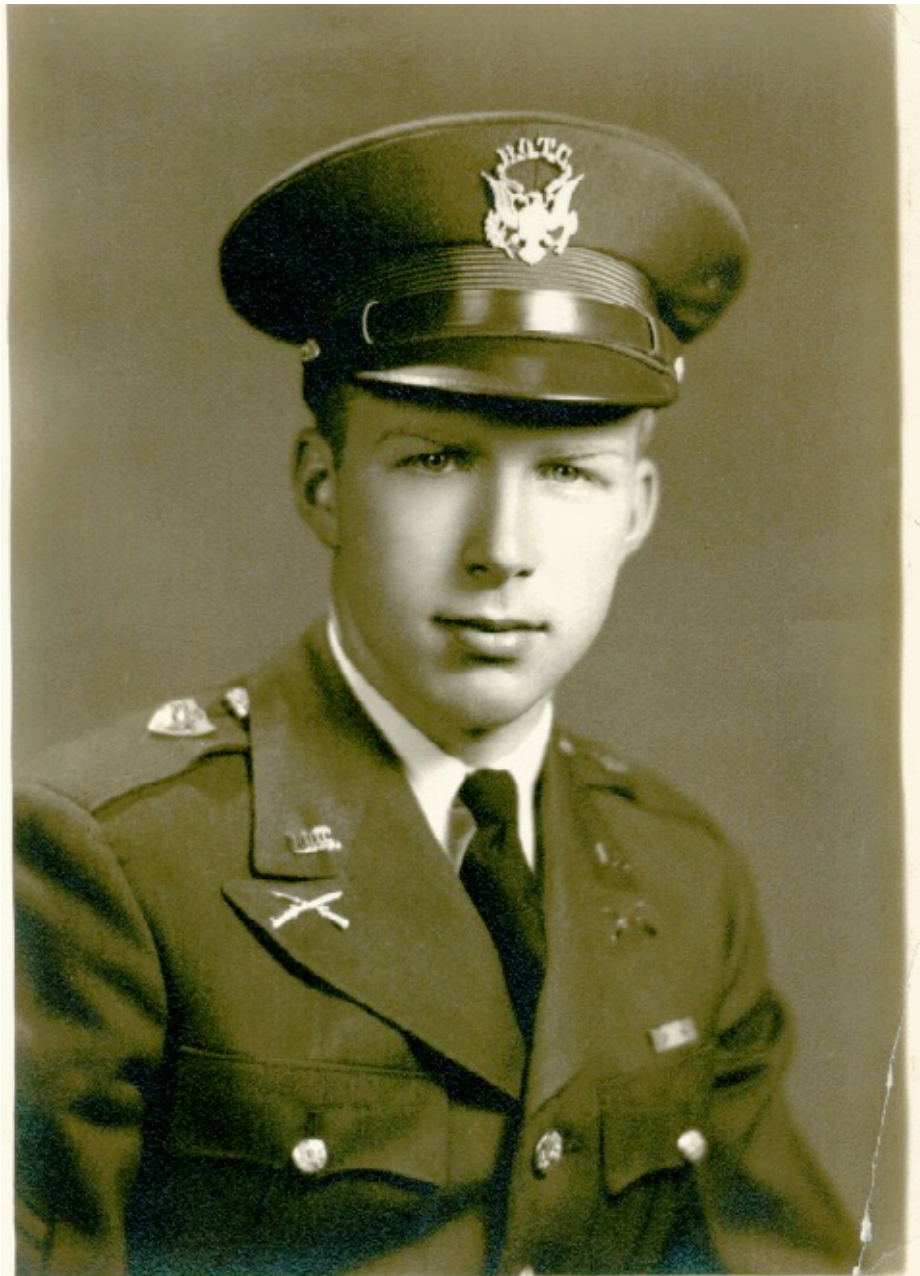


# **A QUIET HERO**

**2<sup>ND</sup> LT. GEORGE B. DARBY, 3<sup>RD</sup>**  
**KILLED IN ACTION IN NORTHERN ITALY, OCTOBER 1944**

Written by his Brother,  
CLEMENT H. DARBY

178 Grubb Road  
Malvern, Pennsylvania, 19355  
September 1997  
Updated April 1998



## DEDICATION

To the *brave soldiers* of Love Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion,  
350<sup>th</sup> Mountain Regiment, 88<sup>th</sup> Division,  
who were George's friends and companions,  
who fought side by side against the Germans in Northern Italy  
the last two months of his life, August and September, 1944.  
And to his wife and my dear sister-in-law,  
*Kathryn Cocker Darby*, who, for these so many years,  
has held fast and been uplifted by her memories of George.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Ann Bennett Mix, who's book, *TOUCHSTONES*, gave me the blueprint to follow in gathering information about my brother George's time in the 350<sup>th</sup> Mountain Regiment. To Richard Gardner, Publisher of Battery Press, Inc., Nashville, TN, who furnished me with publications about the 88<sup>th</sup> Division and the 350<sup>th</sup> Mountain Regiment fighting in the Italian Campaign and gave me the lead to Doc Waters in Philadelphia. To Doc Waters who printed my "help wanted" ad in *The Blue Devil*, the 88<sup>th</sup> Division quarterly newsletter. Special thanks to the veterans of Love Company who responded to my ad: Capt. Ned J. Maher, Love Company Commander, Corporal Jim Territo, Company Mail Clerk, Sgt. Ralph Grippo, George's Platoon Sergeant, Sgt. Don Werley, and Sgt. Russell Dalessio. And I could not have completed this booklet without the help of Medic Bob Langmeier, attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, who is the source of information for most of the daily activities of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion and Love Company. And to Charlton [Mac] McCormick, George's close friend and companion for five years at Drexel University, who, after reading the first version of this booklet, provided me with additional information that he had collected while corresponding with and following George from graduation until his death.

And I am eternally grateful to Our Lord who miraculously led me to the many sources of information that made it possible for me to close this final chapter of George's life on Earth.

## INTRODUCTION

It is important that the reader know something of the character of George B. Darby, 3<sup>rd</sup> and my relationship to him before I embark on a narration of his time in August and September of 1944 with the U. S. Army in Northern Italy. He was my only brother, born February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1921, almost nine years before I was born. He was always my hero. George taught me to ride a bicycle, roller skate, play baseball, build model planes, shoot a rifle, electrify model trains, sail and many other things too numerous to mention. He was my Sunday School teacher and, along with his future wife, Kathryn Cocker, we sang together in the choir at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Glenside, PA. To me he always exemplified honesty, integrity, hard work, love and a strong faith in the Lord. Our father was killed in an automobile accident in 1941, so he became my surrogate father for three years, until his death I October 0f 1944.

Somewhere in the Darby genes is a response to *Serve one's Country* when needed. George's great ambition was to attend the U. S. Naval Academy. He was a good student, an expert sailor and marksman, but defective vision disqualified him from receiving an appointment to the Academy. The Darby family was still recovering financially from the Great Depression so, in September 1938, George entered Drexel Institute of Technology in Philadelphia [now Drexel University] on a work study program. He joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps [ROTC], knowing that he would become a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant when he graduated in 1943, but not knowing that World War II would be at the peak of its fury.

I say *Service to your Country* is in the genes because as far back as the French and Indian War [1756-1765], and, even before then, in Cromwell's invasion of Ireland in 1649, our ancestors answered the call to defend what they believed was right. Captain John Potter, 5<sup>th</sup> great grandfather, and his sons, Captain James Potter and Lieutenant Thomas Potter, as Colonials attached to the English Army, fought the Indians in Cumberland County, PA. James was wounded and Thomas was scalped. In the Revolutionary War, James Potter, 4<sup>th</sup> great granduncle, became a Major General and was again wounded several times. Dr. Henry Buck, 4<sup>th</sup> great grandfather, was a soldier and a doctor, wounded several times. George Latimer, 4<sup>th</sup> great grandfather, was a Ranger in Western Pennsylvania and was wounded in the hip by an Indian arrow. George Latimer, 3<sup>rd</sup> great granduncle was a Colonel from Delaware, and Josiah Grant, 4<sup>th</sup> great grandfather, was a Private from New Jersey. The War of 1812 included Robert N. Buck, 3<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather, George Buck and Robert Latimer, 3<sup>rd</sup> great grandfather. Dr. Robert M. Buck served in the Mexican - American War in 1847, and ancestors too numerous to mention, including five generals, fought and died for the Union in the Civil War. Great granduncle Edwin Latimer, Captain of a Colored Company from Ohio, was captured by the Confederates at Petersburg, VA and came close to dying from starvation during imprisonment at Camp Asylum, SC. In World War I, our father, George B. Darby, Jr. was a Captain in the Army Transportation Corps, our mother, Dorothy Buck Darby, was a Yeoman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, USNRF at the Philadelphia Navy Yard and our uncle, John J. Z. Darby, who, in 1926, died from trench warfare diseases, was a Sergeant in the Marines in France. Albert Morely Darby was a Naval Aviator. In addition to George's service in World War II, our 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins, Gaylord Ziegler and John Ziegler served with distinction as Marine Officers in the Pacific and Gaylord was severely wounded on Iwo Jima. Our first cousin, Jack Darby, was a Sergeant in the Army Air Corps. Gaylord and John Ziegler were back fighting again as Officers in the Korean War and, during that time, I was Operations Officer on the USS Miller [DD535] in Korea.

Many of our ancestors were Scotch-Irish and fought in many of the battles in Europe and America. By nature they were aggressive because they strove to survive the persecution by the English, but I doubt that they relished the fighting, killing and carnage. George would be proud of his heritage but he was a very gentle, kind and peaceful man. Nevertheless, when it was time to serve, he was there. The enumeration of ancestral *Service to your Country* is not to glorify them, but to set the stage for some of George's decisions in his last days.

## **JUNE 1943 - JUNE 1944**

The twelve-month period from June of 1943 to June of 1944 was spent by George in training for combat. After being commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Infantry, followed by a brief honeymoon, George shipped out to Ft. Benning, GA, which was the major infantry officer training facility on the East Coast. After that there was a brief stint at Camp Croft, Spartanburg, SC for more training and then to Camp McCoy, LaCrosse, WI to join the 76<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. It was there that he was trained to be a ski trooper. The place was bleak - lots of snow and ice. I recall him telling me that he had learned to assemble and disassemble a jeep engine in the cold and dark. From a letter he wrote to the Drexel newsletter he stated "Right now I am in Michigan. We are up here for a month in the Ottawa National Forest and it's mighty cold. The main thing to do here is try and keep warm. The Company I am with moves on snowshoes when we have no vehicles and the equipment is carried on white sleds and toboggans, not unlike the ones used by Eskimos. We live in shelters made from logs and pine boughs."

According to the newsletter, George visited Drexel in late April or early May, while home on leave. And then in June the time had come to depart for where the action would be. Massive amounts of troops and supplies were going to England in preparation for the invasion of France scheduled for October. Others were headed for the Mediterranean Area to reinforce the Allies and replace the many casualties incurred in the stalled northward push in Italy. George was selected to head for Italy and the recollection of his wife, Kathryn, was that he left the East Coast for North Africa by troop transport the end of June or early July. A trip such as that took approximately three weeks. This is confirmed by another letter to Drexel. "In the short time since I left Drexel I have visited North Africa at Oran, I'm now on a converted luxury liner and have wonderful accommodations." Presumably he was transshipping to Naples, Italy because in his last recorded correspondence to Drexel in July, 1944, he wrote "I'm training troops here in a Replacement Center and it's not bad at all. Some of the places I have seen are: Oran [Africa], Naples, Caserta, Capua, Pompeii, and others I cannot mention. It will be good to see Drexel once more when I finally do come home and may it be soon."

## ARRIVAL IN ITALY, JULY 1944

As was outlined in the previous paragraph, George arrived in Naples by ship from a North African port in July 1944. Most of the replacements for the 88<sup>th</sup> Division went through the 7<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot of the Replacement and Training Command in Italy. It was housed within the U. S. Army Medical Center and was located near the southeastern corner of Campi Flegrei. This tract stretches from the hilly ridge separating Naples and its western suburb of Bagnoli, to the western coast of Italy. No doubt this was the Replacement Center referred to in his letter to Drexel. On July 31<sup>st</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion reported receiving five new officers as well as enlisted replacements. It is reasonable to assume that my brother was among those officer replacements. At that time they were located in the vicinity of San Vivaldo, a rest and training area. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion had recently stood down from several weeks of fighting south of the Arno River.



Camp McCoy, LaCrosse, WI, 1944

A bit of history of the 88<sup>th</sup> Division is in order. It was first formed in World War I and saw action in France near the end of the War. Early in 1942 it was reformed at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma and was one of the first all-draftee divisions. After one and one half years of training, the 88<sup>th</sup> Division shipped out from Hampton Roads, Virginia and arrived at Casablanca, North Africa on Christmas Eve 1943. They arrived in Naples on February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1944. In March they filled defensive positions in the Minturno Area on the left flank of the Fifth Army along the western side of Italy. This was about halfway between Naples and Rome. They moved up the west coast of Italy and fought in the Rome-Arno, North Appenines and PO Valley Campaigns with great distinction - and many casualties.

## **AUGUST 1944**

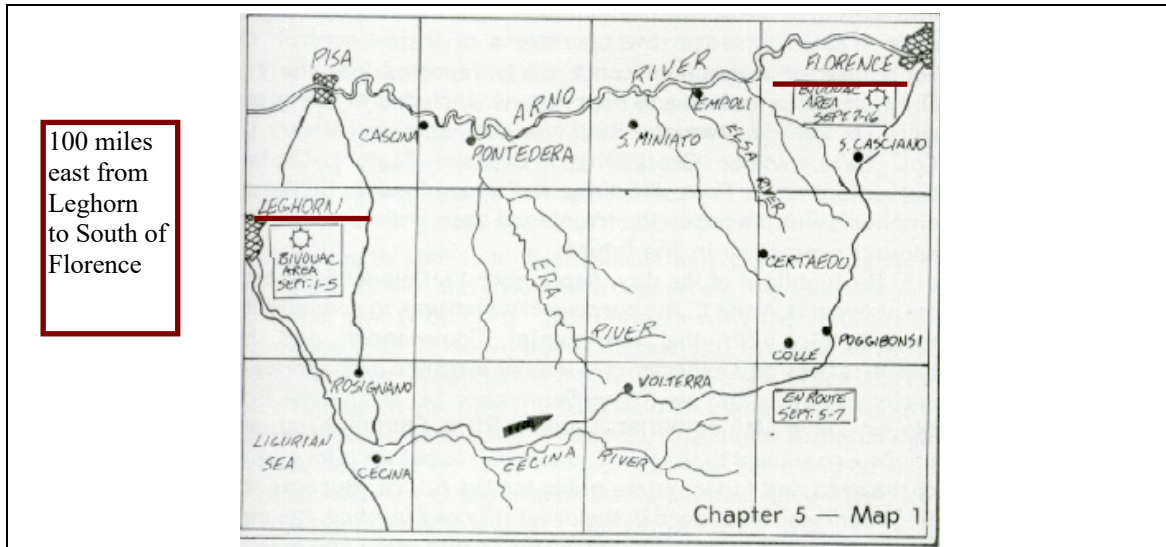
At some point in early August my brother took command of the Second Platoon, Love Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 350<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. Ralph Grippo was the platoon sergeant of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon and had been with the Battalion since its formation at Camp Gruber. Ralph and George became steadfast friends and he was with George up to his final days. Ralph nicknamed George “baby face” because he looked so young. From July 28<sup>th</sup> until August 20<sup>th</sup> the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion underwent rigorous mountain and river crossing training, along with some R & R and visits to Rome. On August 21<sup>st</sup> they traveled 55 miles to a new training area southeast of Leghorn on the west coast. More training, athletics and lots of swimming in the Ligurian Sea. George did have an opportunity to visit Rome, Pisa and other historic sights during his first month in Italy.





## SEPTEMBER 1944

On September 6<sup>th</sup> the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion traveled east about 100 miles over rough and muddy roads, through a steady rainstorm, reaching a new bivouac area south of Florence.

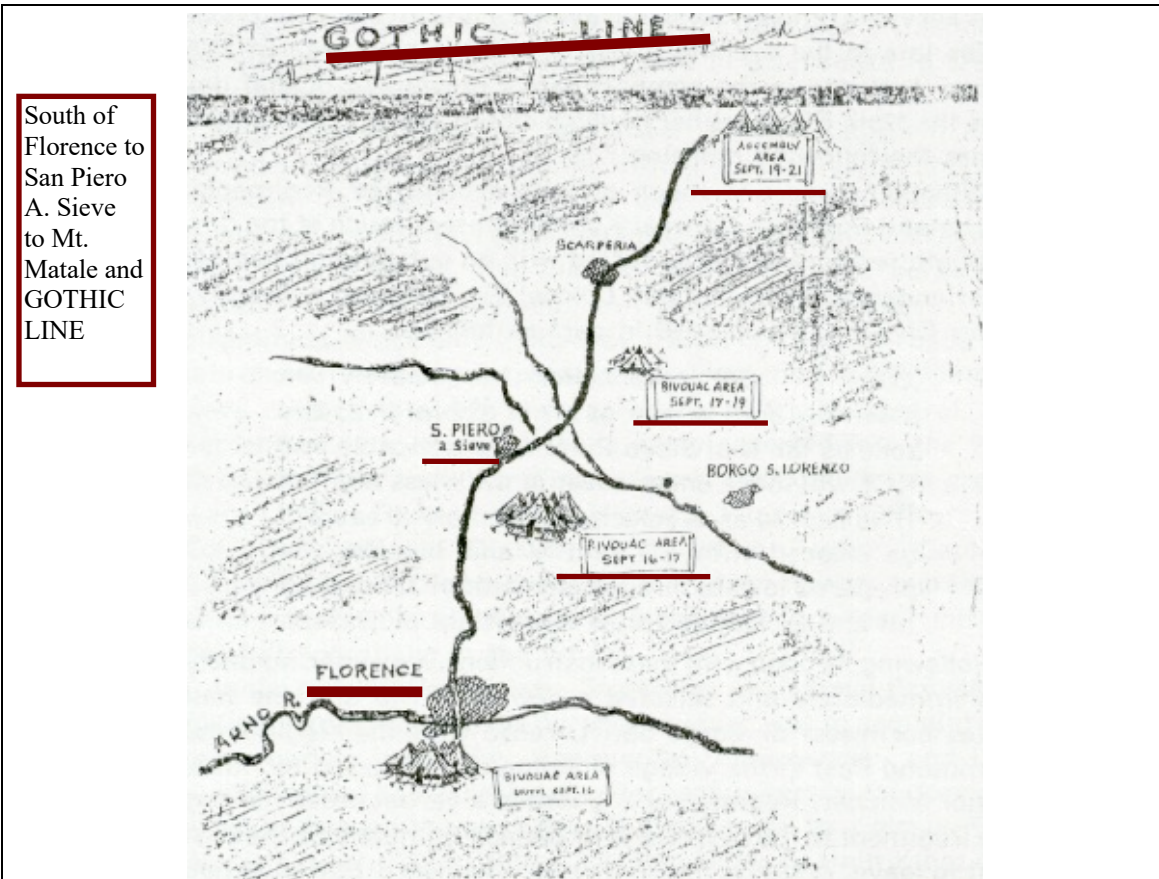


More training until September 16<sup>th</sup>, with passes to Florence. Love Company Commander, Captain Ned Maher, tells me that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was bivouacked on a former palatial estate. The following picture of several Love Company officers was taken there during that period. George is in the back on the right. Capt. Ned Maher is on the left, Lt. Albert Wade is in the middle and Lt. Leonard Hebel is kneeling. Lt. Hebel had just been awarded the Silver Star September 5<sup>th</sup>. The nurse is visiting. Ned and Len later were wounded and received the Purple Heart.



Most of the narrative which follows in the remainder of this booklet is taken directly from the daily Regimental and Battalion Reports as well as the daily 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion History compiled by Bob Langmeier. Much of the language is terse and not grammatically correct, but it is included in its approximate original format in order to convey to the reader the sense of urgency that existed at that time. I have underlined my comments and those excerpts from the Reports which directly related to George.

On September 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion traveled approximately 20 miles to a new bivouac area in the vicinity of San Piero A Sieve, north of Florence and close to the front. Late on the 17<sup>th</sup> the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, comprised of Headquarters, Item, King, Love and Mike Companies, headed north about 7½ miles and established a command post [CP] in the vicinity of Ferracciano. On the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion continued to move up to the front, hiking over steep, muddy and treacherous trails. Vehicles can no longer reach them so that all ammo and rations had to be brought up by hand or on mules. Their Destination was Mount Mantale. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion returns to action, beginning 44 days of fierce combat.



### September 21<sup>st</sup>

It rained again. Part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was lost the previous night but they joined up in the morning about two miles from the front. Moved out behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion. Tough march all day up and down hazardous mountain trails, made worse by the constant rain. Before closing in for the night, leading Item Company captured 12 Krauts, including two radio operators and their equipment. Mike Company captured 3 Jerries and wiped out a machine gun nest. CP established in the vicinity of Tarabba. Walked 18 miles, soaked from the rain, morale not so good.

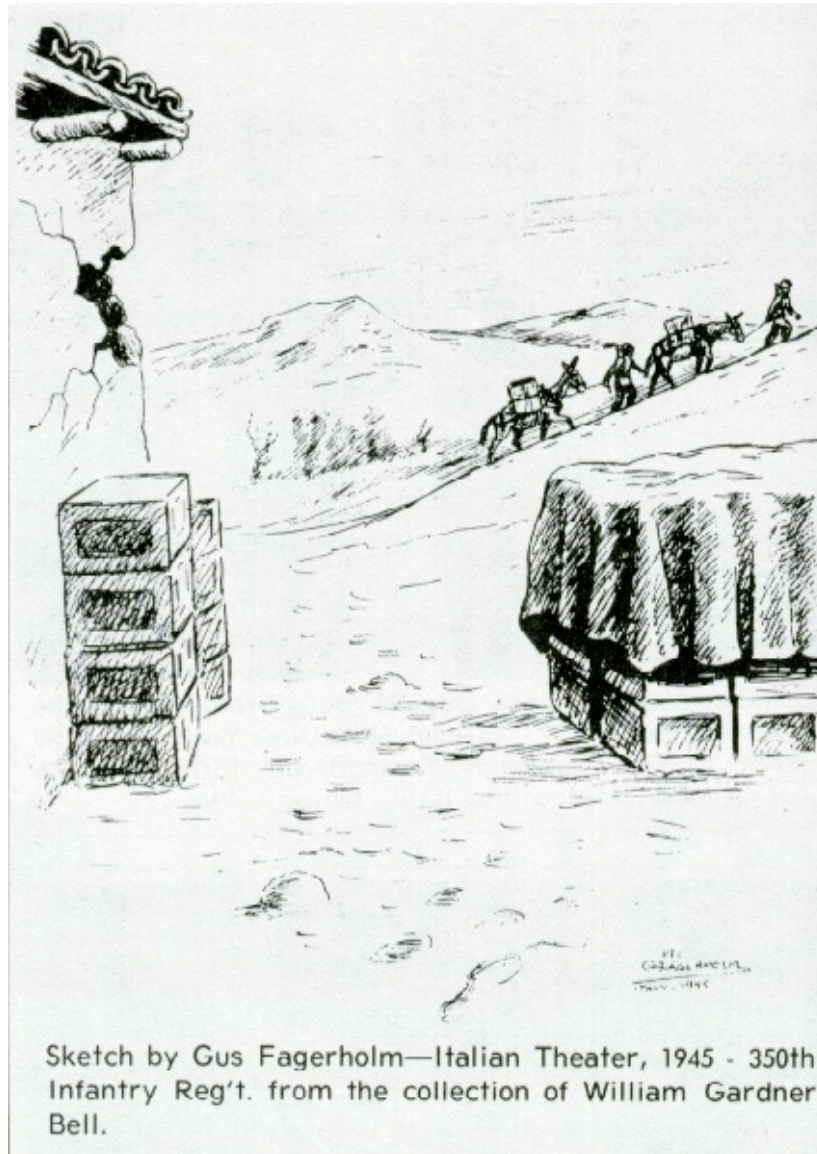
### September 22<sup>nd</sup>

Moved forward and established CP NE of Tarrabba. Mule train arrived. Had run into an artillery barrage at a few miles. Love Company cleared area in front of CP. Two enemy snipers cleared. Did not cover much ground this day. Only a couple thousand yards. Morale fair.

### September 23<sup>rd</sup>



3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion moved out in an eastward direction. Many Jerry vehicles sighted but were out of artillery range. Mule train was cornered by a mortar barrage. One Italian mule skinner killed, one Love Company man wounded in action [WIA] and four mules killed. Ran into heavy enemy machine gun, small arms, artillery and mortar fire. 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was pinned down until dark. CP established in house on Mt. Bellasandro. Forward units capture Mt. Della Croce. Surrounded on three sides by Jerry snipers. Cannot move without drawing fire. No rations for two days.



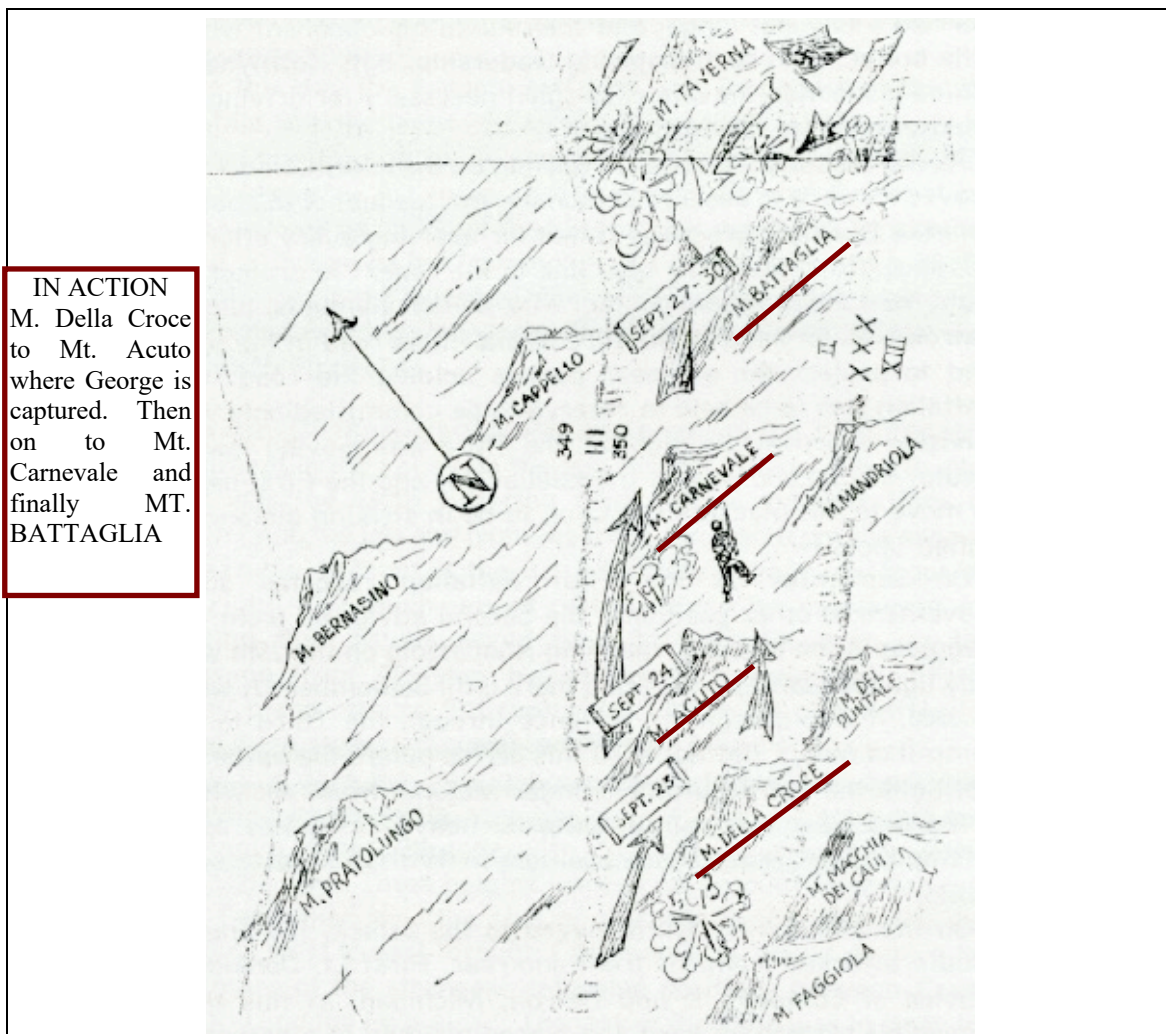
### September 24<sup>th</sup>

Still in same position. Heavy machine gun, mortar and artillery fire landed on 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion positions all day. Started to move forward about midnight toward Mt. Acuto. Reached top of the ridge north of the CP and ran into gale winds, strong enough to blow off soldiers' helmets. You cannot see an arm's length in front of you because of the dust and sand being blown about by the wind. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion is completely disorganized. The Companies are mixed together and there is a frantic effort to reorganize before daylight.

SEPTEMBER 25<sup>TH</sup>

At dawn it was discovered that the point of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion column with Lt. DARBY had been captured by the Germans along with the Company Medic, BOB LANGMEIER, and four others. The enemy launched a strong counterattack on the front and rear of the column, which threatened the whole 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion. Love Company Commander Capt. NED MAHER was severely wounded. The Company was disorganized and suffered heavy casualties. Capt. CUSSANS assumed command. An assault was launched that not only beat off the German counterattack but won control of Mt. Acuto, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion's next objective. The CP was moved to that position. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion suffered many casualties, including Lt. MILLSPAUGH, who was killed in action [KIA]. This also was the day that orders were received to take MT. BATTAGLIA as soon as possible. These were orders which started a week of battle which is practically beyond description.

George wrote a letter to his wife, Kathryn, telling her that he had been captured and subsequently escaped, but gave no details. *Bob Langmeier, who was captured along with my brother, has written a detailed account of their capture and subsequent escape. That write up served as the basis for Bob being awarded the Prisoner of War Medal. A copy of Bob's document follows.*



## **PRISONER OF WAR MEDAL**

### **BOB LANGMEIER'S ACCOUNT OF HIS AND LT. GEORGE DARBY'S CAPTURE BY THE GERMANS AND THEIR SUBSEQUENT ESCAPE.**

I remember the night before and early morning of September 25th. There was high wind and dust or sand blowing so much noise that you could not hear the person in front of you. The company actually walked past Germans that were dug in who latter on surrendered to a follow up group, they could not see or hear us because of the weather.

We entered a clearing with some trees and high ground about 500 or so feet in front of us that's when all hell broke loose. The first person I remember being hit was Choy he was shot in the shoulder. I patched him up when some one around me yelled that the Captain had been hit , and that he was out in front of everyone.

I managed to run to the side of Captain Maher. When I checked Him out he had a small wound in his front but a lot of blood was gushing from his back. I cut his shirt open after I rolled him over and proceeded to take care of the wound. While I was working on the Captain ,Russ Dallissio came over and saw I was working on him. He left when one of his section was hit. I then became aware of Germans all around me ,I told Captain to play dead that they probably would not touch him.(They didn't).They stuck a bayonet in my back and told me to march. There was very little action during this time.

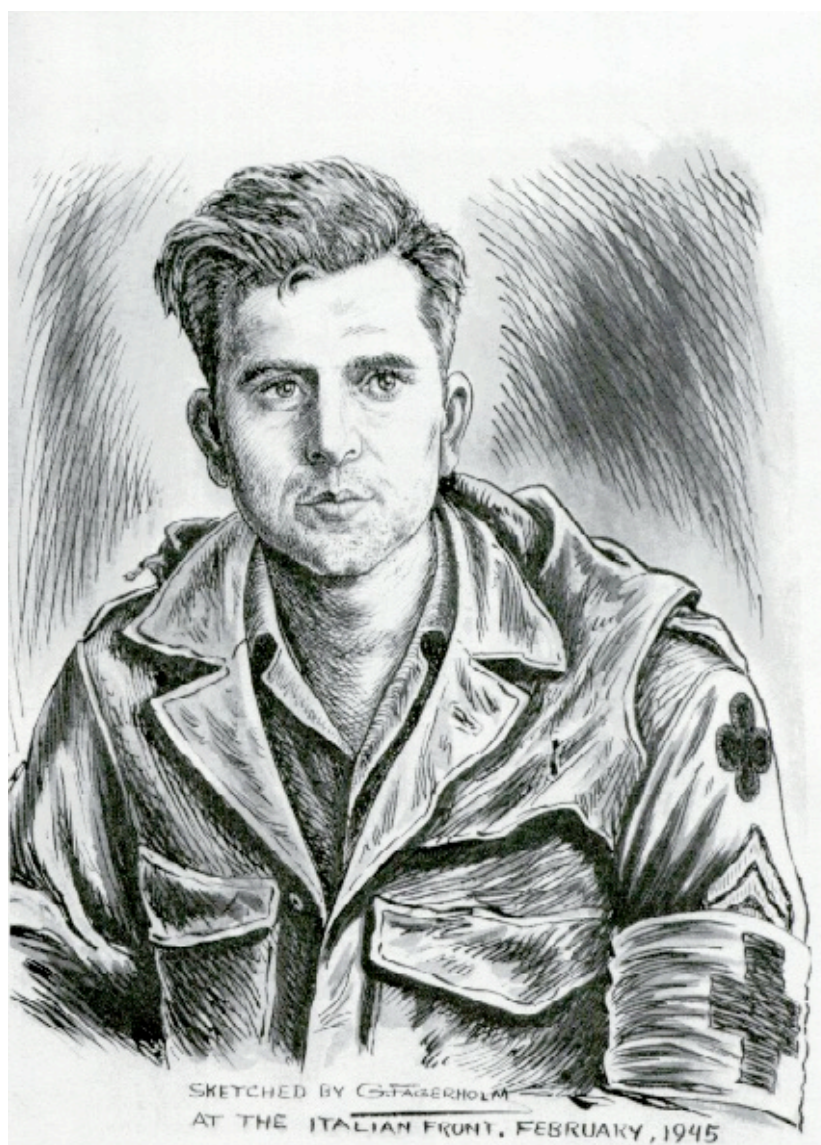
I was taken prisoner along with Lt.Darby and four other men. We were taken to a farm house just outside Castel del Rio, I found out this location later on. We were interrogated by a German Captain who bragged that he original came from New Jersey.

After some discussion I was ordered to treat some of the German wounded ,their Medic had a wound in his arm and was having trouble using it. I redressed his wound and a few others and convinced the Captain to let me retrieve the German wounded and American wounded and evacuated them to the farm house.

When I returned to the farm house I talked to Lt.Darby we decided on trying to escape if we could. About that time there was alot of incoming Mortar and Artillery shells landing all around the farm house , we decided with all the confusion to try to make a run for it. Lt.Darby went one way with some men I split the other direction.

I guess I kept moving East(I think) to find our lines. I kept running and then hiding for periods of time I lost track of time but I spent a least one night or two trying to find friendly people. I finally found my self in the rear of 350th Reg.Hq. How I got there I don't recall. I received some coffee and some food and was questioned very briefly by a Lieutenant. After this I was put in an ambulance going forward to 3rd . Battalion. I then rejoined "L" company. I stayed there for about two days .I then was ordered back to Reg. Medics.It was after this that the companies moved on to Mt.Battaglia. I helped with the removal of wounded to the 3rd.Battalion aid station.





Sergeant Owen L. Sanderlin.

A typical 88th Division Medical Corps soldier, who repeatedly risked his life to aid the wounded on the battlefield.

## SEPTEMBER 26<sup>TH</sup>

Daylight on Mt. Acuto showed that many German bodies were sprawled in front of Item Company foxholes, the results of the previous night's counterattacks. Mule trains arrived with ammo just as supplies were being exhausted. *Lt. DARBY returned to the CP after escaping from the Germans. Lt. CARPENTER, Item Company Commander, killed by a sniper bullet.* A few replacements arrive but many more are needed, including officers. Word is received that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion is to pass through tonight and take up forward positions. At the end of the day they were prepared to move on Mt. Carnevale. *At this point we have no evidence of George's activities except his return to the CP. It can be reasonably assumed that he was debriefed upon his return to the CP or at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion headquarters and then returned to his Platoon. We do know that, as a result of his capture by the Germans and his escape from them, Army policy was that he no longer had to go into battle. If he had been recaptured by the Germans and identified as an escapee, he would have been shot. RALPH GRIPPO, George's Platoon Sergeant, told me that my brother turned down the opportunity to return to the rear. George said that, since the Company Commander, Ned Maher had been severely wounded and most of the remaining Love Company officers wounded or killed, George needed to return to his platoon. To quote a letter I received recently from Capt. NED MAHER, Love Company Commander, "George had the right not to return to combat after being captured. However he declined this right in an exhibition of great courage and returned to his platoon".*

## September 27<sup>th</sup>

2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion passes through and we follow them. As we pass through positions that had been the scene of the previous night's counterattacks on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion on Mt. Carnevale, there were numerous German bodies and equipment scattered about, giving evidence of the terrific struggle. CP established vicinity of Val Maffione. Rations arrive.

## September 28<sup>th</sup>

Advance a short distance, then return to former positions. It is raining and the trails are a quagmire of mud. The mission is to keep Germans from infiltrating through the lines. A Platoon of Love Company has been furnished to secure the rear. Heavy German artillery fire landing just forward of Battalion CP. Twenty two much needed replacements arrive and are sent to the companies needing them. **Casualties are very heavy.** Regimental Aid Station moving forward to be with the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion moves on **MT. BATTAGLIA**.

## September 29<sup>th</sup>

Still raining hard. 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion moves out. Part of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion has just crossed over ridge in front of Item Company's old position when ***we are caught on the trail under a terrific mortar and artillery barrage, inflicting quite a few casualties.*** They withdrew to obtain the protection of the reverse slope of the hill. They then proceeded in small groups down the trail and through the draw to a house in the valley. The entire route was under sniper and mortar fire and was tough going. The CP was established in this house, south of **MT. BATTAGLIA**. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions move in so that all three Battalions are in support to gain and hold **MT. BATTAGLIA**. Heavy mortar and artillery fire received about 1630, three direct hits on CP but no casualties. Guides sent back to bring up aid station which was left behind to treat casualties suffered in this morning's barrage. Ration train arrives after darkness. **Major WITTER** inspected positions of the troops around the castle at the top of **MT. BATTAGLIA**, speaking words of encouragement to them and also seeing that a sufficient supply of ammunition was on hand for any eventuality. **BATTAGLIA** in Italian means "Battle".





Castle atop Mt. Battaglia.

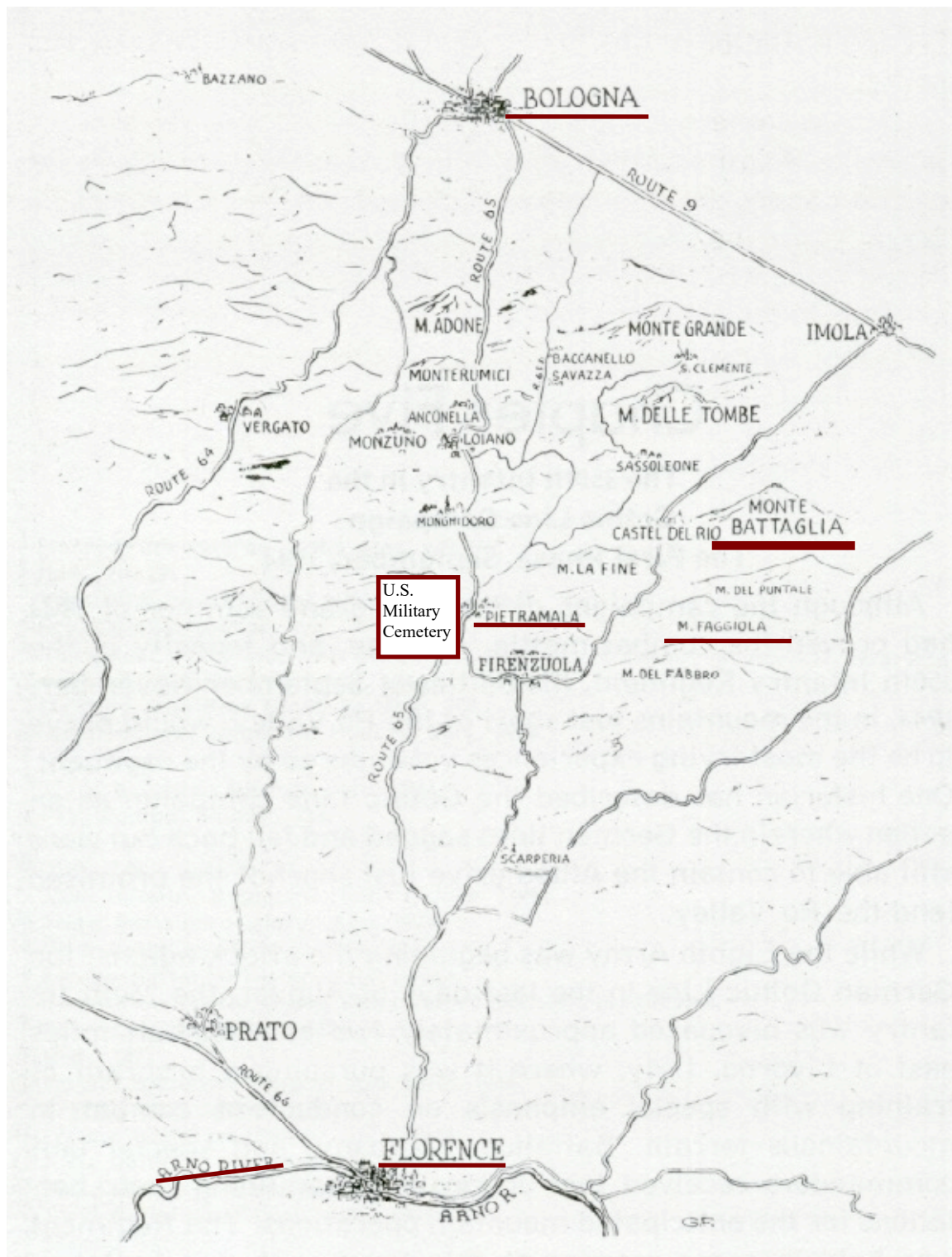
## SEPTEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup>

CP is still in same place south of the Castle on top of **MT. BATTAGLIA**. Fierce German counterattacks launched to regain control of **MT. BATTAGLIA**. Beaten off with hand grenades, bare hands, rocks and fierce machine gun fire. After the Germans had recaptured the castle, **Capt. CUSSANS** rallied the men forward through murderous enemy machine gun, mortar and artillery fire to retake the castle and defend it. He stayed with the men, replenished their ammo and prepared them for additional counterattacks. The **1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions** suffered high casualties as did the enemy. It continues to rain and the foxholes are full of water and mud. There has been very little artillery support. *The only officer left in Love Company, Lt. HEBEL, was wounded in action. Sgt. RALPH GRIPPO has now taken over command of Love Company. Aid men and Litter Bearers are doing a good job of treating the wounded and evacuating them to the rear by foot on steep treacherous trails. Motorized transportation for the wounded is up to ten miles behind the lines. Lt. SMITH is transferred from Mike Company to Love Company and made Company Commander.*

Until I embarked on this project we had always believed that George had been killed in action by German artillery fire on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. And to me, KIA meant instantly. But as you can interpret from the previous paragraph, George was no longer with Love Company at some point on September 30<sup>th</sup>. In posing this possible conflict of information to Bob Langmeier, the medic who was captured with George, Bob suggested that my brother might have been wounded sometime between September 26<sup>th</sup>, when he escaped from the Germans and returned to his Platoon, and September 30<sup>th</sup>, when there were no remaining Love Company Officers. He then would have died of his wounds on or before October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Tragically, that is exactly what happened. In doing my research I have received several hundred pages of documents from various Government Agencies. The last packet of papers came from the U. S. Total Army Personnel Command in Alexandria, VA and it included the "Report of Burial" for 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. George B. Darby, 3<sup>rd</sup>. In that report the place of death was listed as "Vicinity of Mt. Battaglia, Italy". The estimated date of death was the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1944 and the cause of death was "KIA-Sustained Fatal Wounds, Trauma from Amputation of the Left Leg". My correspondence with Albert H. Meinke, Jr. MD, a frontline Surgeon with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division at the time of George's death, indicates that he probably lost his leg from an artillery shell and that it was not surgically amputated. He died in the field or during evacuation because, statistically, only between 1 & 2% of the wounded who reached a hospital did not survive. He was temporarily buried on 10 November 1944 in the U. S. Military Cemetery, Plot F, Row 19, Grave 799, Mt. Beni, Pietramala, Italy. A "Report of Death" states "The individual named in the report of Death is held by the War Department to have been missing in action status from 3 October 1944 until such absence was terminated on 19 November 1944, when evidence considered sufficient to establish the fact of death was received by the Secretary of War."

Obviously the situation was confusing during that period. The 350<sup>th</sup> Regiment was in the midst of the fiercest battle of the Italian Campaign. Many of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion officers were killed or wounded, Love Company was decimated and units were down to less than half of their strength. Within a short period of time George's wife, Kathryn had received his letter about his capture and escape, a telegram stating that he was missing in action and another telegram indicating he was killed in action. My discussions with several survivors of Love Company emphasize the total confusion that existed during that period. The living were attempting to survive and there was no time to account for the dead.

From all of this confusion I believe we can still draw some firm conclusions. My brother was mortally wounded by German artillery fire near Mt. Battaglia on September 29<sup>th</sup> or the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup> before Ralph Grippo took command of Love Company. He died in the field from his wounds sometime between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of October but more likely on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Probably he was heavily sedated with morphine and being cared for by a medic, but because of the severity of the battle, evacuation to a field hospital was impossible. BUT THE STORY IS NOT COMPLETE WITHOUT FINISHING THE BATTLE OF MT. BATTAGLIA.



### October 1<sup>st</sup>

After September 30th the defense of **BATTAGLIA** became easier as the 351<sup>st</sup> Regiment pulled up even on the left flank and the British Units finally arrived on the right. The Germans could no longer attack the flanks. October 1<sup>st</sup> was the fifth consecutive day for the 350<sup>th</sup> Regiment on **BATTAGLIA**. As the fog hid the shattered castle from view, the Germans counterattacked again. Following the usual artillery barrage and flame throwers, they were again repulsed by accurate rifle fire and grenades. The Companies are still in their same defensive positions. Received heavy artillery fire until allied planes bombed and strafed enemy positions. The regiment is expecting to be relieved by the British. **Sgt. RALPH GRIPPO** *again takes command of Love Company when Lt. SMITH became a casualty*. British officers visited CP at 1500 to recon position. Ration train came up at 2400.

### October 2<sup>nd</sup>

Companies still in defensive positions. Weather is again foggy and raining, obscuring enemy movements. The enemy can come within a few yards of the crest without being detected. Weapons are almost impossible to use because of the mud. Hand grenades and artillery used to repulsing the Germans. Item and King Companies are relieved and move back near Regimental Headquarters under cover of darkness. Advance party of British arrive at CP. **Sgt. LEE BEDDOW** of Love Company and his squad fought off a fierce German counterattack that was attempting to regain the castle on the peak of **MT. BATTAGLIO**. **BEDDOW** observed the Germans entering the castle which housed the CP. Ignoring artillery and mortar fire he engaged the krauts at close range, killing every German who had entered the castle. He held his position until he was seriously wounded and blinded by mortar fire.

### October 3<sup>rd</sup>

Love Company still waiting to be relieved by the British. At 1630 the Germans launch a heavy counterattack. Repulsed by heavy artillery fire. Evacuation of the wounded begun. All aid and litter men summoned to evacuate them as soon as possible. It was difficult getting the litter cases to the Regimental Aid Station. Trails were narrow and deep with mud.

### October 4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>

Love Company relieved and moved back to temporary bivouac in area vicinity of Moredeccio. Showers, new clothes, combat boots, sleep, beer, Red Cross doughnuts and coffee, church services, candy rations, sun.

### October 9<sup>th</sup> 1994 - May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945

Love Company and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion moved up to the front, relieving the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 149<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. And they continued to move North, slowly, through many more fierce mountain battles. It wasn't until April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1945, almost seven months after the capture of **MT. BATTAGLIA**, that the troops marched out of the last hills overlooking Bologna, and saw the green stretches of the Po Valley in the distance. If you look back on page 18 you will see the relatively short distance between **MT. BATTAGLIA** and Bologna, as the crow flies. Now, in your mind picture seven months of intense mountain fighting and more staggering casualties to reach this objective. On April 24<sup>th</sup> they began crossing the Po River and the Germans were surrendering by the hundreds and thousands. They passed through Verona, Vicenza and reached Arsie on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, the day the War ended in Italy.

## EPILOGUE

The 350<sup>th</sup> Mountain Regiment was part of the 88<sup>th</sup> Division. They endured 344 days of combat in the Italian Campaign. A modern Infantry Division is comprised of approximately 14,000 men, a Regiment, 3,000 men, a Battalion, 850 men, a Company, 180 men and a Platoon, 40 men. In Italy the 88<sup>th</sup> Division suffered in excess of 15,000 men killed or wounded in action. *Between September 21<sup>st</sup> and October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1944, a thirteen-day period, which essentially was the battle leading up to the capture of MT. BATTAGLIA, the Division as a whole had suffered 2,105 battle casualties. In that same thirteen-day period, the 350<sup>th</sup> Regiment suffered 1,420 battle casualties, almost fifty percent of its strength.*

*George Darby prepared for this with five years of ROTC training to become an infantry officer, a year of advanced infantry officer training in the United States and almost two months of further on-site mountain training in Italy. He was in battle for ten days, during which he was captured, escaped, refused to leave his platoon, was mortally wounded and died. There is extraordinary heroism in time of War, but there can be no glory - only sadness and tragedy.*

My wife, Lois, and I had the honor to join Love Company alumni Ned Maher, Jim Teritto, Ralph Grippo, Don Werley and Russ Dalessio for lunch in West Point in July of 1997, almost 53 years after the battle of MT. BATTAGLIO. It was an extraordinary experience. Of course it made me feel good to hear the nice things they said about my brother. But the bonding of these Love Company survivors, having fought together 43 years ago, and the love they extend to each other, and to me, as a proxy for George, is beyond comprehension. Without their help and their continuing outreach to me, plus the assistance from Bob Langmeier, I could not have completed this project.





**In back, left to right: Russ Dalessio, Don Werley, Jim Territo, Ralph Grippo  
Front: Ned Maher and Clement Darby July 1997**



IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF

Second Lieutenant George B. Barby, 111, A.S.No. D-520122,

WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY ~~AT~~

in the Mediterranean Area, October 3, 1944.

HE STANDS IN THE UNBROKEN LINE OF PATRIOTS WHO HAVE DARED TO DIE

THAT FREEDOM MIGHT LIVE, AND GROW, AND INCREASE ITS BLESSINGS.

FREEDOM LIVES, AND THROUGH IT, HE LIVES—

IN A WAY THAT HUMBLER THE UNDERTAKINGS OF MOST MEN

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA