

AN INFANTRY CHAPLAIN'S DIARY

1943 - 1946

Chaplain John James Watson
Major, United States Army
91st Infantry Division

Edited By: Robert L. Watson

(C) 1993

27 October 1944
Mt. Beni U.S. Military Cemetary
Pietramala, Italy

" ... On the hillside where the trucks of dead are unloaded, they had laid down branches of trees to keep them out of the mud. The ground was bloody and the pools of water were red with human blood. I had never thought that the time would ever come when I should literally wade through human blood, but that is what I found myself doing today."



Chaplain John James Watson
Savannah, Georgia
1941

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FOREWORD

My grandmother, Rosa Belle (Lowrie) Watson, was a woman of considerable fortitude and determination. If it were not so, there would be considerably fewer of us Watson's around and, quite likely, there would be no reason to write this book. Following her marriage to Samuel Joseph Watson in 1910, and despite concerns for the effect childbearing might have on her health, she bore seven sons. These Watson brothers were named, in order of their appearance: John James (1911), Virgil Dexter (1913), Stuart Lansing (1915), Herbert Hoover (1918), Clifford Joseph (1921), Austin Ray (1924), and Thomas Freeman (1927).

John Watson, my father, was a freshman at Berea College (Kentucky) when Samuel died suddenly in 1930, leaving mother and boys with the prospect of making whatever living they could from a rock-strewn patch of farm land in East Tennessee. These were Depression years and times were hard for most everyone. Somehow, Belle Watson carried on. The Watson brothers carried on; and each, in a different way, became a credit to his heritage.

To begin the diary which is the basis of this book, requires a little more background concerning the author, John Watson. Following his father's death, he completed his undergraduate years at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tennessee. There he met a young woman, Ruth Perrin, with whom he fell in love and later married. His interest in becoming a minister took him to Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, from which he graduated in 1937. He was ordained a minister at Greensboro Baptist Church, Greensboro, Maryland on July 6, 1937.

Too soon, the prospect of a war in which the very survival of this country was at stake, a war which would affect every member of the Watson clan, led to a decision undoubtedly difficult for a minister of the gospel to make. Early in 1941, John left the pastorate of another Baptist church near Baltimore to enter the United States Army. He was commissioned a First Lieutenant, Chaplain, on February 15, some 10 months before the Japanese chose to ensure our entry into World War II with their "Day of Infamy" at Pearl Harbor. His early assignments included a posting at Fort Screven, Georgia. It was not until the middle of 1942 that he joined the newly reactivated 91st Infantry Division which was just beginning its training in Oregon.

Measured in terms of the experiences of countless other GI's, this book is not an accounting of uncommon courage, sacrifice or hardship. Army chaplains were not on the front

lines. But as I first read the diary after my father's death in 1966, I began to appreciate the profound effect that just observing war first hand could have on the human spirit. Ministering to the good people of Alameda Baptist Church was one thing. Ministering to men who feared for their lives, counseling those who risked charges of desertion by leaving their units on the front lines when they could take no more combat, and helping to bury those for which the ultimate sacrifice became a reality were experiences of quite a different sort. I have little doubt that the person reflected in the early pages of this diary was fundamentally different from the person whom I later knew as my father. War, it seems, has a way of doing that.

Now that a half-century has passed since this diary was written, it is time to share it, and the insights it may reveal, with others.

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Interspersed among the diary entries, I have taken the liberty to provide annotation from time to time. Usually, the intent was to provide some historical or family perspective that might not be known or readily apparent to the reader. In some cases there are fairly long gaps in the entries and the course of events during these needed some explanation. In each case, my notes are enclosed in the brackets which surround this paragraph.
[-----]

INTRODUCTION: The 91st Infantry

I remember seeing my father's old khaki uniform shirts with the green fir tree emblems hanging in the closet. The 91st Infantry Division had a Western U.S. heritage symbolized by the fir tree and by its nickname, the Powder River Division. (The Powder River is located in Montana.)

The 91st Infantry lacked the continuity of existence and the resulting reputation of an 82nd Airborne or a Big Red 1. It apparently existed for the sole purpose of fighting world wars. According to the book The 91st Infantry Division In World War II [Robbins], it was first activated for service in World War I at Camp Lewis, Washington, in 1917, and was deployed to France in July of 1918. After serving, reportedly with distinction, the division was demobilized at the conclusion of the war.

Robbins relates that: "The 91st Infantry Division was reactivated in World War II at Camp White, Oregon, on 15 August 1942." Officers drawn from various Army units and an enlisted cadre from the 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Bliss, Texas, began training and preparations for full staffing of the division. In September of that year they underwent an infamous "91-mile march" through the Cascade Mountains which surround Camp White. The march was said to have been accomplished with full field equipment in just twenty eight and three-quarters hours of actual marching time [Robbins, p.7]. Depending upon who is telling the story, it was undertaken either to instruct the cadre in marches and bivouacs and to test the physical condition of the officers and enlisted men, or it was done to satisfy the ego and enhance the image of the commanding officer. Or both.

Chaplain John James Watson (Captain), United States Army, reported to Camp White on July 14, 1942, and was assigned as the Chaplain of the 361st Regiment. Lieutenants Dean T. Stevenson and Dennis J. Doran were the Assistant Regimental Chaplains at that time. A certificate of membership in the 91st Infantry Division 91 Mile Club attests to Chaplain Watson's participation in the "91-mile march" phase of the division's preparation.

An initial group of 12,000 recruits arrived at Camp White in October and November. They were first given basic training, followed by training in platoon and company formations from February to May of 1943. My father's diary begins in that Oregonian setting in the Spring of 1943.

WD Training Ctr. No. 15, 16 Feb 43,
provides that:

1. Diaries will be sent to the Base Censor, where they will be stored.
2. Before being dispatched, diaries will be enclosed in sealed covers marked as follows: Private diary of JOHN J. WATSON, O-405248, Chaplain (Major)USA, Hdq 91st Inf Div. Upon release to be mailed to:

Mrs. John J. Watson
331 E. Main St.
Morristown, Tennessee

OREGON - 1943

March 16, 1943

This morning until noon was my half day off. Found at the stationery store this note book which I decided to buy for a diary. Cost \$4.75, plus \$2. extra for paper. Hope it will not just be more money "Gone With the Wind". Bought also in Medford a small carbide miner's lamp and a jar of carbide. Expect to use it in the field-- perhaps will be able to do some reading and writing at night.

Anthony Eden is visiting in Washington today-- has had discussions with Secretary Hull, Secretary of State. Says it will be a long war, according to radio commentator Raymond Gram Swing.

The Colonel was mad again tonight! He went into the Chapel and "ate up" Cpl. Tomchek for our not having planted two shrubs-- spruce-- which we found during the day, like foundling babies on our doorstep, laying in front of our Chapel. After supper we got them into the ground and watered them. Hope they are in the proper spot-- and that they live! But we are not optimistic.

An officer cadre left the regiment today for Ft. Benning and a new Division. About thirty in all and some of the best men of our officer personnel-- certainly, they were the most human and most popular group that could have been picked from the regiment. But most of them, at one time or another, had had difficulties with the Colonel, and despite all protestations to the contrary, it is common knowledge that he put on the cadre list those officers he had a personal dislike toward or with whom he had had difficulty. This Colonel dotes on "boot-lickers" and officers who jump when he yells, regardless. Major Charles H. Reed, Major R.D. Mackay, Major Paul D. Harter, Captain Lewis M. Bottorff, Captain Karl S. Landstrom, were among those leaving. Chaplain Dennis J. Doran left today on leave for San Francisco, thence to Seattle, Washington staging area and eventually somewhere overseas. Thus is broken up our original triumvirate of Chaplains in the re-activated 361st Infantry. Our association in the chaplaincy in this regiment has been amiable. Best wishes and prayers follow him.

March 17, 1943

Rumor has it that the big offensive in Tunisia has begun today.

Ruth began teaching at Gold Hill High School, Gold Hill, Oregon, Monday of this week, March 15th. She is teaching English Literature, Government, and Economics.

Started reading D.R. Sharpe's biography of Walter Rauschenbusch, one of the great leaders in our country in the cause of social Christianity. His biography and his writings seem particularly important and interesting at this time when there is so much talk of the kind of world we want to live in and the reconstruction of the post-war world. Rauschenbusch died during the dark days of 1918, before the close of World War I.

[-----]
The 91st was destined to again serve in Europe during World War II, after staging through North Africa. At some point the men must have known of this decision, but it is possible that the reference to the progress of the war in Tunisia above was purely coincidental.

While the 91st was undergoing training in Oregon, General Dwight Eisenhower was leading "Operation Torch", a joint British/U.S. offensive against Axis-held French Morocco and Algeria. According to one account: "The landings were made on the Atlantic coast of French Morocco and at Oran and Algiers in Algeria on November 8, 1942. The next day the Germans occupied Tunisia, to the east of Algeria and just a short jump across the Mediterranean from Sicily. Dislodging them was to be a long, difficult process. But, as the Allies moved eastward (albeit slowly) through the winter mud, and as the British under General Bernard Montgomery pursued the German Afrika Korps westward through the Libyan desert after defeating it at El Alamein, the Germans and the Italians would be caught in a giant pincer movement - the largest of its kind ever and the beginning of the end for the Axis in North Africa." [Nichols, p. 57] In May of 1943 the Axis forces in North Africa surrendered. We will hear more of North Africa directly. For the moment, our attention is directed toward a conflict of another kind.

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March 18, 1943

Have just re-read this morning the courageous and enheartening article "Baptists, Democracy, and the Race Question", by Prof. Edward A. McDowell, in The Commission for March, 1943. This paragraph from the article brings back memories of an incident which happened during our travel home from Baltimore on our vacation in 1940:

"Negroes have made great progress in almost every field of endeavor and Southern white people have contributed much to their progress, but they are still the victims of prejudice and discrimination in almost all

areas of life. Lynchings have greatly decreased, but they still occur. Negroes are still the victims of injustice in the courts and brutality on the part of police officers. They are uniformly discriminated against in the distribution of public school funds. Thousands of Negro families are forced to live in crude cabins that are hardly fit for human habitation. Negro soldiers, clothed in the uniform of the United States, the greatest democratic nation, and committed to the giving of their life's blood for the defense of their country and the preservation of democracy, have been subjected in many instances to Nazi-like insults and abuse at the hands of their fellow-countrymen."

The incident which the reading of this paragraph brings to mind is as follows:

Ruth and I were traveling from Baltimore, Maryland, where I was pastor of the Alameda Baptist Church, to East Tennessee to visit our families during vacation, August, 1940. We were traveling by Greyhound bus. When we got on the bus at the station in Baltimore we noticed a well-dressed and evidently refined young colored woman seated near the center of the bus. She too was traveling south-- from one of our large eastern cities. At Washington we changed buses. The colored girl was careful to take the same relative seat on the bus to which we transferred. As I recall, nothing was said to her until at least the first stop south of Washington. As we proceeded, the bus became loaded to capacity and seats were at a premium. We noticed that the driver spoke to her a time or two in low tones. He told her she would have to move to the rear. She refused. She said she had bought her ticket at the same price the rest of the passengers had paid and that she had been assigned that seat at the point of origin by the Greyhound Company. She felt that she had a right to keep it. No amount of ordering or cajoling by the driver could move her. When we arrived in Harrisonburg, Virginia, the driver left the bus and disappeared. Within a few moments he returned with a policeman. The policeman stalked in and asked her "What is the trouble?" Of course, he knew the story beforehand. Without doubt this was not his first experience with Jim Crowism. "You will either move back or come with me", he said in a firm voice. She came with him. A young man-- a white young man-- seated near the front offered the colored girl his seat and asked permission of the officer for her to take it and let him go to the rear. Of course, the answer was "No." I have wished many times since that I knew the name of that young man. He was courageous. He represents the spirit of the youth on the New South. He

must have been a Christian for he acted as you would expect one to act.

But the colored girl followed the officer and a hush fell over the group on the bus. We all looked and felt guilty. We knew a gross wrong had been done.

Incidents like these are the cause of my nausea when I hear some of our super patriots inveigh against the Nazis and their treatment of the Jewish people. Then I remember that Jesus had something to say about all this .. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye" .. "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." (Matt. 7: 3, 5)

March 19, 1943

Ruth came out to camp after me after school and we had supper at the Officer's Mess. After supper we drove through Sam's Valley to Gold Hill for the Annual Spring Concert of the H.S. Band. A very excellent program for a small town high school. Wish all our high schools had as good band equipment and put as much stress on music - and had a director as enthusiastic and capable as Mr. Whipple, the leader. Before the Concert, at 8:00 p.m., we drove out to the spot a few miles beyond, where I had bivouaced on a Thursday night in September on the 91st Division 91 mile march, September, 1942.

March 20, 1943

Saturday - this afternoon I went out on a problem with Capt. Steve Adkins, Executive officer of 2nd Bn. The problem was one in attack and counterattack by a weapons platoon. Included firing of 60 mm mortars and machine guns. During the critique the Colonel came up and carried on for some time about the problem - the care of weapons - relationship of various infantry units and their support to each other, etc.

March 21, 1943

Sunday - Preached at the 0845 service. Sponsored by the Separate Units Bn. 158 present. Chaplain Dean T. Stevenson conducted the service.

Visited the Station Hospital this afternoon: Sgt. Pearson, who has had pneumonia, seemed improved. Lt. Fred Booth, who broke his back while trying to make a record on the new Division Blitz Course, appeared to be doing well. Whole torso in cast. Looks as if he is

"laid up" for some time. Rose Mary, his wife, was with him.

To return to the morning worship service, I preached on the subject, "Voices of God" - scripture lesson I Samuel 3:14 - the story of God's call to the youthful Samuel. The conclusion was the most significant part of the message - as no doubt it should be in all sermons. We asked the question: How does God speak to men today? These answers were given: (1) through His Word, (2) through His ministers, (3) through His Providences, (4) through His Holy Spirit. It was suggested that the area of the sub-conscious may be the area of activity and influence by the Spirit of God.

March 22, 1943

Attended Division Chaplains' Conference. Chaplain Borell reviewed the book "Which Way Ahead?" by Bowie - the presiding Bishop's book for the year.

In the afternoon we moved to the field - in the Beagle area - and set up at the Regimental CP. Took full field equipment, including a number of books for Lenten reading. Although our church does not follow very closely the church calendar or make much of special seasons, we must try to minister as best we can to all groups of the command.

March 23, 1943

With Cpl. Chilton and Cpl. Miller, Service Co., climbed Upper Table Rock, a peculiar formation famous in Oregon history. Took us an hour and five minutes to reach the crest; about an hour to walk around the rim. From all indications this formation, together with Lower Table Rock to the South, was leveled off by glaciers ages ago. You can hardly set your foot down on top, which is comparatively level, without walking on good-sized stones.

March 24, 1943

Did some work on a paper entitled "An Armed Peace", which I hope to get published. In the evening, assisted Chaplain Stevenson in a brief open-air vesper service near 2nd Bn. CP.

March 25, 1943

Returned to camp with Capt. Pickle of the Med. Detachment. Felt good to get a hot shower and clean clothes. Have been reading a biography of Walter Rauschenbusch, by D.R. Sharpe, also Personal Religion by Macintosh.

Had a letter from mamma in which was enclosed the announcement of the birth, on March 20, of an eight pound son to Virgil and Ennis. Name - Walter Hugh Watson. Came near having Virgil's birthday - March 25th.

Had a surprise call from Chaplain Woodward, whom I had met and bunked near at Chaplain's School, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. He is now attached to the 19th Field Hospital Center here.

April 7, 1943

My birthday! Thirty-two today, but it does not seem I could be that old. Yet much as been crowded into these years.

Had a Division Chaplains' Conference at 1:30 p.m. today with Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Shirley Donnelly, IV Corps Chaplain, and his assistant, Chaplain Ford. Chaplain Donnelly is a Baptist, and impressed me as being a good executive and strong leader. Chaplain Ford is a Catholic. We were told, among other things, to get set for a long war - that we could count ourselves fortunate if we got back home by 1950.

Ruth came out after school and we had supper at Hdq. Co. mess. At 6:30 p.m. we had a private conference with Chaplain Donnelly at the Division Chaplain's office. He was interviewing all Chaplains of the IV Corps who were stationed here. The interview related mostly to the personal background and problems incidental to my work. Chaplain Jaeger had Ruth come in and meet him. He gave us some advice about our personal affairs and the necessity of setting the house in order. Said I would be here for some time yet.

After the conference, Ruth and I went home. She had an attractive birthday greeting for me, and some presents - a metal polishing set, a tie, and some handkerchiefs, etc. She is very thoughtful about such occasions and takes great delight in giving presents.

A year ago today I got my promotion to Captain. We were living then at the cottage, owned by the Schuenneman's at 703 2nd Ave., Savannah Beach, Georgia. Had Major Brown and Capt. Tippins over to dinner in the evening, in honor of the occasion. Took a ride in Major Brown's car after dinner.

April 8, 1943

Worked some today on a funeral service and wedding ceremony for my field notebook. Expected Chaplain

Donnelly to visit the Chapel, but he didn't come - evidently didn't have time to get to us - or was he confident that we were doing satisfactory work and didn't need inspection! I wonder!

April 11, 1943

Services sponsored by 3rd Bn. Attendance rather poor with 107 at General Protestant Worship Service. Cpl. Banks Chilton sang, "There Is a Green Hill Far Away" for the special musical number. Ruth and Doris Stevenson came out for the service, then Ruth and I drove to Central Point where I was supposed to pulpit at 11:00 o'clock. We remained for dinner at the church and a short fellowship service afterward in honor of new members who had recently been received into the church - the Church of Christ, by the way. After vespers in the evening at the Chapel - 1830 - we drove to Central Point again for the evening service.

April 12, 1943

Visited 1st Bn. training areas this afternoon with Major Blanchard, S-3 of the regiment. The training program consisted of four phases or courses, as follows: (1) obstacle course, with simulated landing from a boat, rather from a ship into boats; (2) a combat village - to be stormed and taken. All buildings labled in German; (3) machine gun fire over the heads of men as they advance to a trench, then charge with bayonets; (4) close combat practice as men advance and fire at surprise targets controlled from a tall tree. The entire setup seemed to be well-concelved and calculated to give some realistic training.

Tonight we signed signature cards for a joint bank account at the First National Bank, Jefferson City, Tennessee. Wrote a check for one hundred dollars as the initial deposit.

June 20, 1943

Division maneuvers began today, "D" series. Breakfast at 0300; left camp at 0400. Arrived at rear echelon CP about 0800. As required by SOP of the Division, the first thing on the program was camouflage-- training for the time when our fellowmen may swoop down upon us as hawks upon their prey (only not to satisfy hunger, but merely to destroy us). Next we dug slit trenches-- we must burrow into the ground like rats. We must be prepared to protect ourselves-- not from the elements, not from an act of God, not from disease, but from man himself. It seems that man himself is our worst enemy-- man with distorted mind and demoniac purpose. After

camouflage and slit trenches, we set up our equipment and prepared to function in the field. At 1330 we had a general worship service, conducted by Chaplain Jaeger, Division Chaplain. I preached the sermon. The band played for us and put on a short concert afterward. Later in the evening they put on a separate program, with the SSO.

[-----]
"Extensive training in battalion and regimental problems was also carried out in the Grants Pass area. Climaxing this training, the entire Division moved out on the morning of 21 June to participate in the maneuvers (designated D series) held north and northeast of Camp White.

At the conclusion of D Series on 10 July 1943, the Division returned to Camp White and undertook a period of intensive training to correct errors and weaknesses revealed during the maneuvers. In addition, units were instructed in the assault of fortified areas and attacks on enemy villages. This phase of the training was directed by Major General William G. Livesay, who assumed command of the Division on 14 July 1943." [Robbins, p. 8]

I would venture to say that more than a few members of Company K, 361st Regiment remembered this training on attacking fortified villages when they were trapped in the German-surrounded village of Livergnano, Italy some 15 months later. Some may have reflected upon the inadequacy of any simulation to prepare one for such a hellish experience.

[-----]
June 21, 1943

Still in the same CP, several miles northeast of Butte Falls. Rained much of the day, and was cool enough to be uncomfortable, although we had on heavy underwear and field jackets, with raincoats. Chaplain Jaeger and I visited 361st Infantry; saw Chaplains Moehring, Stevenson, and Sweeney, with assistants. Returned by way of 316th Med. Bn. Roads almost impassable. Very uncomfortable riding in a C and R car with top down. We were very glad to get to bed early-- the only warm spot to be found.

[-----]
Chaplain Vernon P. Jaeger was the Division Chaplain for the 91st. My father doesn't say so directly, but I believe that sometime during 1943 he was reassigned from the 361st Regiment to the job of assistant to Jaeger. In all, there were 15 chaplains in the corps which served the division [Robbins, p. 415]. The personnel of the division numbered 20,000 men, more or less.

HAMPTON ROADS AND THE ATLANTIC - 1944

[-----]
Training exercises including maneuvers with the 104th and 96th infantry divisions continued in Oregon during the summer and early fall of 1943. These were completed and the division moved to Camp Adair in early November [Robbins, p. 9]. By January of 1944, orders had been given to prepare for deployment to North Africa, the first step toward eventual combat in Italy. The first movements of 91st Infantry troops to the port of embarkation at Hampton Roads, Virginia, began on March 14. The final elements arrived at their destination, Camp Patrick Henry, on April 3. As this story unfolds, it is important for the reader to know that as the redeployment neared in late February, my mother had returned to her family in East Tennessee in anticipation of a long separation from my dad. (You may recall the references earlier to the possibility of a conflict which would last until 1950.)
[-----]

April 7, 1944

Good Friday and my birthday! A great day for me! Went to worship service at 0900, Theater #4, Camp Patrick Henry. Chaplain Murphy conducted the service and preached the sermon. Chaplain Bonehoff and his quartet sang. Chaplains Bates, Sweet and Holbrook participated also. My part was confined to securing a portable organ from the Post Chaplain, Chaplain Hjortland, and with him getting the Publications Section to mimeograph our responsive reading and hymns. After the service, we had communion. I ushered. Most of the men, it seemed, received the elements.

As soon as I could get away after the service - permitted one pass from reveille to 0100 the following day - I got a taxi for Newport News and Hampton, Virginia. Mr. Greger and Mr. Martinez, two of our warrant officers, rode to Newport News with me. After we reached this first stop I directed the driver to 270 Little Farms Avenue, Hampton, home of Clifford and Edna.

The day we had arrived at Camp Patrick Henry, April 3, I had sent, the same evening, a wire to Ruth as follows: "Could you visit Clifford on Thursday or Friday or Saturday or Sunday?" She got the wire in the mail on the 4th - and of course she could! Just to make sure she got my message (she might have been visiting Helen James, in Morristown) I called Helen the evening of the 4th. She informed me that Ruth had left the same evening on train No. 42. So I knew that I would get to see her.

Arrived at 270 Little Farms Ave. at 1200. Ruth met me at the door. It seemed very much like a dream to see her

again. When we closed our little cottage in Monmouth on the 29th of February and said goodbye the same evening at the railroad station in Portland, I had hardly expected to see her again before going overseas. But if I had planned it myself, I could not have planned it better. We had twenty-two precious hours together.

Ruth, Edna, and I went to the grocery store and bought groceries for a birthday dinner. I sent telegrams to Herbert and Ray asking them to come over. When we returned home, we put the meat - roast pork - on to cook and went over to visit Ennis and Walter at Copeland Park. Invited them over in the evening. When we got back to Little Farms Ave., Clifford was home planting some beans in the garden - an old tradition to plant beans on Good Friday. Virgil and Ennis were late - so we had to go ahead and eat without them. Vernon Richards, who boards with Clifford, and Alvin Watson, a cousin, ate with us. Virgil and Ennis ate when they came. Herbert was late getting the telegram so it was around nine o'clock when he arrived. Ray's telegram, as it afterward turned out, was not delivered until the following day, so I missed him. It was a wonderful reunion - and especially the few short hours with my dear wife. I was determined not to return to Camp before noon of the following day - regardless of the consequences - and I didn't! No one checked, however, and nothing was said. When I returned I was amazed to learn that all passes were canceled at 1600 the 7th - and I had left at 1100! A close shave indeed! But twenty-four hours never to be forgotten. Providence - just another name for God - was kind to us here.

Bought two little Easter toys - carts pulled by bunnies - for Walter and Stephen.

April 8, 1944

Said goodbye to Ruth and Edna at the street car line in Hampton - 1000. Clifford went to work early, but came back to see me off. He accompanied me down town. We bought a small lock for my duffel bag. Very shortly, I took my leave of Clifford, and he went back to his work in the ship(yards).

These separations are difficult - but necessary adjuncts to life itself. They will make the reunion sweeter.

In the afternoon, gave some thought to Easter Sunday services. Went to Publications Section for the mimeographed responsive reading and hymns.

April 9, 1944

Easter Sunday! At a port of embarkation! Lt. Col. Pittman, Div QM awakened me and asked me if I were going

to the Post Easter Sunrise Service. I tumbled out of bed, dressed hurriedly, and rushed over to the designated area just in the nick of time. The WAC's sponsored the service; their chorus sang several Easter hymns. The Post Band played also. Chaplain Hjortland preached the sermon. Several of our officers were present: Lt. Col. Pittman, Lt. Col. Larsen, Div. Surgeon, Lt. Col. Neeley, G-1, Lt. Col. Primm, A.G., Brig. Gen. Ralph Hospital, Divarty CG was present.

General Service for our men was at 0900, Theater #4. Chaplain Murphy conducted; Chaplain Bates preached the sermon. Chaplains Sweet and Holbrook participated. I pronounced the benediction. Chaplain Bomhoff and his quartet were supposed to have sung, but by an oversight were left off the program. A supplementary Communion service was held in the Reception Room by Chaplains Murphy and Bates for any who wished to participate.

April 10, 1944

Went over to public telephones and looked up the telephone number of the party who live at 269 Little Farms Ave. - opposite Clifford. Put in a call, but no answer.

Repacked my bedding roll and duffel bag; made a u-shaped roll of my shelter halves, blankets, mosquito bag, tent poles, and pins - to be draped over the musette bag.

Drew from supply two protective covers, shoe impregnite, insect repellent, powder for crawling insects, salve for vesicant gases, sulfadiazine for wounds, etc. Have almost enough drugs to start practice as a country doctor.

April 11, 1944

Put in a call to the Leightons, neighbors of Clifford and Edna. They were kind enough to call Ruth to the telephone, so I had a few precious moments of conversation with her. Learned that Ray was at Clifford's. Had him called to the phone. Arranged for him to get a taxi and meet me at the C.P.H. main gate at 1030. My last words to Ruth were: "Remember, dear, I love you."

Ray arrived about 1030. It had been almost two years since I had seen him. He looked quite nice in his uniform - stood erect and walked with a spring in his step. I was very proud of him. We took a walk around the athletic field - two or three times - and just talked. He told me of his duties at Camp Peary, and that he had applied for general Navy service - instead of continuing with the "Seabees." We went in to one of the PX's for lunch together, then at one o'clock, we said

goodbye. After the final handshake he seemed delighted to come to a firm, snappy salute, and I returned it with equal vigor. Just two brothers in the service of their country.

At 1315, had final physical examination (48 hr.) before embarking. Consisted merely of looking in the mouth and at the anus. The Chaplains (Post) were in front of the Medical Processing Center to give testaments to all who did not have them; also a USO packet of religious materials.

The remainder of the day was rather melancholy.

April 12, 1944

The big day! Got off a final last letter to Ruth. Also thought I was sending her my Elgin watch (given to me by Alameda Baptist Church) but later found it was not in the package I had wrapped so neatly and insured for twenty-five dollars. Had early "chow" at 1100 - good meal with tender steaks. Assembled at 1315 to march to the train. We were some sight to behold - with all our equipment. Steel helmet on. Musette bag, with blanket roll draped over it. Gas mask, dispatch case, field overcoat over the arm. To board the train we had, in addition, a val-pac, two lunches given us at the train, and I had my portable altar set. We were pretty exhausted when we got to our seats at 1500. Our band played for us at the train until they had to board; the post band followed us over and played us off. Had a cold chocolate toddy from my lunch (really supper) as soon as we were seated.

Arrived at the docks at 1600. The Red Cross "ladies in gray" were on hand to provide all with a good hot cup of coffee, which was much appreciated. We began loading shortly after 1600. At 2015 two tugboats came in and pulled us out into the James River estuary. We were off! Stood on deck for a time and watched the lights of Norfolk, then went down to lower deck and to our stateroom - if it could be called such.

April 13, 1944

Slept quite well for the first night on board. Our room holds four officers - two lower berths and two upper. Lt. Col. Roberts, Inspector General and Lt. Col. Scarborough, Judge Advocate, have the lowers; Lt. Col. Primm, the Adjutant General, and I have the uppers. We are somewhat crowded, but by hanging our Val-Pacs up and putting most of our equipment under the lower berths, we have room enough. Passed Virginia Beach this morning. One of our officers said he recognized the main hotel there. Have been a little "woozy" today - light in the head, so spent quite a bit of time in my bunk.

April 14, 1944

The convoy began to take shape, and we amused ourselves counting the number of the ships and discussing the various types. Still "woozy" - but not sick. Had a vesper service at 1830, on the forward deck of the ship. The singing was led by a trombone quartet from the band. Had to announce the words of the hymns - this was a poor substitute for the printed word and consequently singing was poor. About 75 attended.

April 15, 1944

Read some in Fosdick, On Being a Real Person. Selected hymns and prepared announcements of Sunday services. Also, prepared for the service.

April 16, 1944

Had Morning Worship at 0900 well forward, on the starboard side of the main deck. Lt. Harrison took the Catholic men on the port side and led them in saying the Rosary at the same hour. We used the hymns "All Hail the Power", "Sweet Hour of Prayer", and "Faith of Our Fathers". Scripture: Isaiah 6:1-8. Topic: "The Elements of Worship". About 150, I judge, attended. Lt. Col. Roberts, the IG, complimented me on the service; said it was very helpful. The Vesper Service, at 1830, same place, followed an order of service for the S.M.C.L. No sermon. Sang "Day is Dying in the West", "Abide With Me", and "Sun of My Soul". Read the story of Jesus stilling the tempest: Matt. 8:23-27.

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I don't know for sure that this choice of scripture had anything to do with his own seasickness or that of the men around him, but I do know that on occasion my dad showed traces of a wry sense of humor.
[-----]

April 17, 1944

Did my laundry in the wash basin in the lavatory. Even washed out a wool shirt. Strung a cord above my bunk and hung most of my laundry there. Played some chess and read more in Dr. Fosdick's book.

April 18, 1944

Last night was a pretty rough night and it was raining this morning. Since Sunday, however, it has been bearable in our stateroom. Saturday night we were so stuffy and miserable that one or two of the officers insisted on a check of the ventilation system. As it was, it was doing practically no good. The TC Captain used one of our men to reverse the motor - or fans - so that they feed fresh air in - and much more rapidly - instead of taking stale air out. We have fared much better since. Caught up on this diary today and played

chess with Lt. Col. Foster and Capt. Storms. Not very successful. The sea seems rather unruly tonight and this ship is reeling like a drunken sailor.

April 19, 1944

The hours for meals are rather irregular. Breakfast at 0800; dinner at 1600; refreshments at 1930. Breakfast this morning was grapefruit, corn flakes, coffee, bread, butter, and marmalade. Powdered eggs for those who could stomach them. Most of the officers are now passing them up as unpalatable. Perhaps the way they are prepared is the chief deterrent - they are steam cooked- scrambled, with bacon in them. They form into little round balls - similar in shape to cottage cheese. Dinner consisted of corned beef and cabbage, carrots creamed, potatoes boiled, jello and fruit dessert, tea, bread and butter. Refreshment was cocoa, sweet raisin roll, and an apple. Sometimes it is soup, crackers, and fruit. The only kind of soup so far has been chicken noodle - it would seem that this is the limit of the variety in stock. And I would swear we have had cabbage in one form or another every dinner meal yet.

Came out on top at chess with Lt. Col. Foster, G-2, but Capt. Storms took me for a ride in two games.

The band gave a concert at 1300; they gave a concert at the same hour on Sunday.

Gun practice at 1500 - fired several rounds with the three inch guns and the machine guns. Hope the gunners are plenty good, for we may need them before we get where we're going. The ship has a barrage balloon to send up in case of an air attack - to intercept strafing.

Lt. Col. Roberts says he is writing his family not to worry - he has in his stateroom a preacher, a judge (Lt. Col. Scarborough) and a "devil" (Lt. Col. Primm). In the stateroom next to us are: Lt. Col. Foster, Lt. Col. Boyles, Lt. Col. Pittman, Lt. Col. Neely. They all seem to enjoy picking on Col. Foster. Think he brings quite a bit of it on himself by constantly "gooseing" others. Last night they loosened the springs in his bed and he had quite a bit of difficulty getting it put together again.

"The Judge" just got up off his bunk, stretched, and said, "Lord, have mercy". A very good prayer for the night.

April 20, 1944

We were awakened an hour earlier this morning for breakfast - a peculiar way they have of informing us we have crossed another time belt - 15° of latitude. Second

change of an hour since we have been out. 2315 here - 2015 at Morristown. From all indications we are about halfway across the Atlantic today.

We got a full tablet of attabrin today. The dose for the past six days had been half a tablet - two grains, I believe. Anyhow, today it was doubled.

My chess was poor today. Defeated by both Lt. Col. Foster and Capt. Crawford. Selected hymns for Sunday and gave them to the trombonists for transposition. They will play for services.

April 21, 1944

A flock of rumors were in the air today. It seems a submarine appeared in the convoy, not far from us, last night. From all indications, it was about as surprised and frightened as we were - i.e. the crew of our ship. We were told that about thirty depth charges - "ash cans" - were dropped in an effort to get it. This morning the life rafts were placed down near the railings on top deck, or some other spot where they would be more readily accessible.

This afternoon late we had another series of boxing matches on starboard deck. Contestants were volunteers, mostly enlisted men. Lt. Col. Foster challenged Lt. Col. Neely, and they sparred three rounds. Their act provided quite a bit of fun for the crowd. Capt. McDonald took on Capt. Storms for three rounds.

A peculiar phenomenon in the water at night in the presence of phosphorous particles. They shine brightly in the water, like hundreds of glow-worms, especially alongside the ship where the water is stirred.

Last night someone put salt in Lt. Col. Foster's bed. He had to get up in the night and brush it out. This morning he was trying desperately to find out who did it, but without success, I think.

April 22, 1944

A beautiful, sunny day, and a calm sea. With a few more comforts and conveniences - and a little imagination - one could believe that he were on a pleasure cruise. This ship is one of the "Liberty" type, built in 1942 at Houston, Texas. Name: S.S. Samuel Griffin, 4375 tons. Our cargo is mostly beans, according to the TC Captain, in addition to the nearly 400 officers and men aboard.

April 23, 1944

Our second Lord's Day at sea. Had morning worship at 1000, on top deck, opposite hatch 3, starboard. The trombone quartet played the hymns: "Onward Christian

Soldiers"; "God Will Take Care of You"; and "O God, Our Help in Ages Past". Sermon topic: "Prayer in Wartime". Inspiration for the sermon came from Dr. Geo. A. Buttrick's "Prevailing Prayer" in the March, 1944, Pulpit. I used three of the main points in his sermon to build on: (1) Prayer may turn the event; (2) prayer purifies the man who prays; (3) prayer is friendship. Scripture: Psalm 27. Attendance: 175 (est.)

The evening service at 1830 was held on lower deck, under hatch 2. Scripture: Psalms 1. Hymns: "Day is Dying in the West"; "Abide With Me"; "America". Special trombone quartet; they played Finlandia, and I made a poor attempt to repeat the words of one stanza (lost my Wayside Hymnal). Gave a short exposition of Psalm 1. "O Lord, establish thou the work of our hands!" Attendance 275 (est.)

April 24, 1944

Made a tour of the ship at 1000, conducted by Capt. Lewis (TC). A very interesting experience. The science of navigation is very intricate and exact. It makes one feel safer to see the organization for the operation of a ship, and some of the scientific devices which help to guarantee our safety. The engine room was most impressive. The big Diesel engine is a pageant of power. It turns the huge shaft 64 times a minute. The engine room was excessively hot because the heavy grade fuel oil must be heated before combustion in the engine. The chief engineer said that the ship would list up to 35°, but that we had hardly rolled more than 5° at any time. A comparatively even and calm trip.

The cargo consists mainly of two Diesel locomotives, several trucks, and beans, I understand.

During the night we gained an hour - the third since we left port.

April 25, 1944

Finished Fosdick, On Being a Real Person. A very helpful book, especially so for a person concerned with counseling.

Have been heading into a cool north-easterly wind for three days and the ship has been plunging forward like a galloping horse. The ship probably makes about 9 knots an hour.

April 26, 1944

Got us out of bed an hour early this morning - time set up an hour during the night. The fourth time since we left CPH. Slept about half the day - then began reading Maugham, The Razor's Edge.

After refreshments, there was a period of "boogey-woogey" music in the enlisted men's section - followed by an exhibition of hypnotism. Lt. Col. Roberts volunteered to be a victim, but the hypnotist was not successful with him. A bunk fell down and broke the spell with another, but the third man was completely hypnotized. He exhibited immunity from pain; stiffness or limpness of body; childhood memories; asked for a cigarette (though a non-smoker) when awakened took two puffs and threw cigarette away, as had been suggested to him while under hypnosis.

April 27, 1944

Finished reading Maugham, The Razor's Edge. The waves beat constantly against the side of our ship - and remind us how this is the shell of steel between us and the elements. The N.E. wind was rather strong, and the waves were higher than they have been yet on the trip.

April 28, 1944

Mamma's birthday! I sent her a present before leaving Camp Adair - a fountain pen. I am sure she has remembered me today. A thought of gratitude for her who thirty-three years ago went down to the gates of death for me! She has been a courageous and good mother - an inspiration and stay for us.

April 29, 1944

Preparation for Sunday services.

April 30, 1944

A beautiful day on the Mediterranean! Services on top deck at 1000. To add local color to the service I read as Scripture lesson the 27th chapter of Acts (selections from it). The trombone quartet led us in singing "God of Our Fathers", "Battle Hymn of the Republic", and "America the Beautiful". Related the sermon to the Mediterranean -- referred to the phrase found on ancient maps ne plus ultra -- nothing beyond -- placed after the Straits of Gibraltar, and how Columbus had proved it untrue. Also, referred to the voyage of Paul, and compared ours with it -- with occasion for thanksgiving! Quoted from the hymn by Joseph Addison, "When All Thy Mercies", and suggested that it was written after an experience of deliverance from a terrible storm at sea. Used some sentences from Psalm 139 with reference to the omnipresence of God, and the fact that "the Great Sea" of the Bible was the Mediterranean.

By the middle of the afternoon we began to approach the harbor of Oran, Algeria. It was a beautiful sight from the sea, in fact it looked to be a colorful, clean, and ultra-modern city. The coloring of the tiled roofs, the stucco buildings, was very impressive. Could it be that

we were about to put in at a modern city! We were destined to be disillusioned in short order.

We tied up at one of the docks-- Mers-el-Kebir, around 2000. It was half an hour or so before we could get off the boat, since we had to wait for another to unload first. Then, after entrucking, we had to wait fully an hour before the convoy left the docks-- in order that our hand luggage could be unloaded and placed on one of the trucks. Then about 2200 the journey to our destination began-- about thirty-five miles away. As we went through Oran we could see in the semi-darkness that it was not the romantic modern city we had thought-- but quite the contrary. A dirty, war-stricken, disease-laden, cosmopolitan city. Along the road through the country we began to get glimpses of Arabs, and wondered if we were dreaming of life in Bible times, their dress was so strange, yet so familiar. They evidently have changed little in two thousand years, in manner of life, dress, and customs. Through St. Cloud, where the French made a stand when we first entered North Africa, and on to Port aux Poules-- "Haven of the Sea-birds", we went. This villa was to be our Headquarters. Arrived around 2400, but it was about 0200, 1 May, before we got assigned to our billets, got our luggage, and were able to get to bed.

NORTH AFRICA - 1944

May 1, 1944

A new experience, to awaken in Algeria, North Africa, on May Day. Took most of the day to get oriented. With Chaplain Jaeger, visited most of the major units of the Division. Except for 361st Infantry, which preceded us, they were in the process of unloading from the ships and getting set up in the field.

In the afternoon, prepared and submitted my April monthly Chaplain's report.

[-----]
By this time, North Africa had been under Allied control for almost a year and the fighting had moved on to other venues. The island of Sicily was invaded by the British in July of 1943 and was secured in less than two months. British and American forces then attacked German-occupied southern Italy in September of that year. While the 91st Infantry was completing its training in Oregon, the U.S. Fifth Army under the command of Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark had moved from North Africa to land at Salerno, Italy on September 9, 1943. The 91st was to become a part of General Clark's forces in Italy, but some additional training and preparations were to come first.
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May 2, 1944

Went to Oran, Algeria, with Chaplains of the Division (less Chaplain Sweet, who has not arrived as yet) for a conference with the Chaplains of the MBS. Was delightfully surprised to find there Chaplain Robert Flitts, former C-N sophomore when I was a senior, now with the Air Corps and stationed at Algiers. Also there at the Conference was George "Dick" Bastian, of Greensboro, Maryland. He used to assist me at the Baptist Church there during the summer with the young people's work, and we knew his family quite well. Most surprising of all, I met Oscar Rodriguez, who graduated the year before me at the Eastern Seminary. And his unit, the 65th Inf., (RA, Puerto Rican) is attached to our Division for amphibious training. It surely was good to renew these acquaintances and to know that even in this far country I have personal friends.

Chaplain Murphy and I scouted about town quite a bit-- just to look around-- and purchased some paper bound French books. We hope to learn to speak some French.

May 3, 1944

The agenda for the day included a Staff conference; a CG's conference; the moving of our office to another building (the CG of Divarty, Brig. Gen. Ralph Hospital decided that our building would make a good headquarters for his Artillery); and an address by the Chief of the Morale Division, MBS, Colonel Scoble.

May 4, 1944

Mainly caught up on odds and ends in the office.

May 5, 1944

Durng the morning attended sessions of the ITC Staff and Command School for the Division. The lectures were concerned with equipment, theory, and tactics in amphibious operations. After lunch, we went to the port of Arzew for a demonstration of the varlous types of landing craft used in amphibious assault. The last item of the demonstration was a trip in a LCVP out to an AP ship, used in transporting personnel. We observed the launching of several LCVP's from the deck; also, the loading and unloading of causalties from the ship-- on stretchers or a device for slightly wounded to sit on. At the conclusion of the inspection of the ship-- were treated to cake and lemonade! And that was a treat, believe you me, for we had not been able to drink our water, because of salt in it, since our arrival.

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Amphibious operations may have received attention during this time because of recent experiences of the Fifth Army. The Allied forces met with considerable difficulty in their attempt to drive north from Salerno to Rome. War correspondent Ernie Pyle wrote from Italy in December, 1943:

"The war in Italy is tough. The land and the weather are against us.

It rains and it rains. Vehicles bog down and temporary bridges wash out. ... Our troops are living in a way almost inconceivable to you in the States. The fertile black valleys are knee-deep in mud. Thousands of the men have not been dry for weeks. Other thousands lie at night in the high mountains with the temperature below freezing and the thin snow sifting over them.

They dig into the stones and sleep in little chasms and behind rocks and in half caves. They live like men of prehistoric times, and a club would become them more than a machine gun. How they survive the winter misery at all is beyond us who have the opportunity of drier beds in the warmer valleys. ...

Our men will get to Rome all right. There's no question about that. But the way is cruel." [Nichols/Pyle, pp. 172-3]

The frustration at not being able to take Rome led the Allies to attempt a flanking maneuver with an amphibious landing at a place called Anzio, some 33 miles south of Rome. "The well-planned mission faltered when the Allies delayed pushing inland, thus allowing the Germans to consolidate their defenses. For four months, Allied troops were pinned on the flat, rocky beaches, suffering heavy casualties to German bombing and shelling." [Nichols, p. 233] Thus, the need for proficiency in amphibious warfare was probably not lost on those who were soon to be joining the fight in Italy.

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May 6, 1944

Attended the Staff and Command School for one hour; most of the remainder of the day I spent consolidating the monthly reports of the Chaplains of the Division. Chaplain Vanderpool asked me to participate with him tomorrow in the Morning Worship for Special Troops.

May 7, 1944

Read the Scripture-- Hebrews 11, 12, selected verses-- and led in prayer at the religious service for Hdq and Sp Trps. The Band assisted with the music-- the trombone quartet led the hymns and played a special selection. There were about 126 present, including several of the townspeople.

Attended the Staff and Command School for one session. After lunch we went down to the Experimental Beach for a demonstration in mine laying and the use of anti-personnel Devices, but the wind was so strong and the dust so dense in the area the demonstration could not be put on. It was therefore postponed.

In the afternoon we took some pictures in front of our quarters-- Lt. Col. Roberts, Primm, Scarborough, and I. Then we took a walk around the water front and St. Antoine Church. After supper the Band gave a concert around the water front to which the people of the town were also invited.

May 8, 1944

Had Division Chaplains' Conference at 1000, at our office. Dealt mostly with MBS regulations and orders which relate particularly to us,-- marriage, graves registration, etc. The afternoon was taken up mainly by correction and consolidation of reports.

May 9, 1944

We arranged for burial of one of our men from 363rd Inf., who was drowned Sunday, in the American Cemetery. The

man's name is Wolfe, I believe, and of Jewish faith. Chaplain Honig of MBS will officiate; Chaplain Lenk, 363rd Inf., will also be present and the regiment will furnish pallbearers, firing party, and bugler. Burial at 1000.

Wrote letters to Ruth and Stuart. Much of the day spent in study and catching up on office routine.

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Stuart Watson, also in the U.S. Army but destined to fight another foe in the Pacific theater, was by this time moving westward through Hawaii. His assignments would take him to battlefields on Okinawa and elsewhere. [S.L. Watson, Genesis and Janus, p.31] In my father's effects, we happened to find a letter from Stuart, possibly the one to which my father replied on May 9. Here is the text of that letter, dated March 8, 1944:

Dear John,

Your letter of CENSORED arrived today. I left CENSORED CENSORED just a few hours too soon to receive it there.

Well, here I am in the Hawaiian Islands. Am in another replacement depot here. They certainly shuffle us about from place to place. We have been restricted for a few days here. Just what is in store for us is unknown right now. As soon as the restriction is lifted we expect to learn of our assignments.

Have seen Honolulu, Pearl Harbor, etc. Was amazed at the size of the fleet in these whereabouts. I certainly feel protected here.

You are perhaps leaving there (Camp Adair, Oregon) by now. In CENSORED CENSORED I met Capt. Vandergrift who had been with you for some time. We had quite a chat. He seemed very nice and spoke well of you and Ruth. Lt. Krauz from the 91st was my platoon officer on the way over here. (Incidentally, I got rather sea sick on the trip.) Let me know how you make out.

I sure would like to have a print of those pictures. Keep writing and I'll do likewise. Best of luck, and take care of yourself.

Your bro.,
Stuart

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May 10, 1944

Ch. Jaeger and I visited the chaplains of 361 and 363, in the field. I snapped a picture of Stevenson and Mochring; also one of the assistants. From their pyramidal tent you get a magnificent view of the Mediterranean - Gulf of Arzew. In 363, we had a chat with Col. McGill and Lt. Col. Grissard. Ch. Malcolm S. Sweet had just arrived - with the last contingent of the regiment.

May 31, 1944

Finished reading The Robe, by Lloyd Douglas. Thoroughly enjoyed it; a magnificent book.

June 2, 1944

Left Port-aux-Poules. Crossed I Pat 0800. Set up in Staging Area, near Fleurus, in pyramidal tents. We have a magnificent view - the valley below, a patchwork of vineyards and Lion Mountain to the North.

June 4, 1944

0900, conducted Worship Service for Rear Echelon - 51 present. Spoke on "Let Us Set Each Other Right".
Scripture: Isalah 1:1-20.

June 5, 1944

Consolidated Chaplains' Monthly Reports. Ch. Jaeger had conference with Ch. Lenk, 363, and Ch. Borders, 362, about the positions of the Catholic Chaplains in combat. Ch. Lenk, particularly, has been insistent that there be a Catholic Chaplain at the Med. Bn Clearing Station. It was finally agreed that Ch. Duignan, of Div. Arty, should be responsible for the ministry at that point.

Heard an excellent USO program this evening - in 9685-H area. Edwind Eustis sang, accompanied at the piano by Marion Carley. A very refreshing program - and I told them so. They volunteered to visit us again for a Vesper Service. Do hope we can have them.

June 6, 1944

D-Day! The Day we have been waiting for days on end. Heard the news about ten o'clock this morning. May God grant it a successful consummation. Visited 43 Gen. Hosp. today; made a list of the men from the 91st hospitalized there and visited several of them.

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There have been many D-Day's before and since, but none so famous or significant as the Allied invasion of France from England, led by General Eisenhower. With the opening of this second western front on the European continent, and the unimagined success of armored units in sweeping across France, attention naturally was diverted from the battle in Italy. For the men who were fighting and dying there, however, the battle for the Italian mountains and cities was no less bitter. The 91st was now about to join in the fighting and the dying. They probably could not anticipate what was in store for them.
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June 7, 1944

Visited Oran this evening. Took two men from 362 to Christian Science Service. Visited SSO Show at Red Cross Service Men's Center, put on by Capt. Storms. Capt. Storms and I stopped at a shop and purchased a ladies' handbag each for our wives - almost identical in red. Also, purchased a wallet for Thomas, as a souvenir of North Africa.

At the Show, Chaplain Bomhoff and his quartet sang quite acceptably. Part of our Band played and there were several skits.

June 8, 1944

Mailed package to Ruth - the handbag and a plate which I got at Port-aux-Poules. Also, mailed the wallet to Thomas.

Sent twenty-five dollars (\$25) to Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, my alma mater, as a memorial gift - as a contribution in memory of Chaplain Thompson, a classmate, who was killed some months ago in New Guinea. Suggested that the money be used toward the building of a chapel.

ITALY - 1944

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Another passage from the book The 91st Infantry Division in World War II helps set the stage for the diary entries from the Italian campaign: "The troops of the 91st embarked with grim anticipation on the last leg of their journey toward combat. Already the Allied forces had smashed the vaunted Hitler and Gustav Lines south of Rome, had liberated the Eternal City, and were relentlessly driving the remnants of Marshal Kesselring's German armies northward up the Italian peninsula. ...

The 91st's move to Italy began on 15 June, when it left Staging Area No. 2 and went aboard ships in the harbor of Oran. The following day, minus its rear echelon headquarters and the 361st RCT, already in Italy, it steamed out of Oran for Naples and the smaller port of Bagnoli." [Robbins, p.21]

The 91st Infantry Division was attached to General Mark Clark's Fifth Army, and many of the elements of the division saw combat during July and August. In early September, the entire 91st was given the mission of crossing the Arno River east of the city of Florence and driving north through the rugged Apennine mountains toward Bologna. An array of well fortified German defenses stood in their way: the Gothic Line, the Monghidoro Line, the Loiano Line, and finally the Caesar Line. At first, progress up Highway 65 was rapid. The Gothic Line was breached and Pietramala was captured in late September. On October 2, the town of Monghidoro fell to the 91st and within a week they had captured Loiano and arrived at the Caesar Line. They had covered perhaps two thirds of the distance from Florence to Bologna. The ground had cost many casualties, but resistance had not been exceptionally stiff. The situation was to worsen quickly.

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10 Oct 44

Pietramala! Living in the palatial former home of a Count Baldi. But the windows are blown out by artillery shells and there is a huge hole in the roof over the living-room on the second floor. The water comes through and makes two huge puddles on the tile floor. The wonder is that more of it doesn't seep through on the AG office on the first floor. By putting up a piece of canvass on the third floor, above us, and setting some German coal hods around, we have managed to keep our room fairly dry.

The kitchen moved today from the hill back of the house to the courtyard. The ankle-deep mud had become such a problem that it became almost necessary that it be moved. It was a difficult task to get to the mess without falling.

My little sheet-metal stove which I got in Florence yesterday works fine and adds much to our comfort. I have also got our salvaged American mantle lantern working and it provides a good light. Converted it from gasoline-burning to kerosene-burning so we can use it without having to strain the lead out of "red" gasoline.

Tonight the "jazz" boys from the Band played in the AG office downstairs. Also, we had two "hill-billy" artists from the Replacement Pool down to add a little variety - "Smiley" Gray, Aiken, S.C. and a buddy.

11 Oct 44

Tires and inner tubes are scarce. We had picked up a nail in one of our tires and it came near ruining the tube, but the EM of the office finally got it repaired after they found they could not get a new one from Ordnance.

Took some pictures today - one of the mud - two of a 240 mm gun nearby - one of the village church - one of the grave of a fallen German buried in a trench in our back yard. He was hastily buried there by his comrades before they retreated, and they erected a crude cross at the head. It bears the name Alfred Ratzmann, b. 9-9-20; d. 10-3-44; Fallschirm; :Einheit: I'-54697. As one of the GRS sergeants at the cemetery said to me the other day, in pointing to a group of German dead awaiting burial: "Chaplain, these are the Supermen; they believed the lies they were told."

Had a service at 1530 at the Replacement Pool. Attendance - 78. Spoke to them on "Our Shepherd God"; gave exposition of Psalm 23. Hope the message was of help to someone. These men are under a heavy burden of anxiety, for soon they will be going up to replace casualties. Naturally they are under intense strain for it is a new experience for most of them. Some have merely had basic training and they are going up to strange organizations to work with men they have never seen before. It is no wonder many of them have misgivings.

T/Sgt. L.D. Boyce, one of the group leaders, came to me after the service and asked me to write his wife, Mrs. L.D. Boyce, Route # 4, Seymour, Mo., assuring her of his faithfulness and telling her that he is attending my services regularly. This I have done tonight. He has been attending my services regularly and has encouraged his men to attend.

Pvt. Blackburn paid us a visit and ended up by taking our stovepipe down - so he could close the shutter better and shut out all the light. He was rather incoherent in his

speech also. I took him down to Lt. Col. Primm, AG, and recommended he be sent to the Clearing Station for further observation by the Division Psychiatrist, Major Kaufmann. We think he is either off his "nut" or is putting on a good act to try to get out of the service. Sent the EM with him down to the Clearing Station and wrote up a resume of my two interviews with him. He has an illusion that he is under surveillance by the FBI and the CIC.

A man from Co. I, 362, came in who had run away from his outfit. He was a rifleman in the company. It seems they had been in difficulty today and had had several casualties. In the emergency this man was detailed a litter bearer. After bringing in some of the wounded, and under pressure of some snipers, he said he went to pieces and took off across the hill. He got a ride with an ambulance driver and reported to the Rear C.P. I hope I can help to get him straightened out and avoid a trial by court-martial.

Had a complaint to make today to the C.O. RR Ech. Two men from the Finance Section urinated in the corner of the room above us. It came through and messed up the bed of Pvt. Fraumann - to say nothing of making our room "smelly". I think this practice will be stopped pronto, or a couple of sergeants will be "busted".

[-----]
The type of combat conditions which led the man from Company I to leave the front were widespread as the 91st attempted to break through the Caesar Line.

Fighting was exceptionally fierce during this period around the village of Livergnano. "At dawn of 9 October, Company I and Company K (361st Regiment), on either side of Highway 65, were heavily counterattacked by an enemy force which included tanks. The fire fight was desperate, but the enemy was forced back with many killed and captured. At 1040 General Livesay directed the 3rd Battalion to hold its positions along the southern escarpment until its left flank was more secure. One platoon, however, was to make its way into Livergnano. ... (Other platoons of Company K soon followed.)

Just before daylight on 10 October, the enemy attacked with rifles, machine guns, and hand grenades, but the company stood them off successfully and they withdrew to bring up heavier weapons. At about 1000 two enemy tanks and many mortars began to fire point-blank at Company K's building. The enemy changed his positions methodically so that every part of the building was damaged and numerous casualties were inflicted on Company K. Finally the building began to fall apart under the steady pounding. Then suddenly, the firing ceased and the enemy assaulted, killing or capturing practically all of the company." [Robbins, pp. 161-162]

"On the escarpment, fighting during the day had been equally bitter. Although the Germans attacked again and again, the companies did not give ground. At 2100, 10 October, they had dug in securely and had left no gap in their line along the rim of the escarpment. . . . The supply and evacuation problems had become extremely difficult, however. It took twelve to sixteen hours to bring a wounded man down over the escarpment by hand-carrying, which was necessary since litters were too bulky for the width of the trail. Communications were consistently disrupted by enemy fire into the draw. It took an individual runner four hours to negotiate a one-way trip to the battalion command post." [Robbins, p.166]

The stress of combat was taking its toll on many of the men.
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12 Oct 44

Had interviews with two men who were having difficulties in combat. One, Pvt. Donald D. Fortner, Co I, 362, had left his company. He had been impressed into service as a litter bearer and the sight of the wounded, plus sniper fire, so upset him nervously that he ran away. Was instrumental in getting him transferred to the 916 F.A.

A RTU man - Pfc. Thorn B. Himel, Co. B, 363rd Inf. - came by and related he could not bring himself to fire in combat, and that his responses in combat are erratic. Sent a note to Ch. Sweet, 363 Inf. with regard to him.

Quartet rehearsal - Pvt. Fraumann, T/Sgt. Fleeman, Mr. Van Dellen, Sgt. Fischer. They will sing Whittier's "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" at our Sunday morning service.

13 Oct 44

Interviewed a man by the name of Porter who had been away from his outfit four days. Turned him over to the JAG for disposition. The first step will be an examination by the Division Psychiatrist.

Visited US Mil Cem, Castelfiorentino. Ch McLorraine, 361, went for Catholic services. Had a special service for a 5th Army man whose friends had come for the service. For some reason their Chaplain didn't get there. In all, had services for two American dead and fourteen Germans. Ch McLorraine will report religious services for half the German dead because their religion was unknown. We both had services for them.

17 Oct 44

To Florence to see "The Barretts of Wimpole Street", starring Katharine Cornell and Brian Aherne. Left at 1500 - show at 1830 at the Apollo Theater. Took Cpl. Webb; Sgt. Hanson, AG; T/Sgt. Noyes, Ch office; Sgt. Leon

Bine, IG. The best production I have yet seen overseas, - portraying the home life of the Barretts and the romance of Elizabeth and Robert Browning.

18 Oct 44

Had Bible Study and Prayer tonight. 9 men present, including myself. We took the first topic in Sept. Link, "What Do You Think Concerning God?" as the basis for our discussion.

19 Oct 44

Visited the forward CP at Lolano; conferred with Ch Jaeger. Together we visited 916 FA, Div Arty Hdq, etc. Saw Ch Murphy, Ch Vanderpool, Ch Bomhoff. Met Ch Vanderpool and Cpl. Chilton on the road, on way to 1st Bn 361 for service.

Was within a few thousand yards of our front lines, and could see the Po Valley quite plainly. Our artillery was firing quite steadily and quite often. I could hear the whine of an enemy shell coming in, but none dropped close by.

Visited Ch Marleau of the 94 Evac Hosp and arranged to have a Prot service there Sunday in conjunction with the 791 Ord - our Ord Co.

[-----]
It was the practice of the 91st to maintain two command posts. The division commander and several staff members (usually including Chaplain Jaeger, I believe) normally occupied the forward CP. The Judge Advocate, Finance Officer, and Personnel sections (along with the assistant Division Chaplain) were assigned to the rear CP. A typical separation for the forward and rear CP's might be 20 miles. [Robbins, p. 417] One of the responsibilities of the rear CP was apparently to see to the proper burial of the dead.
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20 Oct 44

To US Mil Cem Castelflorentino, Italy. Had services for two men - one Protestant, one of unknown faith. Most of our dead in recent days had religious rites by other Chaplains. Approximately 100 dead were lying in tents - in various stages of mutilation and decay - awaiting burial. Most had been enclosed in mattress covers - some awaiting further identification lay exposed. A sorry sight - the seamy side of war! And yet they say the world is civilized. Not yet! Scratch the veneer and the savage and bestial is not far beneath.

Had a short special service for Capt. Burleigh Roderick, 362 Inf. His brother-in-law, T/Sgt. Noyes, stood by the grave with me. Although he had already had religious

rites by another chaplain previously - we wanted to have a private ceremony of our own.

Tonight took a man, J.C. May, to have a conference with the Division Psychiatrist. The man had run away from Sv. Co. 361 Inf. after a shelling there earlier in the day. Maj. Kauffman, the psychiatrist, pronounced him a severe case of panic and recommended he be evacuated through medical channels.

21 Oct 44

Visited this morning the new military cemetery just opened today near Pietramala. The first dead were buried here this morning - a truck load of men from the 34th Division. The same sorry sight that has become so familiar: men strewn around in all sorts of distorted shapes and horribly mutilated. Some covered with fresh blood from open wounds. Some sewed up after autopsy. Some bloated beyond recognition by exposure to the weather for several days. Some with head or limbs missing. Some being devoured by maggots. Some with clothing slit off in effort to find identifying marks. But our men of the 47th QM (GRS) get them identified and buried somehow - and they seem to be doing a pretty good job at a very nauseating and distasteful task.

Had two men come in today who are "sweating out" going back to the line. One had left the line and made his way back here. The psychiatrist says he is normal, so no doubt he will be sent back. The other RTU man, is being held a few days in the Repl Depot until he is determined able to return. We can't fail to sympathize with those men who have real difficulties, physical or mental and nervous, but it is hard to ferret them out.

Men's chorus rehearsed tonight. Had a good group out. We hope to be able to put on some special programs in the Division. T/Sgt. Noyes is going to make a good director.

22 Oct 44

Sunday - and three services scheduled. The first, for the RR CP and Repl Pool, we held in the AG office downstairs. Had 48 men present. Spoke on "The Use of Profanity". Set the altar up in front of the huge fireplace. The day was dark and rainy, so the lit candles made an impressive scene. Mr. Van Delien sang "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep". T/Sgt. Moyes accompanied him.

We then drove through the rain, mud and fog to the 94th Evac Hosp for a service there - both for them and the 791 Ord Co. But the Evac Hosp had moved the day before because some shells fell in close by - that is all but 33 men and the chaplain (Catholic). So we had only one man

out - from the Ord Co. But we had a service anyhow. The chaplain had a chapel tent which we used. It had electric lights, portable seats, altar, etc. Location: Monghidoro. We got back in good time for lunch, since the service was at 1030 and we had no sermon.

At 1500 we left the RR CP for a service at the 91 QM at 1600. It took us a full hour to get there because of the bad road the last five miles after we left Highway 65. We set up in the loft of one of their buildings. Used an old dining table to set the altar on, the dining chairs for pews, and hung up a gasoline mantle lantern for light. Had 15 present, including an ARC girl. There are four of these girls and they live at the QM. This past week just after they had left their room one day, a shell came in and demolished the room. They serve doughnuts and coffee to the men of the Division.

We had supper at the QM then got off in a hurry for the RR CP. Even so, it was dark on us before we got to the highway and had to drive most of the way back blackout and in a heavy fog.

23 Oct 44

Today we caught up on odds and ends of office work, and otherwise. Had the radiator of the "Jeep" welded to stop a leak. Got fir trees painted on our helmets and liners. Ch McLorraine was by for a bottle of altar wine. Said he had a mass today for one of his battalions and the area was shelled during the mass. Also, Ch Jaeger called by and stayed for supper with us. T/Sgt. Noyes left us today to go to the Fd CP. He is to work in the G-3 section. Sorry to see him go. He is an outstanding person. Has a good education and is a graduate in music. I could have used him to good advantage - but there is a war to be won and the Army is not sufficiently interested in my musical program to give me a T/Sgt to assist with it. All our T/O allows is a Sgt. and two Tec 5's for the Div Ch's Office.

Two men, named Rosen and Jenkins, came in tonight to give themselves up. They were from the 34th Div. Had left the line. Said the shelling, the sight of the wounded and dead, was too much for them. They couldn't "take it" so they left their post of duty and came back. I got them a place to spend the night and in the morning will take them to the 34th Clearing station for diagnosis by the Psychiatrist.

24 Oct 44

Took Rosen and Jenkins to 34th Div Training and Rehabilitation Center. Hope that by getting them back they may be saved for the service and a court-martial be avoided. If so, my time was well spent.

This afternoon I visited the 8 Evac Hosp. What war does to men is quickly seen here. Saw a man named Abram K. Spittler who had recently gone to 363rd Inf. through our Replacement Pool. He had received a shell fragment wound in the jaw and had his mouth sewed up. He is a Christian Missionary Alliance man and he and his wife have been studying with a view to going to the mission field after the war - to the Somaliland, I believe.

Saw two of our QM men who were wounded a few days ago. One was still suffering considerably from abdominal wounds; another, Frank W. Little, had had a kidney removed.

Had Chorus rehearsal tonight. A good group out. Tec 4 Fischer directed; Minor played the organ. Both are from the Band.

25 Oct 44

A quiet day - but rainy. Tonight - Bible Study group. Attendance: 9. We considered some of the paradoxes of life. Took the topic from the Link, "Topic Talks".

26 Oct 44

A miserable day - a driving rain and considerable wind. How our men can endure it and remain in the lines is more than I can understand. Only superior devotion to duty, team spirit - or perhaps fear - could keep them there. Only one Combat Team is in the line - I believe. Our men are merely holding now. I am sure I don't know "the score" with regard to present tactics - just hope the Generals do. We are eight or ten miles from Bologna. Perhaps the reason the drive is halted is that we don't have sufficient food to feed the population there. Or perhaps the main attack is to come from some other direction.

This morning three prisoners from the Repl Pool Stockade came to see me. They complained of their treatment there. One had no underwear on. Their feet were wet and they said they could get no dry socks. Said they are sleeping three in a tent - their blankets are wet, and in general they are miserable. They are not the only men who are miserable over here, and shouldn't expect too many favors, but I will see if I cannot help them.

27 Oct 44

Another typical rainy day and the ever-present mud! Visited the Mt. Beni US Mil Cem, Pietramala, and had services for some of our men who have been killed. A sorry mess. Could hardly get in for the mud. On the hillside where the trucks of dead are unloaded, they had laid down branches of trees to keep them out of the mud. The ground was bloody and the pools of water were red

with human blood. I had never thought that the time would ever come when I should literally wade through human blood, but that is what I found myself doing today. Many of the graves were full of water - constant rain and underground streams - so that a compressed air pump had to be used to empty them before they could be used. Between pumping water and drilling boulders out of graves, the compressor was kept busy.

28 Oct 44
Preparation for Sunday.

29 Oct 44
Had three services today as follows:
Div CP RR \ ----- 0900 - 75 attendance
Repl. Pool /
791 Ord (LM) Co --- 1300 - 20 attendance
91 QM Co ----- 1600 - 25 attendance

At all three places, spoke on the "Social Program of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Wm. Temple", who died this past week. Had lunch with the Ord Co. Got to the QM Co only after extreme difficulty on a five mile stretch of the muddiest road I have ever tried to travel on. The MP wouldn't allow us to enter the road without chains on. Even then we got stuck two or three times - but finally pulled through. After supper we grabbed a sandwich and tried to get out to a main highway before dark. The road was one-way, we found, so we had to make a wide circuit. Got back about 2000. The circuit riders of former years in our country had nothing on us.

30 Oct 44
Another visit to Mt. Beni US Mil Cem, Pietramala - and more dead to bury. In war, the maw of death is never full. There were rows of gaping holes prepared, too, just waiting to claim their prey.

31 Oct 44
Prepared Chaplain's Monthly Report - another reason for living until the war is over, as the soldiers say, - no more official reports!

[-----]
The drive up Highway 65 was stalled in late October, partly by a fierce German resistance from elements which reportedly included the 29th and 90th Panzer Divisions, and partly because the division's ammunition allotment was severely curtailed after mid-month. I assume this was in order to give priority to Allied forces in France and elsewhere. In any event, the division began preparing defensive positions short of their

objective of Bologna and facing a towering granite mountain known as Mt. Adone. [Robbins, pp. 186-195] As conditions permitted, units were allowed to leave the front to rest and regroup. The Italian winter weather soon became almost as much an enemy as the Germans.

[-----]

November, 1944

Entire month spent at Pietramala, Italy, in the former mansion of Count Baldi.

Nov 6-11, inclusive, was spent at the Forward CP, in the absence of Ch Jaeger. He went to Rome for the week, in a party with Brig. Gen. Williamson, Ass't Div Commander. The party included also Lt. Col. Taggart and Lt. Col. Primm.

13 Nov 44

Initiated mail delivery route to the Evacuation Hospitals: 15 Evac (Florence); 56 Evac (Scarperia); 601 Ctr Co; 602 Ctr Co; 8 Evac (Pietramala). Visited Ch Sweet (363 Inf) at 602 Ctr Co. He had been evacuated for chronic dysentery. The doctors said they had decided to send him to a general hospital for re-classification.

16-18 Nov 44, inclusive.

To Fifth Army Rest Center, Anglo-American Hotel, Florence. Had room 97, a private room, with a huge bath tub. After the first day, had plenty of hot water. Spent most of the time eating, sleeping, reading and cleaning up. The food was well-prepared, the menu varied. I enjoyed the change immensely! One afternoon, visited Santa Croce Church, the Westminster Abbey of the Italians. It was quite interesting, noted especially the tombs of Galileo and Machiavelli. It is amazing how men can, during their lifetimes, defy the Church, or be actually anti-Christian, and yet get buried in a church. The last afternoon, I went to see Verdi's opera, "Rigoletto". It was well presented - a most enjoyable experience - at the Verdi Theater.

Bought a few Italian Christmas cards and mailed them to friends. Bought Ruth a cameo, a representation of the Three Graces, for twenty dollars. It was unmounted, so she will have to get it mounted in the States.

26 Nov 44

Had Thanksgiving Services today, instead of on Thursday, 23. Rear CP: 80; Ordnance: 22; 346th FA: 78; QM: 18. Ch Jaeger and Ch Bomhoff were both at the Rest Center, at Montecatini.

27 Nov 44

A quiet day. Heavy fog, rain, and trouble with generators! The problem of lights is a rather difficult one. Ch Borders, 362, stopped in for lunch. He was up yesterday to 1st Bn, in Corps reserve, for Mass. The rest of the regiment is at Villanova.

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There were no further diary entries until years-end. It was interesting to me to note in the writings of Stuart Watson that at about this same time two other Watson brothers were crossing paths half a world away in the Western Pacific. Ray (in the Navy) and Stuart (in the Army) met, almost by chance, at Tinian Island in the Marianas while in the process of carrying the war to the Japanese. There were other enemies besides the Germans to fight. [Genesis and Janus, Volume II, p. 16]
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ITALY - 1945

New Year's Eve (1944)

- to Villanova, from Pietramala. Heavy snow there. Think they feared we might get snowed in. Also, wanted to provide more space for forward elements. This villa is a tremendous rambling structure - must have at least two hundred rooms - and seems to have been designed without rhyme or reason. Our office is a small room, with oval ceiling, which must have been a bedroom for servants.

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From mid-January to mid-February of 1945, "... the bulk of the Powder River Division, in II Corps reserve, was scattered about the Italian countryside. The 362nd Infantry, initially in the 34th Division reserve, was at San Benedetto; the 361st, at Montecatini; and the 363rd, at Madna del Forelli. The Division command post was at Villanova, with a small advance detachment at Pietramala." [Robbins, p. 234] As winter ended and April approached, preparations were made for an offensive campaign against the Germans' Winter Line, the fortress Mt. Adone near Bologna, and the Po river plain beyond. If these objectives could be achieved, it would mean an end to the months of mountain warfare and an opportunity to bring air power and armor to bear against the Germans at a time when things were going poorly for them in France. Allied armies had survived the Battle of the Bulge and on March 7 had captured a strategic bridge over the Rhine River at Remagen. Germany was on the defensive everywhere.
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17 April, 1945

Moved to Loiano, into the building which had been used by the Forward CP as a Hdq since September, when our drive on Highway 65 was stopped at Livergnano. The building, I am told, is the Agricultural Building of the University of Bologna. On the hill above is the observatory, also part of the University.

On Sunday, 15 April, was at the Fwd CP, since Ch Jaeger was away on his trip to Cairo and Palestine. Services

at: Fwd Cp ----- 0900 - attendance - 66
348 F.A. Bn --- 1100 - attendance - 93
316 Eng. Bn --- 1400 - attendance - 46

Had dinner at 348 FA Bn CP. After dinner went out to an OP near La Guarda to see the formations of heavy bombers come over. They were so high we could scarcely see them. Gen. Livesay and Gen. Williamson were there, too, with their aides.

Tonight from the balcony off our office I could see rocket firing planes attacking a mountain in the distance preparatory to the "jump-off" of the 88th Division at 1000 tonight. The planes come in small groups, circle their target a few times like vultures over carrion, then peel off and dive straight for their target, all guns open and firing. One attack started three huge fires on the side of the mountain. Our troops jump off at 0300 in the morning - for Bologna, the Po river, and beyond.

[-----]
The spring offensive proved to be very successful. By April 18, Mt. Adone, surrounding high ground, and the town of Planoro had been captured by the 91st. Bologna and the Po Valley lay ahead. On April 21, the 362nd entered the outskirts of Bologna and occupied a stadium on the western edge of the city.
[-----]

30 April, 1945

Made a trip with mail clerk to Bologna, Modena, Ostiglia, and the Po river. Visited 56 Evac (set up in the stadium, Bologna) and had dinner there. Near the Po River German vehicles were strewn along the road on both sides, every hundred yards or so. Most of them had been burned, some hit by our planes, some burned by the Germans themselves when they had run out of gas in their retreat. Picked up a German rifle at an APO near the Po river. Had supper at the 170 Evac Hosp with Ch Wise, Catholic chaplain there.

The Po Valley is beautiful farming country - as level as a house floor, rich soil, farms geometrically laid out. Rows of mulberry and fruit trees are set at regular intervals in the fields. Between the rows of trees, grain, alfalfa, etc. is growing. It all makes a very impressive picture. This valley is no doubt the most productive area in Italy.

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By this date, April 30, the 91st had moved more than a hundred miles north and east from Bologna to Treviso, near Venice. On the plain of the Po River, motorized infantry and tanks picked up the burden from the foot soldier. German positions were quickly overrun and prisoners were taken by the thousands.
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2 May 1945

Through the Po Valley - from Loiano, to Bologna, to Ferrara, - to Treviso. Set up in an Italian barracks. Once used by Mussolini's cavalry, more recently by the Germans. This afternoon a plane came over and dropped Stars and Stripes announcing the surrender of all German armies in Italy.

5 May 1945

To US Mil Cem at Mirandola - where our dead in this drive are buried. Had supper at the 8 Evac Hosp with Ch Laird. Had only a few men in the hospital.

7 May 1945

To Cormons, Italy. Arrived at Fwd CP about 1500, but it was nearly three hours before it was finally determined where we should set up. Finally got word to go to Soleschiano. There we set up our office in the Palazzo.

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"Early on the morning of May 7, Col. Gen. Alfred Jodl of the German high command entered Allied headquarters in a red school building at Reims, France. There on behalf of his government, he signed the terms of unconditional surrender. ... After five years, eight months, and seven days, the European phase of World War II had ended." [Vol. W, "World Book Encyclopedia", p. 399]
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13 May 1945

Conducted:

1 worship service, RR CP -----	30 - 0900
1 worship service, H&S Co, 316 Eng. -	27 - 1030
1 worship service, 91 AM Co. \	
791 Ord -----	55 - 1900
8 Ord, etc. /	

14 May 1945

Had Division Chaplains' Conference at Office - 0930. All Chaplains present.

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This is the last entry from 1945. Division records show that the 91st had various missions which kept it in Italy until August. Early that month, they moved rapidly back through much of the territory won at high cost from the Germans during the previous year to the Volturno Redeployment Area south of Rome. On August 14, the first troops of the 91st left Naples aboard ship, headed for home. At this time there were undoubtedly mixed feelings among the men: happiness at the prospect of leave to see their families in the States; uncertainty as to the nature of their redeployment to fight in the Pacific. But Japanese resistance in the Pacific was coming to an end as well. On August 6 the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Three days later the second fell on Nagasaki. The Japanese were forced to accept the inevitability of their defeat and they signed the documents of surrender on September 2, 1945. There would be no Pacific Campaign for the 91st Infantry Division and, lacking a world war to fight, the division would once again be inactivated.
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HOMECOMING: 1946 - A Resume

The beginning of 1946, I was at mother's home at Bluff City, which requires a word of explanation. On November 10, 1945, at noon, I had left Camp Rucker, Ala., my last army station in World War II and my separation center, for home. Chaplain Joseph A. Lenk, Catholic, one of our Division Chaplains, drove me to Atlanta. I arrived home - to stay - at 0345, Armistice Day, Sunday, 11 November, 1945. After Thanksgiving, during the last week in November, Ruth and I went up to mama's home at Bluff City.

At this time, Clifford was still working at the shipyards, Newport News, Virgil and Ennis, and boys, were at home. Herbert was not yet out of the Navy. Ray was in Japan, or preparing to go there. Clifford and Virgil had talked over the possibility of going into the sheet metal business together; they thought, too, that Herbert and possibly Ray might be interested. In fact, Clifford was about to buy out a shop in Virginia and ship the tools to Virgil. Since Virgil was working for Weaver's Sheet Metal Shop, Bristol, and had very limited time to look for a suitable location, I went to Elizabethton, where they thought they would like to set up in business, to look for a place for them.

I first consulted with Mr. Paty, of Paty Lumber Co. He suggested a building on Hattie Avenue, and volunteered to go with me to see it. Together we went and looked it over, after getting a key from Mr. T.J. "Doc" Hale. The building was a barn-like structure, rather open but fairly substantial, which had seen various uses through the years - stables for saddle horses, coal yard, Rural Electrification Authority storage place, cannery, cement block factory, hog butchering place. Three parties had "stuff" stored in it when we looked at it. About half the floor was concrete. Mr. Paty thought the building would serve the purpose; so did I. He volunteered further to go with me to talk to "Doc" Hale about the possibility of buying it. He told "Doc" that I might be interested if I could get it right, otherwise he was going to let me have material to put up a building. He hadn't owned the building more than three or four months, I believe, - had bought it as a real estate investment - but agreed to sell to me at just what he had paid for it, plus enough to buy the real estate broker (Grindstaff) off, which amount was \$50. Thus, the lot and building were to cost \$4050. On November 30, 1945, I gave Mr. T.J. Hale, then druggist at Central Drug Store, corner Elk Avenue and Sycamore Street, \$100 in cash to confirm

the sale of the property. The following day, Saturday, December 1, 1945, we arranged for transfer of title, insurance, etc. and Ruth and I signed a Deed of Trust for \$2000. The first \$2050, we paid in cash from savings in the bank. The property had formerly been owned by a Mr. W.A. Wolfe, of Marion, Virginia. Sold to Mr. Hale for \$4000.

I began immediately to make plans to ready the building for use as a sheet metal shop. Called Clifford on the evening of 30 November, 1945, and told him to ship the tools to Elizabethton.

From about the middle of December to the middle of January, 1946, I worked as steadily as the weather would permit to get the place ready. Had to get the goods in storage removed. Bought, painted, and installed plain half-windows around sides - two full windows in front. Secured new office door, painted it, mortised locks, hung it. By the last day of December, 1945, had the place wired - by Jack Chambers, for \$97.50. Gave the office a coat of paint; also the front door and window facings. Put my old flat-top desk and swivel chair in office. By January 9, had the necessary plumbing done - included water line to meter, commode, water tank, etc. - done by Lynch Plumbing & Heating, at cost of \$78.97, plus \$5.50 later for the toilet seat. I put flex-o-glass over the high windows. The flue - in front - was built by Uncle Clark (J.C. Lowrie) on 18 December, 1945, which turned out to be a snowy day. The second week in January, Herbert and I got a concrete mixer from Paty Lumber Co. and poured a section of floor in a space which he wanted for a welding booth; also, we poured a section of sidewalk.

By 15 January, 1946, Virgil, Herbert, and Clifford were able to announce the opening of Watson Bros. Sheet Metal Shop, 516 Hattle Avenue, Elizabethton, Tenn. Ray joined the partnership later in the year.

For the holidays, I had taken off only three days. On Sunday, 23 December, came to Morristown with Uncle Clark, who was on his way to see Cousin Harmon at Knoxville. He had Sunday dinner with us. On Wednesday, 26th December, I went back to Elizabethton to finish the work there.

In readying the place for the shop, I spent, including miscellaneous items, the sum of \$374.36.

9 February, 1946 - Left this morning on the Southerner for Baltimore. Arrived in Washington late, so missed regular train connection to Baltimore. Finally got a Trallways Bus and arrived in Baltimore around midnight. The Prems, although they were expecting me, had almost

given up hope of my coming. I stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur B. Prem, and Mother Prem, 2522 Harford Road. They had just retired when I called by telephone; were up to greet me when I got there by taxi. Mr. Prem was my Sunday School Superintendent the two years I was pastor of the Alameda Baptist Church, Alameda Boulevard and 32nd Street, Baltimore. It was good to renew our friendship.

On Sunday, 10 February, went to Sunday School with Mr. Prem. Seemed much like home to return to the church from which I left to enter the Armed Forces. The many familiar faces and the warm greetings made me feel welcome and at home again. I was invited to sit on the rostrum during the morning service and was given an opportunity to bring greetings. Explained why Ruth was not with me - the expected arrival of a son in early summer. The pastor, Leslie M. Bowling, was away on account of illness, and Dr. W.H. Baylor, former General Secretary for Maryland, was acting as pastor. He prevailed upon me to speak at the evening service on my experiences in military service, and particularly upon my trips to Rome and Palestine. This I did. While I spoke, so much snow fell the people had difficulty getting home. (No, not so long-winded as that!) Really didn't speak many minutes over the hour; but more snow fell in that hour than I had ever seen fall in the same length of time.

The afternoon of the 12th I left Baltimore by bus for Washington and a visit with Vedder and family at 750 Atlantic Avenue, S.E. Arrived there rather late; had difficulty getting a taxi driver who knew the address. Vedder was at work; Curtis about to go to Army; Imogene in school; Mildred married - living in on of the Carolinas. Iley was well. I decided to stay over the following day and night so as to have more time with Vedder. On the 13th we spent the morning hobnobbing around the city. Visited the offices of Rep. B. Carroll Reece, Tenn.; and Sen. Tom Stewart, Tenn. Secured cards to Senate and House galleries. In the afternoon, I visited the House gallery briefly. Vedder and I looked at some household appliances in stores. Went to A&N Trading Co., Inc., where I got a full set of Army ribbons to which I was entitled. Cost - \$1.55. Location: N.W. Cor. 8th and D Sts, N.W.

Thursday morning, 14 February, 1946, Vedder saw me off at Union Station on the Southerner for home. Arrived home the same day.

June 15 was the red letter day of the year for us, for on that day our dream of a child of our own came true, and Robert Lowrie Watson was born. He arrived almost to the day nine calendar months from the time Ruth and I met at

the Ansley Hotel, Atlanta, upon my return from overseas. I had got to Fort McPherson, Atlanta, on the 12th of September, 1945, and got my 45 day leave immediately - rather 30 days, later extended to 45. So spent the night of the 12th at the Ansley alone. Ruth arrived the evening of the 13th September, 1945. ...

After Ruth had left the delivery room, Dr. Purvis called me in to see the newcomer. He was lying in a small receiving basket. He was red, wrinkled, lean and hungry. Dr. Purvis pointed out that he had a slight deformity of the left foot - a club foot - which the doctor said could be corrected very easily. He cautioned me not to mention it to Ruth - said he would tell her the following morning (which he failed to do). I reassured Ruth that Robert was a fine boy before leaving her and going home. ...

Ruth was greatly disturbed the next morning when she discovered, at the ten o'clock feeding, the deformity in the left foot. When I came at noon, I could see right away something was wrong. The doctor hadn't mentioned it to her. (Perhaps he didn't have the heart to do so). I assured her that the foot could be entirely corrected and that it would be all right. Later, she asked Dr. Purvis about it and he gave her further assurance.

[-----]
And so, this recounting of the wartime portion of my father's diary comes to an end on this unlikely note. It seems ironic that it should be so, for this accident of birth prevented my participation - probably unwilling participation - in a bitter war of another era, Vietnam. My parents could hardly have imagined that my slightly twisted foot would stand between me and the necessity to discover whether I was destined to become another Pvt. Fortner; or, perhaps a Capt. Roderick.
[-----]

A POSTSCRIPT

[-----]
John Watson died in November of 1966. He was 55 years of age. Happily, there were other red-letter days which came before that tragic one and many good times which resulted. Charlotte Lyon Watson and Charles Coffey Watson, twins, shared my birthday when they made their appearance in June of 1952. James Perrin Watson completed the family when he came along in October of 1953. All three were born in Knoxville while my father was pastoring a small Methodist church, Rutherford Memorial, in nearby Corryton, Tennessee. How he came to be serving a Methodist congregation at that time; and how, a few years later, he left the ministry to take up a second career in teaching could probably be the subject of another book. It might have been a book he would have written, had he been granted the time to do so.

What my father might have written about his post-war experiences, I can only guess, but I am sure that he would have relished the opportunity to write. He had a great respect for literacy and an unending desire for knowledge. While in school, he spent money for books which others might have felt compelled to spend on the "necessities" of life. After returning home from Italy and after seeing to affairs such as the startup of "Watson Brothers", he took advantage of the GI Bill to once again enter the classroom. The last entry in the diary came during that time.

[-----]
1 April 1947

My birthday! Thirty-six years of age. I can hardly realize that I am now beginning the second half of my three score years and ten.

Robert will be ten months old in a few days-- on the 15th.

Spent some time today painting-- red-- the play pen which I made for him Saturday.

We are now living at 28 W. 108th Street, Shanks Village, Orangeburg, N.Y.

I am taking sixteen points, or sixteen semester hours, of work at Union Theological Seminary, as follows:

Old Testament Theology - Dr. Terrien

Christianity and Human Tragedy - Dr. Roberts and
Dr. Kroner

New Testament - Survey - Dr. Grant and Dr. Knox
Systematic Theology - Dr. Tillich
The Christian Idea of God - Dr. Roberts

Union Seminary is located at Broadway and 120th Street,
New York 27, N.Y.

I spent a considerable part of today working on a paper
for the course in Christianity and Human Tragedy. The
topic: The Problem of Evil in F.R. Tennant Philosophical
Theology.

[-----]
His pursuit of knowledge also led John Watson to earn a Master
of Arts degree from Columbia University in February of 1948.

College and seminary degrees and wartime experience in
ministering to his fellow soldiers, however, did not lead to
easy access to pulpits and congregations when he returned to the
ministry. It was difficult to make up for lost time and to get
a foothold once again in his chosen profession. At the risk of
appearing bitter about the subject, I would observe that the
"church" business is big business, with windows of opportunity
that rarely reopen once closed. Even moderate levels of success
seem to require "merchandising" that interferes with the
message, or may even become the message. I suspect that he
might have written of these things, given the opportunity.

Unfortunately, there were no retirement years and no further
time for writing. However, I remain thankful that the
preceding observations of my father's were written and
preserved so that I and others who may be interested can know
something of that wartime era as it related to my family.
Without this diary, I would know very little of that history,
for I can remember hearing my father discuss the war scarcely a
dozen times. When he did, it was usually to speak, in tones of
incredulity and disgust, of "... man's inhumanity to man."

In some ways he and his brothers might be considered very lucky
to have survived the war years unharmed. But after reflecting
on this at length, I have come to doubt whether anyone touched
by war escapes unharmed. Although it seems futile, it still
seems appropriate to hope that our country will never again feel
the necessity of war as it did in those days, now a half-century
ago.

[-----]

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APPENDIX

- o Certificate: 91st Infantry Division's 91 Mile Club
- o Time Magazine Articles from December 14, 1942
- o The Telegram That Led to the Birthday Party
- o V-Mail Letters: Ruth and John Watson, 1944
- o Map: Routes Taken by the 91st in WW II
- o Map Used by Troops of the 91st in Italy, 1944
- o Newspaper Clippings from August, 1944
- o Map: Combat Areas Between Florence and Bologna
- o Newspaper Clipping from October, 1944, (King)
- o Stars and Stripes Clipping (Fleisher)
- o Stars and Stripes Clipping (Williams)
- o Stars and Stripes Photo of Loiano Church
- o Verdi Theatre Program of Opera Rigoletto
- o Medford Mail Tribune Resume Article

91ST INFANTRY DIVISION

91 MILE CLUB



15 SEPTEMBER 1942

CERTIFICATE

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT BETWEEN THE DATES 7 SEPTEMBER 1942 AND 12 SEPTEMBER 1942 INCLUSIVE, Capt., (Chap.) JOHN J. WATSON, 361st Inf. SUCCESSFULLY ON FOOT, WITH TBA EQUIPMENT, COMPLETED THE 91 MILE PRACTICE MARCH OF THE 91ST INFANTRY DIVISION, 28 3/4 HOURS ACTUAL MARCHING TIME, THUS COMMENDABLY DEMONSTRATING SUPERIOR PHYSICAL ENDURANCE AND STAMINA.



C. H. Gerhardt
C. H. GERHARDT,
MAJOR GENERAL, U. S. ARMY,
COMMANDING.

TRAINING

When You Fall . . .

Men of the 506th Parachute Battalion marched 115 miles through Georgia last week in three days. The battalion slogged through fog, rain, sleet and hail, over soggy fields and concrete highways. They carried full equipment, including machine guns. Some fell out with sore feet. Even they got congratulations from their commander, Colonel Robert Sink. Said he: "When you fell, you fell face forward."

Perhaps the toughest trainer in the U.S. Army is a wiry little man who carries a



Camp White Rogue

MAJOR GENERAL GERHARDT
He stripped to toughen.

full pack and a rifle while marching his troops across stony Oregon desert and who expects his middle-aged staff officers to be as taut-bellied as the hardest young private. Major General Charles Hunter Gerhardt breaks in new men "gently" by sleeping them in pup tents in the rain, making them swim icy Oregon rivers.

Since General Gerhardt formally activated the 91st ("Wild West") Division at Camp White last August, some of his junior officers have developed convenient hernias or obtained transfers to softer outfits; but he himself takes raw men under pack five miles through the rain in one hour, nine miles in two, finishes at the double, insists that every officer under him be able to do the same. Even Gerhardt's chaplains practice marksmanship, swim icy rivers, make themselves physical as well as moral exemplars.

For critics who call Camp White the Alcatraz of training camps, Charlie Ger-

hardt has an answer: "We are trying to guarantee every man that, by God, when his platoon leader takes him into action, he'll have a chance of getting back alive."

WOMEN

WAAC AWOL

Pete DeCenzie manages Des Moines' Casino Theater, where customers pay 30¢ before 1 p.m., 30¢ before 5 p.m. and thereafter 40¢ to see second-rate movies and bush-league burlesque ("Midnight Show Tonight . . . Red Hot Thrills . . . Adults Only"). Last week Manager DeCenzie was full of woe. Said he: "I had no idea. . . . I certainly was surprised. . . . I was shocked to death. . . ."

The thing that shocked him (and Des Moines too) was that henna-haired, sexy Amber D'Georg, the Casino's strip-teaser,



Associated Press

AUXILIARY GREGORY
She stripped to tease.

billed as "direct from Hollywood," was really direct from Fort Des Moines. Her billing there: Auxiliary Kathryn Doris Gregory, 15th Company, 3rd Regiment, Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. Her home: Fort Worth.

On Nov. 22, finding WAAC life dull, she had posed as a stranded showgirl and landed a job in the Casino's chorus. Four days later she had been upped to "Samoan Love Dancer" (the drummer beat a tom-tom while she wiggled in a lei) and strip-teaser (blue lights followed her around the stage as she teased off a gown borrowed from Mrs. DeCenzie). By Nov. 28 WAAC authorities had discovered where she was and quietly hauled her back to Fort Des Moines. Last week the news leaked and reporters persuaded the Fort's genial commandant, Colonel John A. Hoag, to part with details.

In the Army a soldier who goes AWOL gets guardhouse sentence. But the WAACs

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To
Mrs. John J. Watson
Route # 4
Rutledge, Tennessee
U. S. A.

From
Chaplain (Maj) John J. Watson
749 91 Inf. Div.
APO-91, 2/6 PM
New York, N. Y.
12 May 1944

Dearest Ruth,
Had a nice long letter from you today - post-
marked Blaine - which is the one you sent by Mrs.
Parrin to be mailed. Making thanks for it. I appre-
ciate more than I can tell each one - and all the
expressions of devotion to me. These assurances
mean much to me during this period of our sep-
aration. And I appreciate more now my own-
girl - in the little leather folder. Have it on my
field desk. The poems, too, will be an inspiration to
me until I return.

_____ was out to see me today. He is a
Captain now and looks well in his uniform. He
is stationed only about forty or fifty miles from
me. I want to return his visit soon. We had a
good long chat. He said he had heard that Mrs.
Bushman is critically ill.

My watch I could so much trouble about the watch.
I am having it repaired here - at practically no cost
I will keep it as a reserve in case I should get
my other one broken.

I expect to assist Ch. Vandevord in a service to-
morrow. Not long ago I preached from Acts 27.
Would suggest it to you for your devotional reading.

Will just air-mail stamps on this. In that
way, it will be sent air-mail to you from Chicago
where V-mail for Tennessee is reproduced. Will be
interested to know just how long it takes for you
to receive it - if any quicker that way.
Love yours,
John

V-MAIL



To
Chaplain (Maj) John J. Watson
8-405 248
Hdq. 91st Inf. Div.
APO-91
Chattanooga, New York, N.Y.

From
Mrs. John J. Watson
331 E. Main St.
Morristown, Tenn.
July 19, 1944

Dearest John, No letter today but an airmail yesterday
of July 9. Mama had forwarded it to me here at your office.
I had planned to phone about tomorrow, but today we
had a board from Ray saying he expects to get home Sat.
So I may wait and see him before I go. Clifford plans
to get Orville Hiatt to take my things down to the depot
tomorrow to ship down home. I have every thing ready
even tagged. All our things here are now in good order.

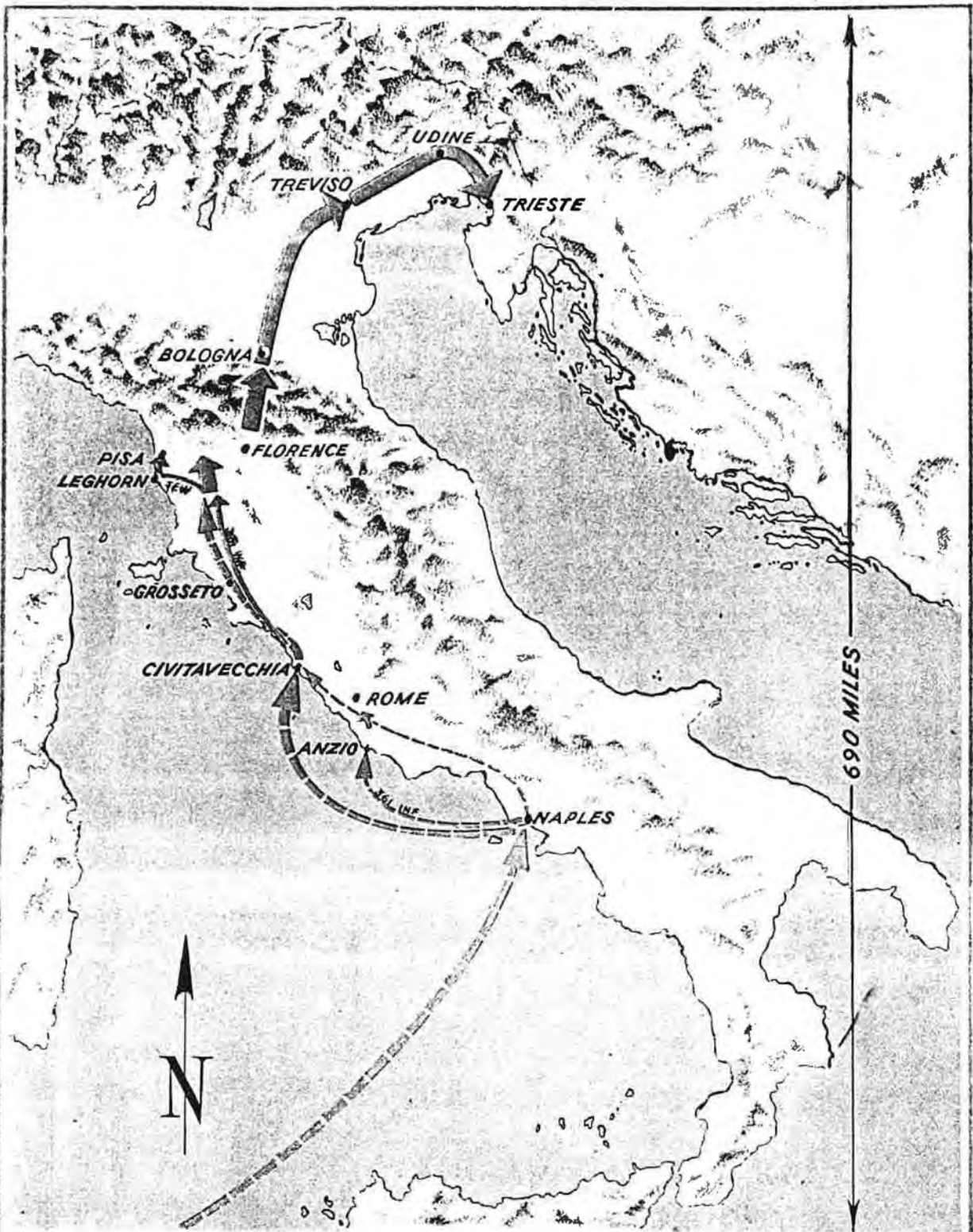
Since you can't wear your civilian clothes, I taking
part of those with me. I want Virgil to wear your
shoes (two pr.) for they just fit him. I don't believe you
can wear them now. He has worn one pr. already.

Edna and Clifford came back from Bristol today.
They shopped for shoes for me - red sandals to
match the boots you sent to me. I'm so pleased with
them and they really fit well, and are comfortable.

Mother Watson is branking beans (Ky. Wonder) for
dinner tomorrow, and we do wish you had some of them.
Today we had ham berry pie, and was it good! How
I wished you had some! We think of you much!
This is Tues. am (July 20). We are all well. How I do
hope you are. It is good to be here - only wish you
were here with us. I miss you terribly!!!

John, I rec'd the enclosure in your last letter. Will
preserve them for you. All my love and kisses,
Your Ruth

V-MAIL



"OPERATION ITALIA"
(Naples to Trieste)

91ST INFANTRY DIVISION
WORLD WAR II

91st Div Revealed On 5th Army Front

ADVANCED ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS, Aug. 18—The 91st Division, elements of which have been fighting with the 5th Army since June, was the first American division to reach the Arno River, and the first to enter the southern outskirts of Pisa, an official announcement disclosed today.

The division, which saw action in the World War I from the Meuse-Argonne offensive to the Armistice, was reactivated Aug. 15, 1942. Its original cadre was drawn mainly from the 1st Cavalry Division which has seen action in the South Pacific. Personnel hails predominantly from the West and Midwest.

Maj. Gen. William G. Livesay, native of Illinois and Army veteran of 29 years' service, has commanded the division since July 14, 1943. The 91st arrived overseas in May at Oran and undertook rigorous invasion training.

Early in this phase of training, a regimental combat team was ordered from North Africa to Italy and was attached to the 5th Army II Corps May 31. This team subsequently saw action with the II and VI Corps, 34th and 36th Divs, and 1st Armored at Anzio, in the breach of the Gustav line and in the chase of Germans north of Rome to Leghorn. The team reverted to the 91st on July 6.

A second combat team was assigned to the 34th on July 1 to gain experience. This unit returned to division control July 12 when the 91st attacked enemy positions south of the Arno. The 91st entered its first engagement as a complete division on July 12 and remained in action from Casaglia north through mountain terrain to the Arno. One division unit reached the Arno July 18.

The division insignia is a green fir tree shoulder patch symbolizing the northwest from which a large portion of the original division was drawn in the last war. Its motto is "Always Ready," and its war cry "Powder River! Let 'er buck!"

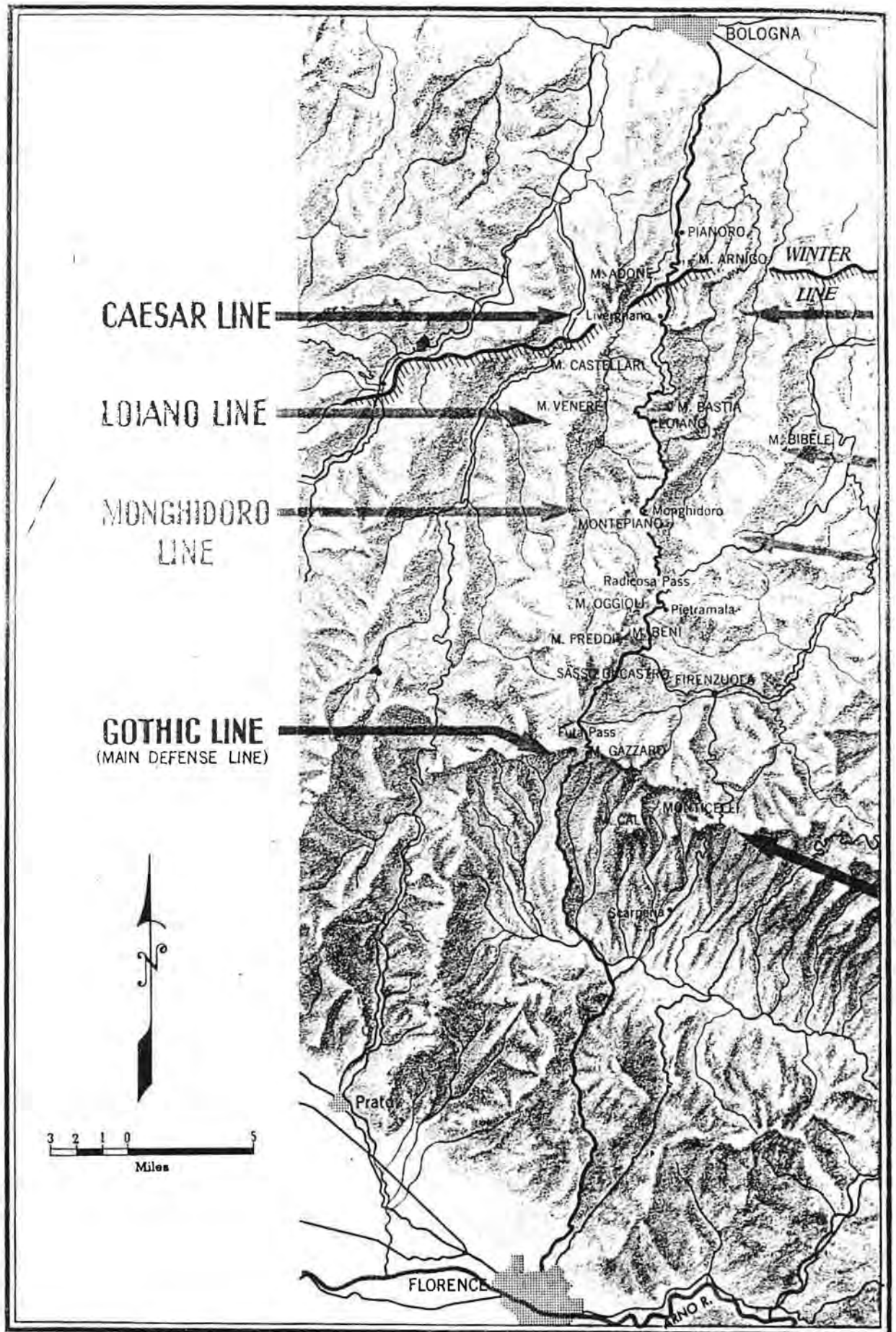
363rd Regiment First Troops in Pisa, Leghorn

ADVANCED ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS, Aug. 30—Men of the 363rd Regiment of the American 91st Infantry Division were officially revealed today to have been among the first troops to enter Leghorn and Pisa the latter part of July.

The regiment, commanded by Col. W. Fulton Magill, Jr., Portland, Ore., first entered combat July 4 and only 14 days later, after a fast pull-out from near the 5th Army center, it feinted in toward Leghorn from the southeast and then hauled around to the east to enter the city from the northeast.

With hardly a pause, the outfit struck northward from Leghorn, crossed the canal above the city, and after clearing the enemy from the coastal strip between Leghorn and Pisa entered the southwestern section of the latter city early in the morning of July 24.

During both the above mentioned operations the 363rd was attached to the 34th Division.



Map 11: From the Arno to Bologna

Remember him? And his Service Club fiancée
at Adair?

Italy's Fog-Shrouded Peaks, Mud Delay American Drive To Bologna

By WILLIAM B. KING

WITH THE FIFTH ARMY IN NORTHERN ITALY, Oct. 18 (AP)—The Fifth Army's battle in northern Italy's ragged jumble of muddy mountains must be seen to be believed—and even then you wonder how battle-weary American soldiers have managed to inch their way along the narrow cliff-bordered roads and precipitous heights which bar the way to Bologna.

You have wondered at the apparent snail's pace of the Army moving up the center of the Italian peninsula, but when you see the fog-shrouded mountains and narrow, twisting roads where they fight, you marvel that the campaign has been possible at all.

You make your way along a highway into which has been channelled all vehicular support for

this fighting Army, until you reach the headquarters of the American division which is spearheading the attack against an enemy who daily is making it clearer that he will not give up a yard of Italian soil without a stubborn, cunning fight.

At a division command post you climb into a jeep with operations officer Maj. George Klemm of Bellmore, N. Y., and driver Max Hammond of Portis, Ky., and set out for a look at the battle area.

You pass along a narrow street through piles of rubble and tumbled brick and mortar walls which once was a village. Italian peasants grub in the wreckage piles, and big-eyed children stand in doorways, staring at you without notice of the crack and rumble of our artillery.

Mud slops and spews under your wheels as you ride up and down

the winding road which clings to the mountain side. Milky fog blots out the valley below, and for miles you ride through clouds that cut your visibility to a few feet. Here you realize the main difficulty of the present phase of fighting. Although the peak of the Appennine ridge has been passed, every ragged ridge on the northern slopes offers the German defenders new positions.

Ambulance jeeps pass you, carrying back their cargoes of suffering. One is crowded with walking wounded, each uniformly tagged at a first aid station. Each tag is uniformly topped by a pale, gaunt face of pain. Another and another pass, some with stretchers slung before and behind the driver. You cannot see the faces of blanket-wrapped stretcher cases, and you are glad.

There Are No Headlines For This Kind Of Fight

WITH THE 5TH ARMY, Oct. 20 (Delayed)—If a GI, slopping yard by yard through the thick mud, cold and rain, miserable and tired beyond belief, found time to open his home town newspapers several weeks ago, he might have read the following headline: "Allies Chase Routed Foe 15 Miles From Bologna."

This headline actually did appear in a New York newspaper dated Sept. 25th. If the doughboy had read farther, as his family knowing he is in Italy and vitally concerned with how things are going here undoubtedly did, he would have read this: "Mighty blows of the U. S. 5th and British 8th Armies caved in the entire eastern half of the 115-mile Gothic Line and today the Germans were in disorganized retreat from the rubble of their fortifications before American forces surging to the edge of the Lombardy plain within 15 miles of Bologna."

ADVANCE SLOW

This to describe the slow, heart-breaking advance that crawled up the slope of one mountain only to face another one on the other side. This to describe a battle with an enemy who has never fought any harder or any better on this or any other front. This to describe an enemy whose withdrawal through the Gothic Line came slowly, yard by yard, and only after long and bitter resistance. This to describe a month of fighting that will rank with the bloodiest and most costly of the entire war.

No, the Gothic Line didn't "cave in" in one "mighty blow." It took many little pushings by a lot of guys who won't do much pushing any more. And, the Germans weren't in "disorganized retreat"

—not then and not now even though the Gothic Line per se has been passed. The Germans are fighting well, their equipment is good, and if there are reports that their morale is cracking, somebody ought to tell them about it.

GIVE AND TAKE

And the Americans, on Sept. 25th, or even now for that matter, weren't "surging" to the edge of the Lombardy plain. They are getting there foot by foot. They are getting there by advancing a little one day, maybe getting pushed back the next, and advancing a little more the following day. They are getting to the Lombardy plain alright. If the High Command wants them to take it, they'll take it. But it won't be a surging line buck or a home run with the bases loaded. It has got to be done the hard way.

Correspondents at the 5th Army press camp were unanimous in their condemnation of this type of story which is finding its way into far too many American newspapers. Any writer who has spent even one day on this front during the past month could never and would never write this sort of a story.

But they point out, in all fairness, that sometimes the communique is misleading and most operational stories are written from the communique and from the information in the official background. They also point out that very often stories written by correspondents here are rewritten by other men when the story reaches the United States. Maybe the rewrite men spice the stories up with phrases like "mighty blows," "headlong flight," "disorganized retreat," "utter rout," etc. Sensational headlines sell papers.

A SAD SITUATION

Whatever the reasons and whoever is at fault, the tendency of newspapers to treat the war like some gigantic football game is having two serious repercussions. Firstly, it is widening the dangerous and unhappy gap between the front-line soldier and the civilian. You can't kid the GIs. They are right up there and they know what the score is. They resent what they consider home front ignorance of what is happening and the fact that the civilians "don't know there is a war on."

But how can the civilians know when they are treated to what may most kindly be called "inaccurate reporting?" How can the civilians know what their soldiers are going through when newspapers call the Italian battles of the past month a "surging advance?"

And secondly, the GI is losing his faith in the press. It is bad enough that "honest" mistakes in reporting are inevitable, but when the men at the front read stories that do not pretend to give an accurate picture of his very real sufferings, bitterness and distrust can only result.

—Sgt. BOB FLEISHER

Italy Front Tough, House Body Agrees

By Sgt. DON WILLIAMS
Staff Correspondent

ON THE 5TH ARMY FRONT, Dec. 17—Fifteen members of the House Committee on Military Affairs jeep-bounced their way along the 5th Army's windswept, cold Apennine Mountain front today.

Accompanied by Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, Commanding General of the 15th Army Group, with whom they took turns riding in a topless jeep, the Congressmen traveled for more than eight hours over the mountainous terrain north of Florence.

Rep. John M. Costello (D., Calif.), Acting Chairman of the committee, and Rep. J. Parnell Thomas (R., N. J.), ranking minority member, described the sector through which the 5th Army had been pushing, as the most rugged and difficult fighting country they had seen during the Committee's three-week tour of the western and Italian fronts.

"Compared to this, the countryside in France is just rolling hills," Mr. Costello said.

"I've never seen anything as tough as this," was Mr. Thomas' comment.

The Congressmen left their civilian clothing at the hotel in Florence where they were given winter underwear, galoshes, combat suits, jackets or parkas and gloves for the trip. Their equipment also included steel helmets on which their names had been painted.

The Congressmen were briefed on the tactics and strategy of the Italian campaign by General Clark. They were joined at 5th Army by Lt. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., Commanding General of the 5th Army, Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Keyes, Commanding General of the II Corps, Maj. Gen. John Cannon, Commanding General of the 12th Air Force and Brig. Gen. Ben Childlaw, Commander of the 22nd TAF of the 12th AAF. These officers

(Continued on page 8)

Monday, December 18, 1944

Italy Front Tough, House Body Agrees After 5th Army Tour

(Continued from page 1)

accompanied the Representatives for most of the trip.

The tour, which took the Representatives as far forward as bomb-shattered Loiano and to within four miles of the front lines and ahead of Allied heavy gun emplacements, gave them a first-hand view of the cozy muddy lowlands and forbidding mountains through which the 5th Army has moved.

They didn't get to the foxholes. But they saw and felt the mud. They gasped at the artillery shriveled trees on the bleak slopes of the snow-capped and cloud-shrouded mountain peaks. They heard the roar of Allied artillery. They saw a German 88 mm. shell land less than 1,000 yards away. They were wetted by the rain, and they felt the bitter cold.

In the middle of the Gothic Line the Representatives dismounted from their jeeps and slogged their way through ankle deep mud to the crest of a slope near Altuzzo Hill.

There, standing within a few feet of the graves of several German soldiers, they watched and listened while General Clark told of the fighting around the hill where at one stage of the battle dogged German defenders threw back eight American attacks. General Clark described the fighting in the sector as among the toughest in which the 5th Army had engaged in all Italy.

SAMPLED MUD

The Congressmen travelled over rock strewn, mud-rutted roads, at times so narrow and curving that one way traffic and four wheel drive were necessary. They saw knee booted GIs shovelling the mud from the sides of the road and they passed the lighted Christmas tree at Radicosa Pass where American doughboys have attempted to create a bit of the holiday atmosphere, even though they are far from home.

They lunched on K rations and coffee in a bomb-wrecked building at Monghidoro and attended non-denominational services on the second floor of the same building.

The Congressmen were told by Chaplain Dean T. Stevenson of Bethlehem, Pa., that upon them rested the responsibility for the establishment of a world to which the doughboys could return and live in peace with others. Earlier the party had passed through a ruined village where church bells were calling the paesanos to Sunday worship.

The party returned to Florence after a stop at the 8th Evacuation Hospital commanded by Lt. Col. Harris S. Colomboe. There the Committee members talked with soldiers who had been brought from the battlefield but a few hours before.

STILL A HOUSE OF GOD



When the little town of Loiano was in the path of war the church of San Giacomo and Santa Margherita, like many places in the village, was caught in artillery crossfire. But the church is still in use. Here, men of the 91st Division return to the town and to services held by Catholic Chaplain Joseph M. Lenk of Fort Wayne, Ind., assisted by Cpl. Norman Krohn of Milwaukee. The war-raided chapel is used now by members of all faiths. (91st Division Photo)

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— F L O R E N C E —

G R A N D O P E R A S E A S O N

November 1944

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by

Francesco Maria Piave

Music by

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Vancouver, B. C.

Record of the 91st

"Powder River, Let 'er Buck" was a familiar slogan here in southern Oregon in the early days of Camp White when the 91st Division was in training. It became a frightening battle cry to the Germans later on when the Powder River boys, fresh from final training in Africa, smashed from Rome to Livergnano—from the Gustav Line to the Ceasar Line.

INTEREST here in the 91st was high for more than one reason. This outfit was first activated and trained at Camp White; many western men, including boys of this community were in the ranks; the 91st in World War I was also a western contingent and established the gallant traditions of the division at Meuse-Argonne, Lys, Audenande, Petegem and Kasteelwijk in 1918.

UNDER the leadership of kindly, able Major General William Livesay, the 91st covered itself with glory at Chianni, Monghidoro, Loiano and many battles which were front page news during the Italian campaign. Three times it was the first unit of the Fifth Army to objectives—Leghorn, Pisa and Monticelli. It broke through the Gothic Line, the Berta Line and the Ceasar Line. The 91st became an outfit feared and respected by the enemy, praised and admired by its allies.

GENERAL LIVESAY and the many officers and men of his command were well known and liked here in southern Oregon. People of this community took personal pride in the battle record of the 91st Division. The pine tree shoulder patch, so familiar on Medford streets in 1942 and 1943, has become an emblem of high courage. When the history of the war is written many acts of personal and collective gallantry of this outfit will be found recorded in its pages. — H. G.

