSEND, who had returned to duty, set up at Tampello (F128581), while the 3rd Battalion under Col. HAY, its old commander, was at Castenedolo (F130577). At Riva, Colonel COOK had been promoted to full colonel, and the new executive officer was Lt. Col. HENRY J. HAMPTON, formerly 1st Battalion commander, who had been wounded at Sas-somolare in March, but who now also returned to duty. On May 17, Major GREEN of the 1st Battalion was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

May 13

The regiment held showdown inspections and turned in its winter equipment. From a captured German warehouse, Special Service obtained and issued free to each man a bottle of fine French champagne. When the distribution was finished, a good number of bottles remained. Pfc. THOMAS DALEY, T/5 ARTHUR RILEY and T/4 CHARLES WELLBORN celebrated with the remainder of the bottles in a midnight victory orgy, and paid the inevitable price the next morning.

The men played softball and volleyball in the hot Po Valley sun. On everyone's mind was the thought that perhaps the next stop for the regiment was a port of embarkation.

If such were the plans, Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia disrupted them. His troops refused to evacuate the area around Trieste, and on May 16 the regiment was alerted to move northeast to Udine, in order to keep an eye on the Yugoslavs. A quartering party, headed by 1st Lt. ADNA G. WILDE JR. of Headquarters Company, actually left, but was dramatically turned back before it reached its destination by a liaison plane, which landed on the highway in front of the convoy. Mail censorship, which had ceased soon after the end of the hostilities, was placed back in effect.

May 19

The move did not actually take place until May 19. In the meantime the regiment saw the War Department motion picture, "Two Down and One to Go," which explained the point system of discharge. The point system meant little to most of the men of the 86th since few of the men had sufficient points to think about discharge.

Headquarters Company sent an advance party to the new CP on May 19. The 1st Battalion moved out in trucks, traveling 205 miles and stopping only for the night at Orzano (C410190). The 2nd Battalion moved 187 miles to Cividale (C759625).

On May 20, the remainder of the regiment moved out of Bendecino, while the 1st and 2nd Battalions continued their trip to the Yugoslavian border. The entire regiment settled first in tents in the general area of Cave del Pradil (C672613), but soon moved into the village itself and surrounding mountain hamlets.

The CP was opened in a magnificent hotel in Cave del Pradil at 2235, May 21. The 1st Battalion was at Bretto di Sotto (C692570), the 2nd at Cave del Pradil, and the 3rd at Passo del Pradil (C672613). For much of the regiment, the accommodations were more luxurious than anything they had yet enjoyed in Italy, though some companies still remained in tents. The mountainous terrain reminded many of Camp Hale, and veterans of the outfit were soon skiing and mountain climbing in the surrounding peaks.

Yugoslavs were garrisoned in the same areas as the Americans. Both the Slavs and the Americans carried their weapons, maintained roadblocks, and stood guard duty. But for the most part the Yugoslavs seemed friendly and no serious incidents were reported. The Yugoslavs revealed that their instructions were to maintain the closest and most cordial relations with both Allied troops and Italian Partisans. The Americans contented themselves for the time being with close observation of the situation and the guarantee of protection and evacuation of anyone threatened with conscription by the Yugoslavs.

With the training program and a sports program in full swing, the month came to an end. During the month, the regiment had seen six of its enlisted men given field commissions for their performance during the Po Valley push, and many more men had received combat awards. The regiment had received numerous commendations, and the men were satisfied that they had done a good job. High in the mountains, the men were content to "sweat the war out," at least until the situation changed.

## HISTORY of the 86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY

**JUNE 1, 1945 – JUNE 30, 1945**

**D**uring the period June 1 to June 30, 1945, the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment, under the command of Colonel ROBERT L. COOK, remained in its stationary occupational positions in northeastern Italy, following a routine training program and keeping a close watch on the territory recently in dispute with Marshal Tito's Yugoslav forces..

Throughout the month, the regimental command post, together with Headquarters Company and Service Company, operated from the little mining village of Cave del Pradil. The 1st Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. HAROLD A. GREEN, was at Bretto di Sotto; Lt. Col. DURED E. TOWNSEND's 2nd Battalion occupied Cave del Pradil; and the 3rd Battalion, led by Lt. Col. JOHN H. HAY JR. was in Passo del Pradil.

Little occurred to break the routine of training and recreational programs. On June 3, Field Marshall HAROLD D. ALEXANDER, Supreme Allied Commander of the Mediterranean Theater, briefly reviewed units of the regiment. The following day, the regiment, now under the operational control of II Corps, was alerted. Information had been received that the Yugoslavs had moved a force of 3000 men into the disputed area. Guards were doubled. Major DAVID A. PFAELZER, regimental S-2, received instructions from division to locate and reconnoiter all defensive installations in the area occupied by the 86th. No trouble materialized, and at 1800, June 8, the alert was lifted.

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions switched areas on June 9, the 3rd moving into Cave del Pradil and the 2nd into the vicinity of Pluzett (C664672). On June 16, the regimental Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon, under the leadership of 2nd Lt. WILLIAM IGLEHEART, was sent into the hills north of Cave del Pradil in a fruitless search for 100 SS troops reported to be hiding there.

Effective June 25 at 2400, the 10th Mountain Division was detached from II Corps and placed under the operational control of 13 Corps (British).

Throughout the month, numerous officers and enlisted men were transferred from their regiment to other units in preparation for eventual discharge or reassignment under the point system. The most important single change was the departure of Major DAVID A. PFAELZER, S-2, who was succeeded on June 21 by Captain DONALD MARBURG. Captain ROBERT R. KRUMM, formerly 1st Battalion S-3, became Intelligence and Education Officer, assistant S-3, in place of Captain MARBURG. Captain SAMUEL J. RANDALL became regimental surgeon after the departure of Major JOHN K. MENEELEY JR. First Lieutenant SPENCER L. WYATT, Special Service Officer, became Division Special Service Officer. His place was taken first by Lt. ADNA G. WILDE and then by 1st Lt. WALTER M. CHAPMAN.

At the end of the month, the regiment remained in its same general area, engaged in training and an extensive educational and recreational program.

---

On July 26, the 86th Regiment sailed from Livorno on the SS *Westbrook Victory*, arriving at Newport News, VA on August 7. After a 30-day furlough, the men reported to Camp Carson, Colorado. A copy of the 86th Regimental combat history was distributed to each member of the regiment. The 10th Mountain Division was inactivated on November 30, 1945.

## **COMBAT ORGANIZATION of the 86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY REGIMENT**

### **10th Mountain Division**

Major General George P. Hays, Division Commander  
 Brigadier General Robinson E. Duff, Asst. Division Commander  
     Wounded in action April 22  
 Colonel William O. Darby, Asst. Division Commander  
     Killed on action April 30  
  
 Brigadier General David L. Ruffner, Division Artillery

### **86th Mountain Infantry Regiment**

Colonel Clarence M. Tomlinson, Commander, wounded April 16  
 Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Cook, April 16 to June 30

#### **1st Battalion**

Lieutenant Colonel Henry H. Hampton, wounded March 4  
 Lieutenant Colonel Harold L. Green, March 5 to June 30

#### **2nd Battalion**

Lieutenant Colonel Dured Townsend, wounded April 17, returned May 13  
 Major John E. Seamans, April 17 to wounded April 29  
 Captain Jack D. Carpenter, April 29 to May 13

#### **3rd Battalion**

Lieutenant Colonel John H. Hay, to Regimental Executive Officer April 23,  
     returned to Battalion command May 2  
 Major William D. Drake, April 23 to wounded April 29  
 Captain Everett C. Bailey, April 29 to May 2

---

The 10th Mountain Division was part of IV Corps, which was commanded by Major General Willis D. Crittentenger. IV Corps was part of the Fifth Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott.

## CASUALTIES of the 86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY REGIMENT

The total number of men who fought in Italy in the 86th Mountain Infantry Regiment was 4,785. Of these, 1,770 (37%) were replacements who joined the regiment in Italy.

Total casualties in the 86th were 1,380: 246 killed in action or died of wounds incurred in action, 1128 wounded, and 6 taken prisoner of war.

The Italian campaign can be divided into nine phases. The table below identifies the phases and the number of 86th Regiment casualties in each phase.

CAMPAIGN PHASE	DATES	KIA/DOW	WIA	POW	TOTAL
1. Early Patrols	Jan 6 - Feb 18	13	26	3	42
2. Riva Ridge	Feb 18 – Feb 25	17	49	3	69
3. Mt. Belvedere	Feb 19 - Mar 2	39	176		215
4. March Offensive	Mar 3 - Mar 6	55	192		247
5. Consolidation	Mar 7 - Apr 13	16	124		140
6. Spring Offensive	Apr 14 - Apr 16	43	132		175
7. Breakout	Apr 17 - Apr 20	22	159		181
8., Po Valley	Apr 20 - Apr 26	14	78		92
9. Lake Garda	Apr 26 - May 2	27	170		197
	Unknown dates		22		22
<b>TOTALS:</b>		<b>246</b>	<b>1128</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1380</b>

**ROLL OF HONOR**  
**86th MOUNTAIN INFANTRY REGIMENT**

NAME	RANK*	CO	KIA/DOW DATE	DOW WIA DATE	PLACE
STUART E ABBOTT	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
STRATFORD G ALEX	PFC	K	2/24/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
WARREN S ANDERSON	PFC	K	2/24/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
ARTUR ARGIEWICZ JR	SGT	L	1/25/45		QUERCIOLA
JACK R AUSTIN	PFC	HQ 2ND	4/14/45		ROCCA DI ROFFENO
JAMES L BACON	PVT	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
PAUL G BAZZELL JR	2ND LT	B	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
ARTHUR H BENTLEY	T/5	B	4/23/45		PO VALLEY
RAYMOND W BLOOM	PFC	A	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
LESTER L BOADY JR	PFC	D	3/3/45		MONTEFORTE
PETER A BONTEMPO	PFC	F	4/14/45		TORRE IUSSI
RICHARD B BORDENAVE	PFC	K	2/24/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
MICHAEL G BOSTONIA	PVT	D	2/21/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
RALPH R BROMAGHIN	CAPT	HQ 3RD	2/26/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
MARION W BROWN	PFC	B	2/22/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
WAYNE S BROWN	PFC	K	2/24/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
RICHARD D BRUCKELMYER	PFC	E	4/17/45		MONTEPASTORE
CHARLES W BURBANK	PVT	I	4/18/45		SULMONTE
JOHN BURROWS	PFC	K	4/16/45		MT SETTE CROCI
J B BUXTON	PFC	E	4/28/45		NAVENE
ARCHIE C CALHOON	PFC	A	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
DONALD W CALLAHAN	PFC	M	5/4/45	4/30/45	TORBOLE
THEODORE J CAMIRE	PFC	E	4/17/45		MONTEPASTORE
MICHAEL P CARBILLANO	PFC	E	4/14/45		ROCCA DI ROFFENO
OSCAR C CAREY	PVT	A	3/30/45		CASTEL D'AIANO
PAUL CARR	2ND LT	E	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
CONRAD F CARROLL	PFC	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
WALTER T CASCELLA	PFC	B	4/29/45		NAGO
CARL E CASPERSON	S/SGT	B	2/22/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
RUSSEL H CAVANAUGH	S/SGT	C	3/13/45		MT GRANDE D'AIANO
RICHARD A CEREPA	PFC	A	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
ALEXANDER L CHERKASSKY	PFC	HQ	4/24/45		PO VALLEY
FRANK B CHRISTENSEN	PFC	I	4/17/45		MT NONASCOSO
NICHOLAS D CLAINOS	2ND LT	C	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
JOSEPH O CLARK	PVT	B	3/7/45	3/6/45	SASSO BALDINO
IRVIN W CLEMENS	T/5	L	4/29/45	4/19/45	C PELI
JOEL S COFFIN III	S/SGT	E	3/3/45		IOLA
JACK R COLBY	PFC	F	3/4/45		TAMBURINI
JOHN P COMPTON	PFC	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
RICHARD L CRANDALL	PFC	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
ROBERT J CRONIN	PFC	L	3/5/45		CAMPO DEL SOLE
ROY E CRUM	T/4	SVC	4/16/45		MONZUNO
LLOYD E CRUMBLEY	SGT	F	4/14/45		TORRE IUSSI
PROSPERO M CUCCI	SGT	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
JOSEPH CUOCO	S/SGT	F	4/14/45		TORRE IUSSI
JOHN A DARROW	SGT	E	3/3/45		MT TERMINALE
MORGAN V DESMOND	T/SGT	C	2/20/45		MT SERRASICCIA

\* Rank shown is the highest rank attained while serving in the 10th Mountain Division.

NAME	RANK	CO	KIA/DOW	DOW WIA	PLACE
			DATE	DATE	
EDWARD H DIGITALE	PFC	B	2/22/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
WILLIAM J DMYTROW	PFC	G	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
JAMES B DONAHUE	PVT	G	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
THOMAS C DULLEN	PVT	HQ 1ST	4/23/45		S BENEDETTO PO
JOSEPH P DUSKEY JR	S/SGT	E	3/3/45		MT TERMINALE
MERLE E EASLEY	PFC	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
JOHN M EDMINSTEN	PFC	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
LAWRENCE B ELY	CAPT	H	4/29/45		TORBOLE
EDWARD H ENNERS III	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
JAMES D ENRIGHT III	SGT	H	4/29/45		TORBOLE
DAN ESPINOSA	PVT	K	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
JOHN T EVANS	SGT MAJ	SVC	4/30/45		TORBOLE
FRANK R EVERINGHAM	SGT	I	4/28/45		NAVENE
WOODROW A FAIRCLOTH	T/SGT	B	4/16/45		LA COSTA
KARL I FARGUS	PVT	B	4/29/45		NAGO
MATTHEW W FEITH	PVT	B	4/29/45		NAGO
JOE S FISHER	PVT	B	4/29/45		NAGO
ROBERT P FISHER	SGT	F	4/14/45		TORRE IUSSI
LUTHER O FLANNERY	PVT	M	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
CLAUDE S FORD	T/SGT	K	4/30/45		TORBOLE
JAMES C FORD JR	PFC	E	3/3/45		MT TERMINALE
JOSEPH C FOSTER	PVT	MED	1/6/45		QUERCIANELLA
RIDGWAY FOUST	CAPT	G	4/17/45		MONTEPASTORE
ROY A FOWLER	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
AARON G FREEMAN	PFC	G	4/14/45		ROCCO DI ROFFENO
QUINNON V FREUDENRICH	PFC	E	4/14/45		ROCCA DI ROFFENO
SANGREE M FROELICHER	S/SGT	B	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
GEORGE W FULLER	PFC	F	1/6/45		QUERCIANELLA
MAYNARD A FULLER	S/SGT	I	4/29/45		TORBOLE
GUILLERMO N GARCIA	PVT	K	4/17/45		SULMONTE
HERIBERTO GARCIA	PFC	SVC	4/18/45		SULMONTE
JESUS G GARCIA	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
LEWIS F GARRISON	T/4	B	4/16/45		LA COSTA
CARL F GIBSON	PFC	K	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
ALFRED E GILLERAN	SGT	K	3/24/45		SASSO BALDINO
CHARLES J GILICK	PVT	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
WILLIAM G GODWIN	PFC	A	2/19/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
ANDREW A GOLDSTEIN	PFC	MED	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
BENJAMIN R GOOD	PFC	B	2/21/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
EUGENE A GOODWIN	PVT	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
ROBERT L GORDON	2ND LT	K	4/16/45		MT SETTE CROCI
DELMAR GRAHAM	PFC	G	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
THEODORE S GREENE	2ND LT	I	3/5/45		CAMPO DEL SOLE
CHARLES E GREGORY	PFC	L	4/18/45		BADIA
EVERETT R GRIFFIN	PFC	A	3/3/45		MT TERMINALE
ALBERT R GRUNDTNER	PFC	L	3/3/45		CAMPO DEL SOLE
CLAYTON E GUNTER	PFC	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
CLARENCE J HAGEN	1ST LT (CHPL)	SVC	1/6/45		QUERCIANELLA
HOBLE HALCOMB	PFC	K	4/21/45		CASONI
HAROLD J HALL	T/SGT	B	1/21/45		ROCCA CORNETA
HERBERT V HARDY	SGT	M	2/24/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
WILLIAM S HAUGHABOO	SGT	B	4/29/45		NAGO
HENRY W HENGEN	PFC	C	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
JACK J HERTNEKY JR	PFC	L	3/5/45		CAMPO DEL SOLE

NAME	RANK	CO	KIA/DOW	DOW WIA	PLACE
			DATE	DATE	
MCKINLEY HILL	PVT	H	3/3/45		MT TERMINALE
ELTON L HOOPER	PFC	H	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
THOMAS H HOWELL JR	2ND LT	K	2/24/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
KENNETH M HUSBAND	PFC	E	3/31/45		SASSO BALDINO
HAROLD L HYATT JR	PFC	F	5/21/45	4/14/45	TORRE IUSSI
WILLIAM R JACK	S/SGT	I	4/18/45		SULMONTE
ROBERT W JACOBI	PFC	B	4/22/45		S BENEDETTO PO
GLEN C JOHNSON	PFC	H	4/14/45		ROCCA DI ROFFENO
STEVE KATRUSKA	PFC	L	3/3/45		CAMPO DEL SOLE
STEENY L KOON	PFC	C	3/11/45		MT GRANDE D'AIANO
NORMAN KOVACH	PFC	B	2/22/45		PIZZO DI CAMPIANO
ARCHIE F KUHN	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT GORGESCO
ROBERT L KUHNERT	S/SGT	I	4/17/45		LE PRADOLE
CHARLES D LADD	T/5	MED	4/29/45		TORBOLE
RAYMOND G LADUE	PFC	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
JOHN W LARRABEE	PFC	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
FERDINAND LEBRECHT	PFC	C	2/20/45		MT SERRASICCIA
MICHAEL A LEFAND	PFC	F	4/14/45		TORRE IUSSI
JOSEPH M LENTINI	SGT	D	3/3/45		MONTEFORTE
RALPH T LETO	PFC	L	4/18/45		BADIA
MARVIN E LIEGEY	PVT	H	4/18/45	4/14/45	ROFFENO MUSIOLI
ELBERT LIGON JR	PVT	I	4/28/45		NAVENE
JAMES V LITTLE	SGT	HQ 1ST	4/20/45		PONTE SAMOGGIA
CECILIO LOPEZ	PFC	K	3/20/45		SASSO BALDINO
HOWELL H LOWERY	PFC	C	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
JAMES E LUEDTKE	PFC	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
GILBERT J MADSEN	PFC	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
CHARLES D MALLICO	PVT	C	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
HARRY MALONAS	PVT	MED	1/6/45		QUERCIANELLA
ALBERT MARROCCO	PFC	I	4/18/45		SULMONTE
JOHN D MARTIN	PFC	F	4/14/45		TORRE IUSSI
FRED A MARTINO	S/SGT	C	2/20/45		MT SERRASICCIA
LEO P MASONIS	PFC	B	4/22/45		S BENEDETTO PO
JAMES A MATTHEWS	S/SGT	HQ 1ST	3/7/45		SASSO BALDINO
JOHN A MCCOWN II	1ST LT	C	2/20/45		MT SERRASICCIA
RICHARD G MC GUIRE	PFC	B	4/29/45		NAGO
LEON J MERMET	PFC	A	2/20/45		PIZZO DI CAMPIANO
JOHN C MINTURN III	2ND LT	I	4/18/45		SULMONTE
WILLIAM R MITCHELL JR	S/SGT	K	2/20/45		MT GORGESCO
ROBERT T MIX	PFC	E	3/31/45		SASSO BALDINO
MURL MONTGOMERY	PFC	F	4/14/45		TORRE IUSSI
JOHN S MOORE	PFC	K	2/20/45		MT GORGESCO
ROY T MOORE	PFC	HQ 2ND	3/16/45		CASTEL D'AIANO
ROBERT F MORALES	PFC	L	4/19/45	4/16/45	MONZUNO
ROBERT H MORROW	PVT	I	4/17/45		LE PRADOLE
RICHARD D MOSEY	PFC	M	4/20/45		SAN LORENZO
HERMAN F MUELLER	PFC	B	4/29/45		NAGO
BERNARD J MURPHY	PFC	E	4/15/45		ROCCA DI ROFFENO
MELVIN H NAIMAN	PFC	H	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
ROBERT NAYLOR	PFC	MED	2/24/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
CHARLES G NORTON	PFC	B	1/19/45		ROCCA CORNETA
HERSHELL E NORTON	PFC	HQ 3RD	2/24/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
KENNETH J NYPAVER	S/SGT	K	4/21/45		CASONI
OSCAR P ODDEN	T/4	E	4/14/45		ROCCA DI ROFFENO

NAME	RANK	CO	KIA/DOW	DOW WIA	PLACE
			DATE	DATE	
LEON ORSINI	T/4	E	4/19/45	4/18/45	C CORNETTI
JAMES H PARFITT	T/4	MED	4/21/45	4/20/45	PO VALLEY
JAMES C PARKER	PFC	L	4/22/45	4/17/45	MT NONASCOSO
THOMAS J PATTI	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
MYRON F PEABODY	PFC	G	4/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
JOHN E PENNEBAKER	PFC	B	4/29/45		NAGO
DAVID PEREZ	PFC	B	4/29/45		NAGO
NED O PETERSON	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
CHARLES R PHIPPS	PFC	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
ROBERT H PIRO	CPL	B	2/22/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
CHARLES J PLATTEN	PFC	C	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
JOHN S PODBORNY	PVT	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
MAX POSTERNAK	PFC	E	4/15/45		AMORE
FRED L POYNOR	PFC	F	4/15/45	4/14/45	TORRE IUSSI
RAYMOND E RABE	PFC	K	4/21/45		CASONI
PEDRO M RAMIREZ	S/SGT	K	4/21/45		CASONI
JOHN K RANCK	1ST LT	B	4/29/45		NAGO
DOUGLAS L RAND	SGT	B	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
RICHARD C REED	PFC	B	4/16/45		LA COSTA
WENDELL F REICK	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT BELVEDERE
ROBERT L REID	PVT	A	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
HENRY REISS	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
NEAL M RICHARDSON	PFC	A	4/30/45		NAGO
ALFRED RICKEN	SGT	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
JAMES E RIDDLE	PVT	B	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
GERALD E RIEDELL	PVT	B	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
ALBERT C RIETMAN	PFC	C	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
ROSARIO D D ROBERGE	PFC	B	1/21/45		ROCCA CORNETA
HOWARD E ROBERTS	PFC	I	4/29/45		TORBOLE
MERLE H ROBINSON	PFC	D	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
FAUSTO RODRIGUEZ	PFC	C	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
RICHARD A ROGERS	2ND LT	M	4/29/45		TORBOLE
ROBERT G RUHLMAN	PFC	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
VICTOR E RUSH	PFC	M	4/20/45		S LORENZO
WILLIAM A RYAN	PFC	B	1/21/45		ROCCA CORNETA
JOHN W SANWALD	PFC	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
MICHAEL SBARDELLA	PFC	B	4/29/45		NAGO
WILLIAM J SCHILL	PFC	E	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
WILLIAM SCHREIBER	2ND LT	I	4/18/45		SULMONTE
ARVIL T SELLERS	PFC	I	4/18/45		SULMONTE
AL F SHAFER	PFC	C	2/20/45		MT SERRASICCIA
MARION L SHAFFER	PFC	MED	4/19/45		BORTOLANI
JAMES H SHELBY	SGT	G	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
HARRY M SHEPPARD	SGT	B	4/29/45		NAGO
FELIX A SHERMAN	T/SGT	F	3/12/45		CASTEL D'AIANO
DONALD G SIMPSON	PVT	G	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
EDWARD E SMITH JR	S/SGT	E	4/14/45		ROCCA DI ROFFENO
ROBERT G SMITH	PFC	D	3/3/45		MONTEFORTE
JOHN SOBOCINSKI	PFC	E	3/27/45		SASSO BALDINO
ROBERT L SORENSEN	PFC	I	4/18/45		SULMONTE
EDWARD F SPIEWAK	PFC	B	2/21/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
RICHARD J STAGE	PFC	F	3/12/45		CASTEL D'AIANO
LEO S STASKO	T/3	MED	2/24/45	2/23/45	MT DELLA TORRACCIA
EARL W STAUB	PFC	E	3/3/45		MT TERMINALE

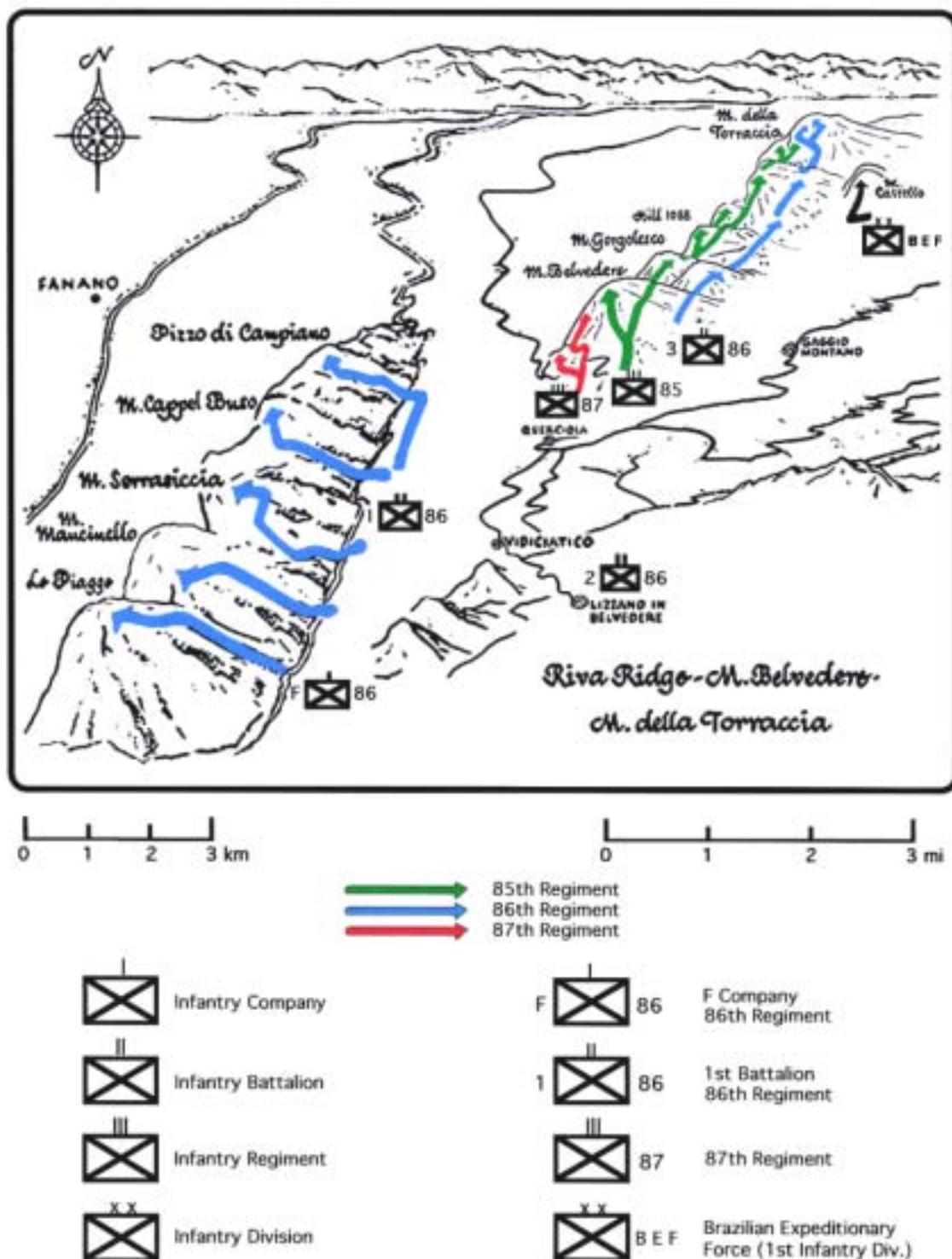
NAME	RANK	CO	KIA/DOW DATE	DOW WIA DATE	PLACE
MELVIN C STEELE	CPL	D	4/21/45		BOMPORTO
HORACE A STERN	SGT	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
JOSEPH STERN	PFC	H	4/14/45		ROCCA DI ROFFENO
DARWIN H STONEROAD	T/5	SVC	4/19/45		BADIA
WILLIAM H STRICKLER	S/SGT	C	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
JAMES J STROBEL	PFC	L	3/4/45		CAMPO DEL SOLE
HOWARD E STROHM	CPL	H	4/29/45		TORBOLE
HORACE L SULLIVAN	S/SGT	L	4/16/45		MONZUNO
ALVIE A SWEARENGIN	PVT	D	2/21/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
ROBERT D THOMAS	PFC	I	2/26/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
ARNIE L THOMPSON	PFC	F	3/3/45		MT TERMINALE
MAGNUS O THUNESS	PFC	C	3/6/45		SASSOMOLARE
RICHARD P TICKELL JR	2ND LT	F	4/14/45		TORRE IUSSI
TORGER D TOKLE	T/SGT	A	3/3/45		IOLA
ARTHUR K TOKOLA	SGT	A	3/3/45		IOLA
WILLIAM H TRESSLER	PFC	F	4/15/45		TORRE IUSSI
JACK E TREW	SGT	L	2/20/45		MT GORGOLESCO
UNKNOWN 1*	PVT	HQ 2ND	3/12/45		MADNA DI BRASA
UNKNOWN 2*	PVT	HQ 2ND	3/12/45		MADNA DI BRASA
GREGORIE S VACCARINO	PFC	G	3/3/45		C ROMITO
CHARLES J VADEBONCOEUR/T/SGT		F	1/10/45	1/6/45	QUERCIANELLA
LESTER L VALENTINE	T/5	L	4/16/45		MONZUNO
NICHOLAS M VLASOFF	PFC	G	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
WILLIAM U WALTER	T/5	MED	1/6/45		QUERCIANELLA
HENRY T WARD	PVT	F	1/6/45		QUERCIANELLA
ORVILLE L WEBB	1ST SGT	I	3/25/45		MT GRANDE D'AIANO
LOUIS C WESLEY	SGT	L	3/2/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
LAWRENCE A WHITE	SGT	D	3/3/45		MONTEFORTE
LEROY WHITING	PFC	B	3/4/45		SASSOMOLARE
JERRY WIEDER	PVT	F	3/4/45		TAMBURINI
JEAN A WILCOX	PFC	I	2/25/45		MT DELLA TORRACCIA
JAMES O WILKINS	T/3	MED	1/6/45		QUERCIANELLA
DWIGHT C WILLIAMS	SGT	B	4/30/45		NAGO
NILLO A WIRKKALA	PFC	B	2/22/45		PIZZO DI CAMPANO
ALEXANDER T WRIGHT	PFC	H	4/15/45		CEREGLIO
LYLE E WYCKOFF	PVT	I	3/5/45		CAMPO DEL SOLE
JOHN J YAMMARINO JR	PFC	A	3/5/45		MT GRANDE D'AIANO

\*UNKNOWN SOLDIERS: Two replacements who had arrived at 86th Headquarters 2nd Battalion at Madna di Brasa on 12 March were killed that night by a shell which hit their foxhole. Their names had not been recorded in the company files and it was not possible to identify the bodies.



## MAP 1. RIVA RIDGE

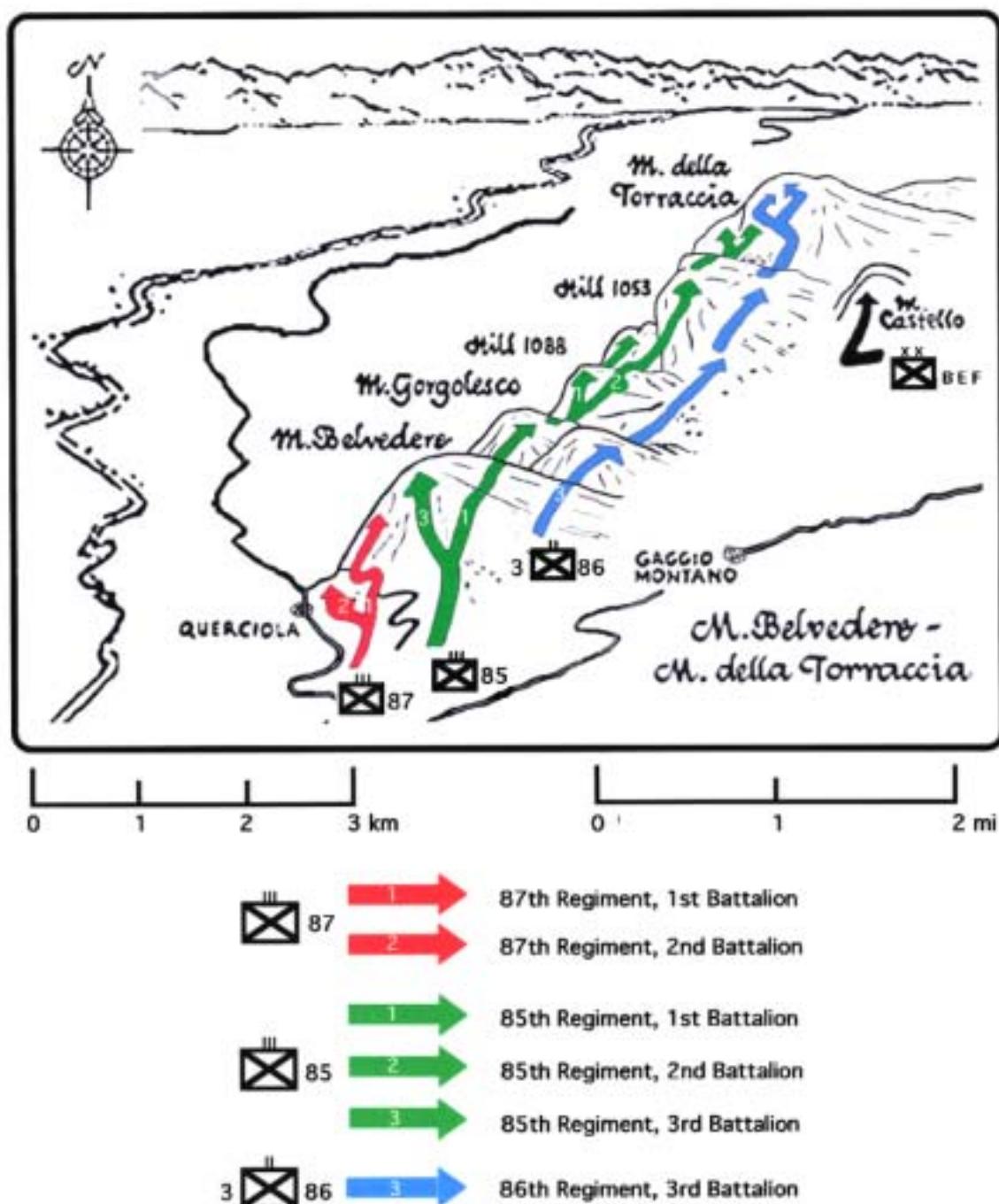
February 18 - 25





## MAP 2. MT. BELVEDERE RIDGE

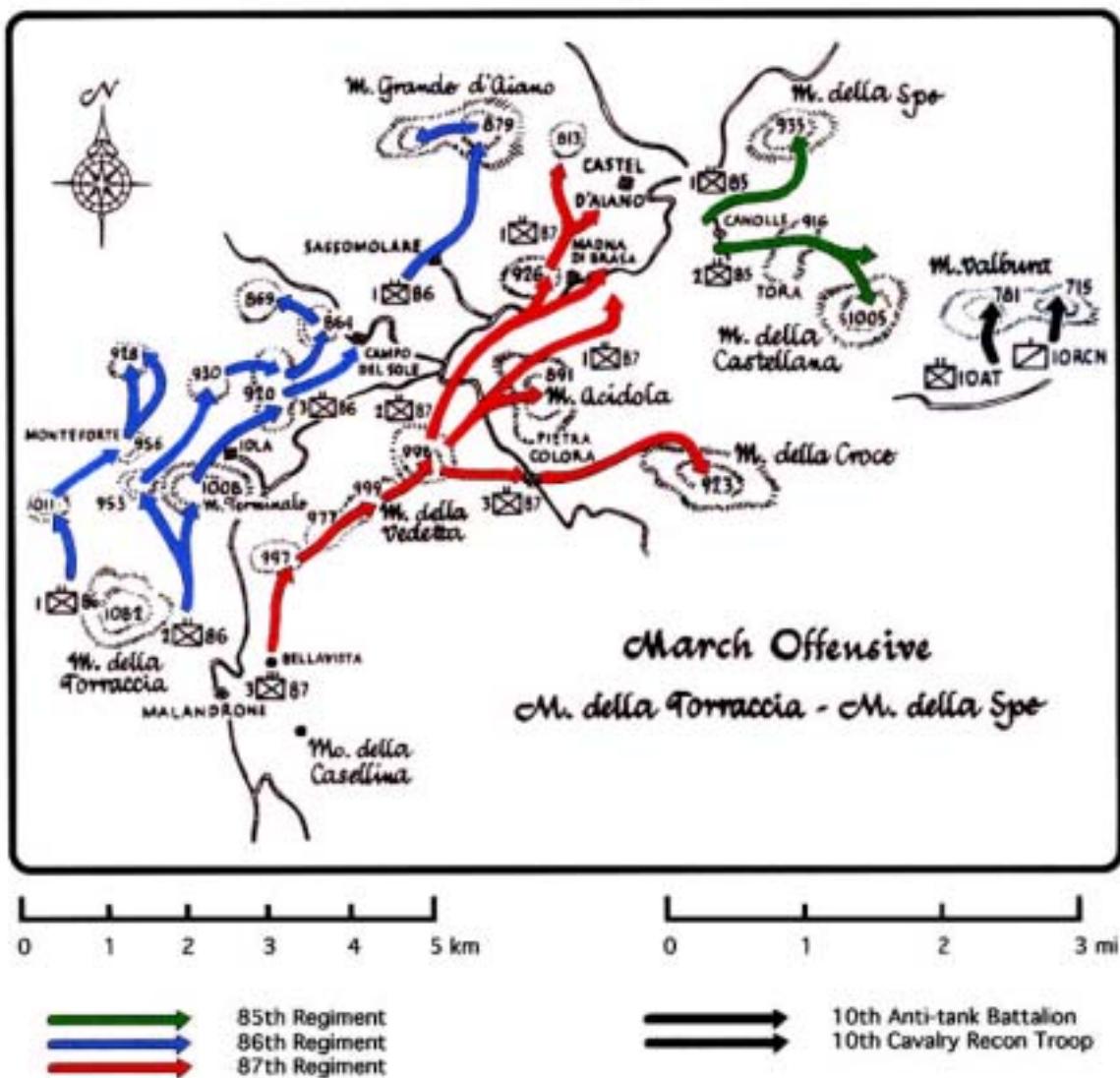
February 19 – March 2





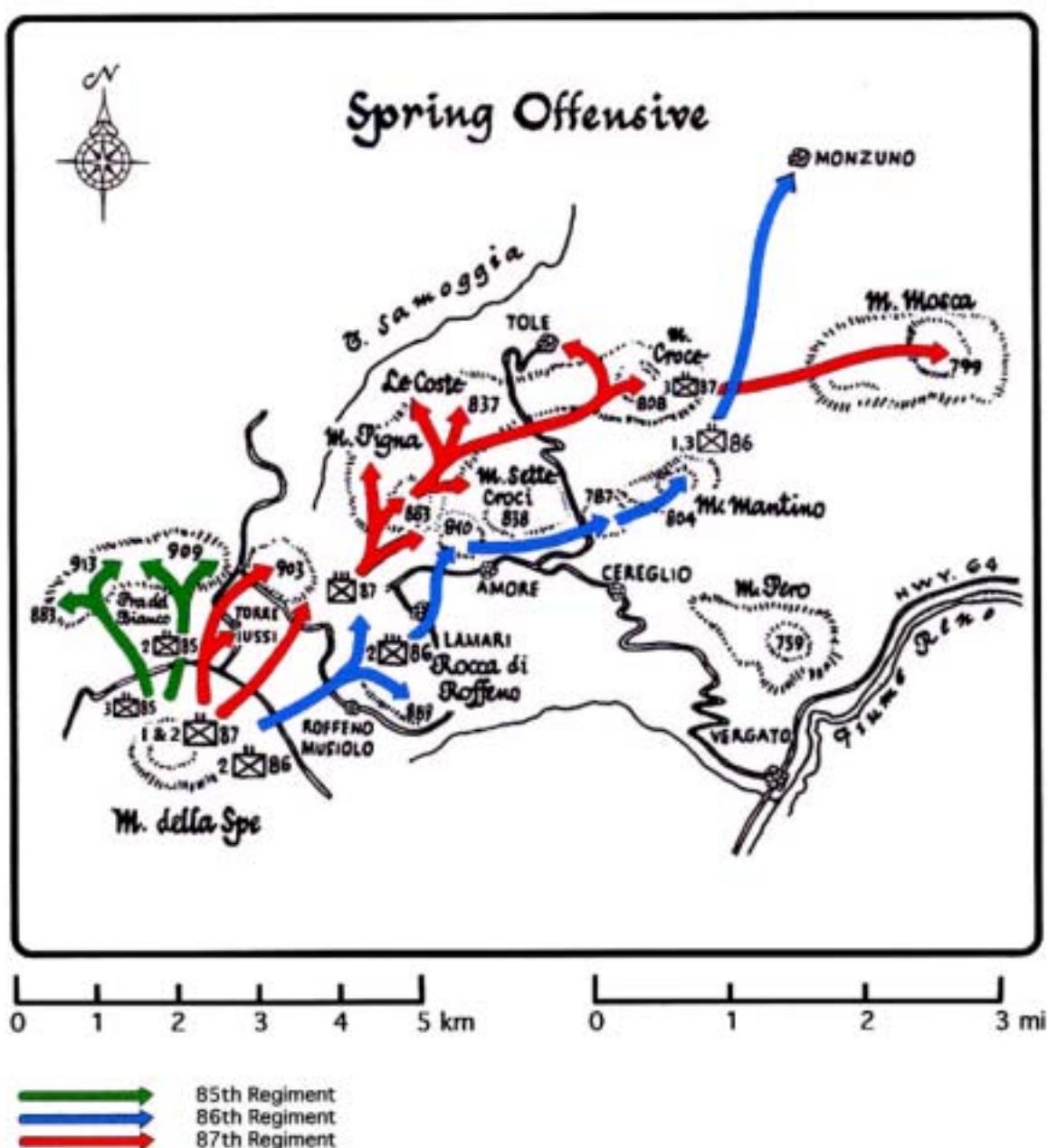
## **MAP 3. MARCH OFFENSIVE**

### **March 3 – March 6**





**MAP 4. SPRING OFFENSIVE**  
April 14 – 16

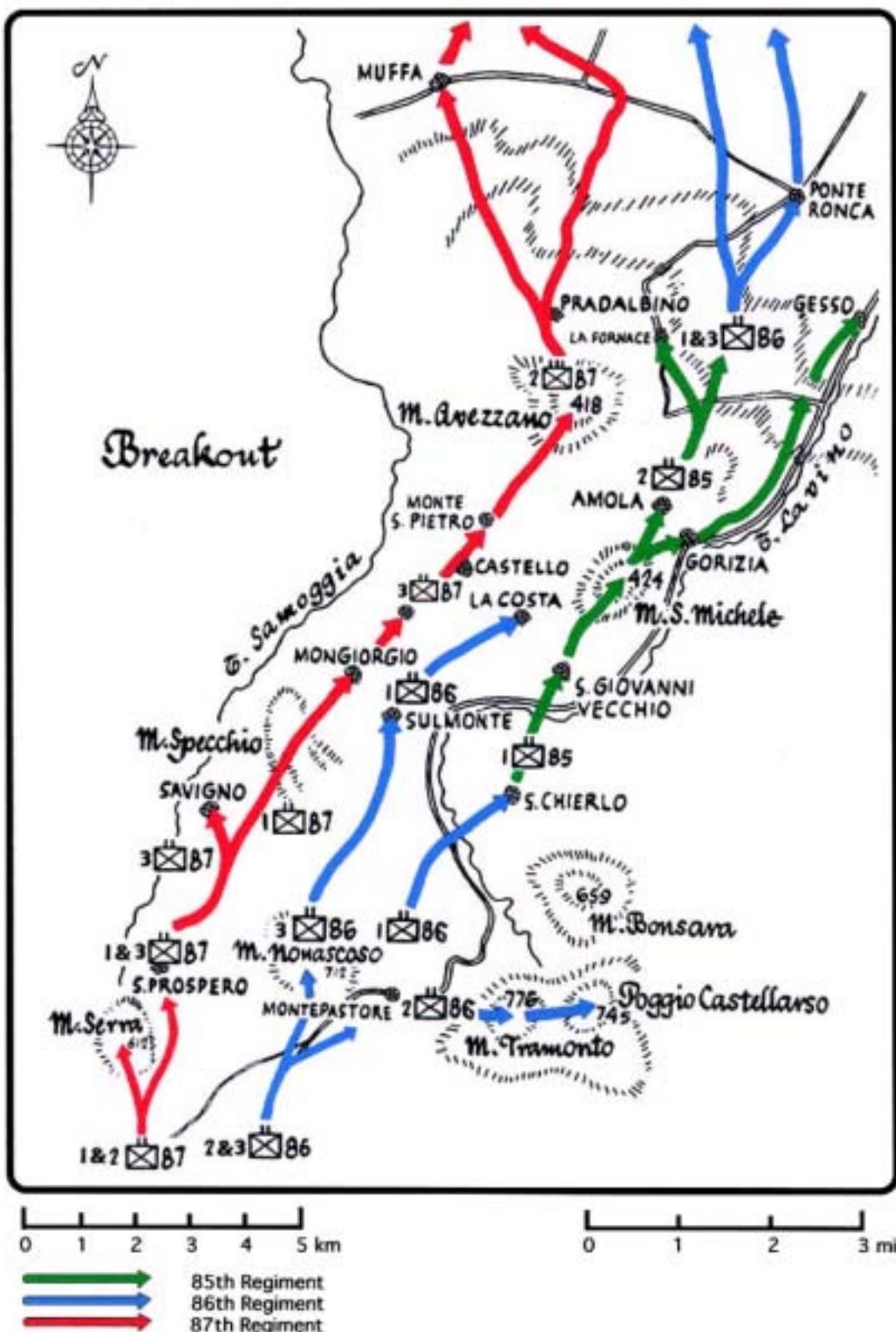






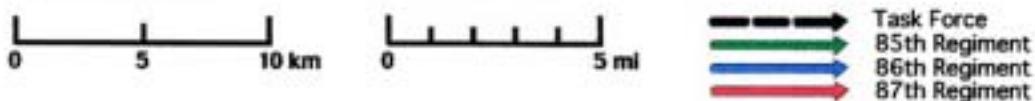
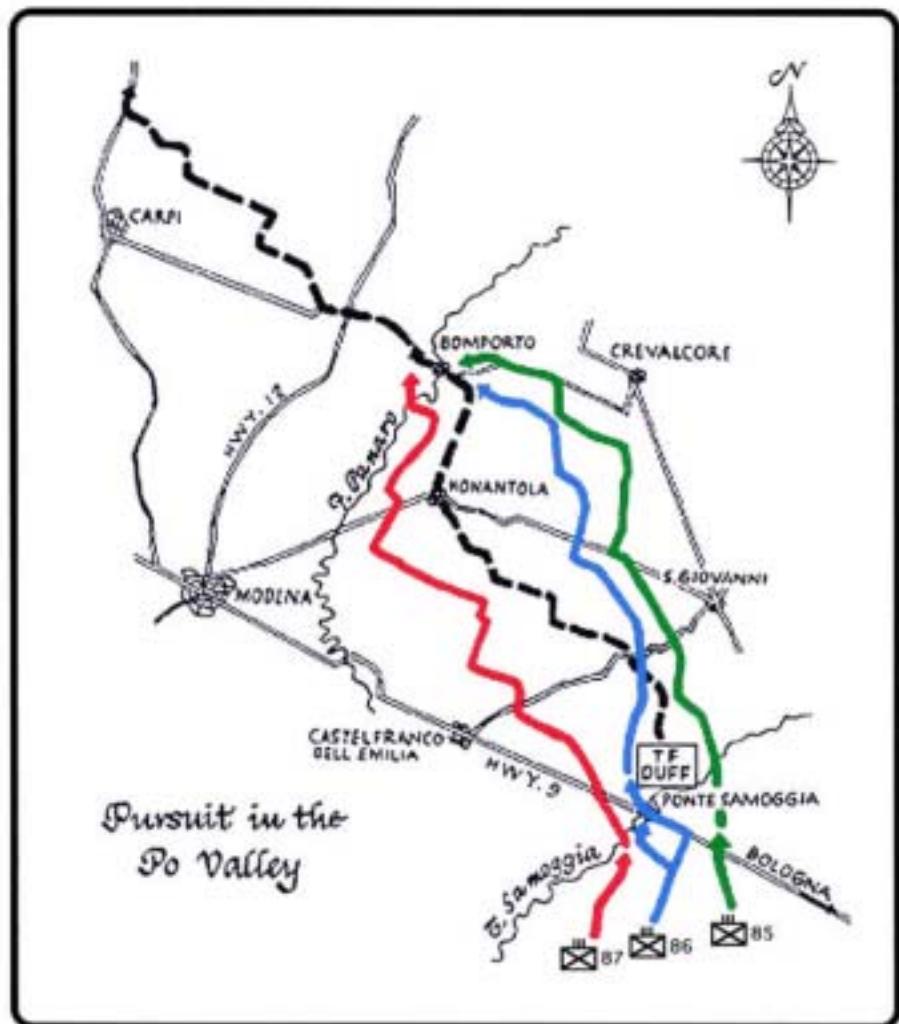
## MAP 5. BREAKOUT

April 17 - 20





**MAP 6. PO VALLEY SOUTH**  
April 20 – 22

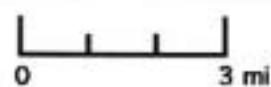
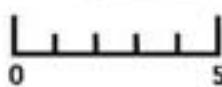
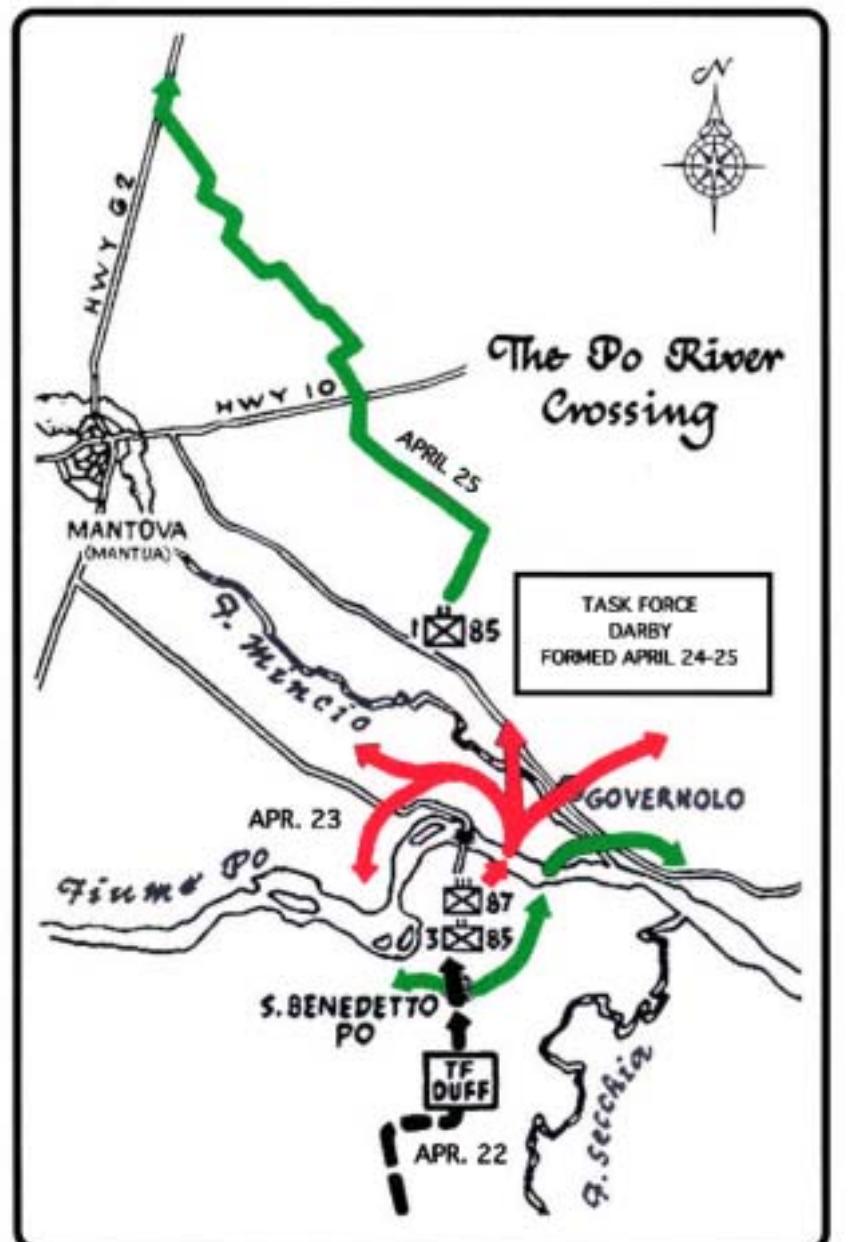


10TH DIVISION UNITS			ATTACHED UNITS		
TASK FORCE DUFF	2	86 86th 2nd Bn (April 21)	B	TD 701 701st Tank Destroyer Bn, B Co	
	3	85 85th 3rd Bn (April 22)	D	751 751st Tank Bn, D Co	
	B E	126 126th Engineer Bn, B Co	91	91st Recon Squadron	



## MAP 7. PO RIVER CROSSING

April 23 – 24



- |   |
|---|
| <span style="color: black;">—→</span> Task Force Duff<br><span style="color: green;">—→</span> 85th Regiment<br><span style="color: blue;">—→</span> 86th Regiment<br><span style="color: red;">—→</span> 87th Regiment |
|---|



## MAP 8. ADVANCE TO LAKE GARDA

April 25 – 29



- Task Force Darby
- 85th Regiment
- 86th Regiment
- 87th Regiment

<b>TASK FORCE DARBY</b>	86    86th Regiment	751    751st Tank Bn, B Co
	126    126th Engineer Bn, B Co	13    13th Tank Bn
	701    701st Tank Destroyer Bn, B Co	1125    1125th Armored Artillery



**MAP 9. LAKE GARDA: THE FINAL BATTLES**  
**April 28 – May 2**

