

## HISTORY 133RD INFANTRY 34TH INFANTRY DIVISION

From 1 October 1944 to 31 October 1944, inclusive.

The month of September, 1944, had been a memorable one for the 133rd Regiment of the 34th Infantry Division, a time of historic accomplishment against a fiercely defiant adversary. In nine days of furious fighting during the month in which it observed the first anniversary of the landings at Salerno, the Regiment cracked through one of the most strongly defended sectors of the Germans' vaunted Gothic Line across the Apennine Mountains of Italy.

As October began the Regiment, emerging from Divisional reserve, continued its drive toward Bologna, gateway to the Po Valley. Weather, terrain, and the enemy were destined to constitute a threefold menace to our forces the greater part of the period.

[30 September - 2 October 1944]

At 2030 hours 30 September the Divisional liaison officer had arrived at the Regiment's forward command post with Divisional Field Order No. 47, instructing us to enter the line on the right of the 168th Infantry of the 34th Division and attack northward at 0600 hours the following morning. (Refer to September history for pertinent field orders.) Attached to the 133rd Infantry for the coming action were: Company A, 757th Tank Battalion; one platoon of Company C, 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion; Company A, 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion; and Company A, 109th Engineer Combat Battalion.

According to plan, our Second Battalion attacked at 0600 Hours 1 October from the vicinity of Madonna dei Fornelli (812160 - Map Italy 1:50,000 Sheet 98-1 Loiano), passing through the Second Battalion of the 168th Infantry. The formation employed was a two company front, with Company F on the right, Company G on the left. Company G remained in reserve and the other two battalions stayed in place. The plan was for one battalion to advance at a time, the lead battalion being replaced by the Third as soon as the former tired, or if it was stopped by the enemy.

The companies met generally light opposition in the morning hours. Reaching Hill 617, immediately north of Madonna dei Fornelli, Company F encountered considerable small-arm fire and suffered two casualties. Company G had to work through extensive minefields.

Meanwhile, Major General Charles L. Bolte, commander of the 34th Division, visited the Regimental command post and conferred with the commanding officer of the Regiment, Colonel Gustav J. Braun. General Bolte imparted the gratifying news that the 133rd Regiment at that time was the leading element of the entire Fifth Army.

Out on the battlefield our troops continued a fighting advance, harassed by heavy mortar and some artillery fire. By noon they were clearing enemy out of houses at 814175, south of Cedrecchia, and taking several prisoners.

At approximately 1800 hours Company F approached Cedrecchia (814178), snaring a few prisoners on the outskirts. The town, well defended by barbed wire entanglements, and machine gun, mortar and artillery fire, was then raked by a platoon of Company C, 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion. The Germans replied with intense fire, and Company F suffered casualties. Unable to take the village without more support, the unit withdrew slightly, reorganized, and prepared to attack at 2300

hours. This assault was to be preceded by an artillery barrage augmented by fire from the tank destroyers and Company A of the 757th Tank Battalion.

During the day's fighting the Regiment had taken 22 prisoners of war. Company G captured 18 from 2nd Company, 142nd Reconnaissance Battalion, 42nd Infantry Division. Company F caught four, one each from the 1st, 2nd, and 11th Companies of the 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division, and 2nd Company, 142nd Reconnaissance Battalion.

At 2300 hours, Company F again attacked Cedrecchia, with First Lieutenant Orva E. Morris in command. Captain Richard E. Waterman, the company commander, had been killed earlier in the day. Second Lieutenant Dean P. Hamilton, a platoon leader in the same unit, was wounded.

Wielding bangalore torpedoes, our troops blew asunder the protective wire around the town, and shortly after midnight were fighting the enemy in the houses. Vicious machine-gun, machine-pistol and other small-arms fire met them at every turn. By 0200 hours 2 October our soldiers were forced to relinquish their hold on the town.

Undaunted, we planned still another effort to take the strong-point, and in preparation the town was again raked by the tank destroyers. At 0300 hours, with Company E added, the battalion attacked. But it was not until 1445 hours, nearly 14 raging hours later, that Company F safely held Cedrecchia.

Throughout the intervening time the German resistance was determined and intense, featured by heavy small-arms fire of all types. Rain falling during the night obscured otherwise easily detected mines, and seriously hampered our troops. The rain, attended by mud and murky darkness, also interfered greatly with the movement of the tanks. These were used to enter Cedrecchia and to clean out machine-gun nests impeding our advance. Intermittent rainfall made daytime visibility poor and progress was very slow.

In the meantime, in order to increase our fire power on Hill 956 (Objective A) the Division had, at 0900 hours, attached the 135th Infantry Cannon Company of the 34th Division to us. A coordinated attack with two battalions abreast was decided upon (refer to Operational Instructions No. 23, this headquarters, and accompanying overlay). The Third Battalion was alerted. All heavy mortars in the Regiment were placed under a central fire direction center in order to take the best advantage of our fire power. For the same reason, the First Battalion's heavy machine-gun section was attached to the Second Battalion. Harassing artillery fires, to be lifted on call, were prepared by the 151st Field Artillery Battalion. The fires were to consist of 600 rounds of light, 300 heavy caliber an hour.

Enemy resistance mounted steadily through the morning and afternoon, and our Second Battalion suffered many casualties, chiefly from hostile artillery fire. Our troops were operating on rocky terrain which multiplied the deadliness of fragmentation.

On account of the Second Battalion's losses and resultant low strength, at 1545 hours Major Edward M. Fabert, in command of the First Battalion, was ordered to reconnoiter forward and be ready to enter the line within 24 hours. At the same time the Third Battalion, alerted previously, moved off through the leading elements of Company F, with two companies, L and K, in a column of companies. Company I remained in its assembly area, ready to jump off on order.

The attack proceeded along the lines planned. However, because of heavy shelling by the Germans, particularly self-propelled gun fire, our troops advanced but slowly. The widespread shelling continually tore communication wires. Little ground was gained the remainder of this rainy, foggy day and night.

Prisoners taken during the evening said that the enemy intended to attack from Hill 956 that night with 150 men, hour unknown. All our units were warned and our mortars combed the draws along the hill, but by midnight nothing untoward had developed. (Refer to Overlay No. 1 for disposition of our troops at this time.)

Twenty-three Axis soldiers were taken prisoner during the day, Company F capturing fourteen; E, four; G, four; and D, one. Enemy units involved were: 1st Company, 142nd Reconnaissance Battalion, eight prisoners; 2nd Company, 11; 2nd Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division, one; 4th Company, one; and 11th Company, two.

[3 October 1944]

By daylight of 3 October the weather had cleared. The air observer, whom inclement weather had grounded the previous day, rose skyward as dawn spread over our sector.

With supporting tanks following them, troops of the First and Third Battalions began moving forward at 0600 hours. At the same time, the Second Battalion, with two days hard fighting behind them, moved to a rear assembly area to rest, dry out and reorganize.

Reports from the forward attacking elements indicated that the Germans had withdrawn somewhat during the night. We were moving ahead steadily, with no opposition other than scattered artillery and mortar fire. An hour after the jump-off the First Battalion reported they had gained Hill 956 without contest. At 0800 hours they still had not contacted the enemy. Hostile artillery activity continued meager, our air observation post perhaps acting as a deterrent.

Once it became clear that the Germans were pulling back, our heavy mortar sections reverted to the battalions from central control.

The two attacking battalions, ever abreast, kept pursuing the enemy toward Mount Venere (Hill 963, 809228). Harassing artillery fire grew in intensity, though neither of our units effected physical contact with the Germans.

By nightfall our troops had progressed well enough to enable our attached Company A of the 84th Chemical Mortar Battalion to move up to La Villa (815189). Our field artillery battalion, the 151st, made preparations to move ahead, and a reconnaissance party went forward to find a new location for the Regimental command post, to be established once Monte Venere was secured. It was the desire of higher headquarters that the hill be taken that night.

In response to that wish both the First and Third Battalions were ordered to keep moving all night, the Second to reconnoiter forward and to be prepared to move to a new assembly area near 812206. Thus, the latter unit would be in readiness to join her sister battalions should Monte Venere still be in enemy hands by morning. (See Overlay No. 2 for troop positions at midnight.)

Fourteen prisoners were apprehended during the day. Company B captured nine; Company A, one; and Company L, four. The captives were from the following units: eight from 1st Company, one from 4th Company

of the 142nd Reconnaissance Battalion, 42nd Infantry Division; and one each from the 1st, 2nd, 9th, 11th, and 15th Companies of the 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division.

[4 October 1944]

Meeting light resistance, Companies K and L advanced along the 34th Division's right boundary through the darkness of early morn, 4 October. Company B was being held up by a counter-attack, estimated to be one platoon strong. As a result, the gap between the First and Third Battalions had widened. It was therefore deemed advisable to employ Company I, which was in reserve, to fill the unprotected sector. As that unit assumed the lead in the battalion's left flank, Company K took the right flank and Company L blocked to the right and mopped up the rear.

At 0400 hours Major Fabert reported that his First Battalion was resuming the advance. Company C passed through Companies A and B to take the lead. Resistance was encountered almost immediately and mounted during the morning.

At approximately 0830 hours Major Fabert was wounded, whereupon Captain Richard F. Wilkinson, First Battalion executive officer, took command. (Captain Wilkinson was reassigned as executive officer when Major Linus T. Williams was placed in command of the battalion on 13 October.) First Lieutenant Wayne T. Patrick of Company C was slightly wounded as he went to Major Fabert's aid.

Meanwhile, the Second Battalion started moving to a more forward assembly area, near 808202. It had been alerted to go back into the line on order, as it seemed likely that Mount Venere would soon be taken. A plan for continuing the attack, using a Second Battalion company riding on a company of medium tanks, was formulated. (For complete plan refer to Operational Instructions No. 24, this headquarters, with overlay.)

By 1630 hours Mount Venere was ours, occupied by infantry and armor. Company F, selected to make the breakthrough to Monzuno (823247), rapidly climbed on tanks and headed for that German-held town. The First and Third Battalions followed plans outlined in the operational instructions mentioned above.

With Mount Venere in our hands, Colonel Braun moved his Regimental command post ahead. At 1900 hours he set up his headquarters at Le Croci (811202).

The outskirts on Monzuno were reached by Company F at 2000 hours, the rest of the battalion in its wake. At the same hour Company I experienced a strong counter-attack from its left flank, the enemy assaulting from Hill 927. After a sharp fire fight in which we suffered casualties, including the wounding of Second Lieutenant Clarence Spike, our soldiers drove off the Germans.

By 2220 hours Company F had fought its way into Monzuno. It entered the village with but one tank. The rain-soaked, muddy ground mired some and others were immobilized by enemy self-propelled and bazooka fire. Company E followed close behind, riding light tanks. Second Lieutenant Joseph C. Lassiter of that company was slightly wounded.

Shortly after midnight further plans for continuing the attack to the north were given to the troops in the form of Operational Instructions No. 25. Overlay No. 3 shows gains made by the Regiment

during the day and troop positions at midnight.

In the last 24 hours we had taken 63 prisoners. Company C captured 49; K, three; I, four; F, two; Headquarters 2nd Battalion, five. Enemy units concerned were:

- 2 - 1st Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division
- 21 - 2nd Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division
- 15 - 3rd Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division
- 1 - 9th Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division
- 4 - 12th Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division
- 2 - 13th Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division
- 9 - 14th Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division
- 2 - 1st Bn Hq Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division
- 2 - Punishment Company, 10th Regiment, 4th Paratroop Division
- 2 - Evacuated by Medical Detachment

[5 October 1944]

By the wet dawn of 5 October our Second Battalion was prepared to move again, having cleared Monzuno of all enemy during the night and set road blocks around the town. After a half hour's artillery preparation the battalion jumped off at 0600 hours.

At the same hour the 135th Infantry's Second Battalion passed our command post, heading for Mount Venere in accordance with Divisional instructions to protect our rear by securing the hill and patrolling to the west and northwest. Attached to us now, in response to a request, was another platoon from the 804th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Noon found our First and Third Battalions forging ahead steadily. Artillery and mortar fire featured the resistance, only scattered small arms [fire] being encountered. **First Lieutenant John F. McLaughlin** of Company H was killed this day. The Third Battalion was engaged this day in cleaning out pockets of enemy by-passed by the Second.

Increasingly bad weather became a serious problem now. Continual rain turned narrow, muddy trails into hazardous stretches of muck and slippery rock. All available men were set to work in an attempt to keep routes open. Mules had to replace vehicles for carrying supplies to the troops and for laying wire. Evacuation of the wounded, too, was impossible by vehicle. Part of our Service Company, cooks from the various kitchen trains, and all personnel of the Anti-Tank Company except the mine platoon were pressed into service as litter-bearers.

However, the inclement weather had little effect on the progress of our persevering soldiers. During the afternoon they advanced far enough to remove the need for security of Monte Venere by the 133rd's Second Battalion. The 168th, on our left, had also advanced slightly beyond the hill. A plan was therefore formulated for the employment of the 135th's unit on our right. (For plan see directive from this headquarters, dated 5 October.)

Later in the evening the Third Battalion of the 135th Infantry took over the positions of its Second Battalion. Thus, both units were now in a position to carry out plans which called for the 135th to pass through on our right the following morning.

General Bolte visited our command post during the day and expressed to Colonel Braun his satisfaction with the 133rd Infantry's going of the past two days. These advances had been achieved against a fiercely resisting foe, over extremely unfavorable terrain, and in spite of hampering weather and poor communications.