

SECOND BATTALION, 86TH MOUNTAIN INFANTRY HISTORY
23 December 1944 to 30 September 1945

The Second Battalion, 86th Mountain Infantry, xxxxxxxxxxby Lt. Col. Dured E. Townsend, Maj.. Harold E. Green, executive officer, with the following staff and company commanders:

Capt. John G. Jorgensen – Hq. Commandant and S-1
2d Lt. Mount G. Wild – S-2
Capt. Ralph F. Lafferty – S-3
1st Lt. Bradford L. Boyston – S-4
Capt. Jack D. Carpenter – E Co. Commandant ✓
Capt. Percy A Rideout – F Co. Commandant
Capt. Ridgway Foust – G Co. Commandant ✓
Capt. Laurence Bl Ely – H Co. Commandant

debarked from the S. S. Argentina at Naples, Italy at 0900, 23 December 1944. The entire Battalion was billeted in an orphanage at Bagnoli, on the outskirts of Naples, until 26 December 1944, when it embarked at 0900 on an Italian cattle boat for Leghorn. On 27 December the Battalion debarked and went to PBS Staging area #3 at Pisa. The Battalion was housed in pup tents, pyramidal tents were available for orderly rooms, kitchens and supply rooms. Here the Battalion was completely equipped for combat and put in reserve for possible use in the Serchio Valley as the Germans had launched what turned out to be a limited objective attack.

The Battalion received motor vehicles on 29 December 1944 and a motor officer, 2d Lt. Douglas S. Jones, was assigned. Three days later when the situation along with west coast had stabilized, the battalion was moved to a training area at Quercianella, south of Leghorn. The first casualties, 7 killed and four wounded, occurred on 6 January 1945 when a guard along the railroad track set off a "bouncing Betsy" mine and the medics coming to his assistance set off another mine.

On the 6th of January the Battalion Commander and Capt. Lafferty accompanied the Regimental Commander, Col. Clarence M. Tomlinson, to TF 45 Hq. at Campo Tizzaro where they learned that the Regiment would relieve TF 45 without delay. Here at 1100 6 January, the Battalion Commander received the first Combat Order issued in the 10th Mt. Division. The Battalion was to relieve elements of the British Army at Pian degli Ontani and Ponte di Sestaione and an American AA Battalion at Cutigliano, Lizzano and Vizzaneta.

On 7 January the Battalion Commander, the S-2 Company Commanders, Platoon Leaders and Sergeants left for the area the Battalion was to take over on the American and British units. Battalion Headquarters was established just north of San Marcello Pistoiese, Italy. E Company, minus one rifle platoon

reinforced with HMG section from H Company, went into position at Pian degli Ontani, F company, minus one rifle platoon and reinforced by a HMG section, took over Ponte di Sestaione, and G Company, also reinforced with HMG and 18MM mortars, took over Vizzaneta and Lizzano. The Battalion completely occupied these positions at 0045 9 January and were thus the first unit in the 10th Mt. Division to occupy a defensive sector. The mission of the Battalion from the morning of the 9th of January until the morning of the 27th of January 1945 when it was relieved by the 3d battalion of the 85th Mt. Infantry, was to hold the positions and to feel out the strength of -----action. Enemy artillery and mortar fire was occasionally registered in on the Battalion position and the patrols, particularly in the vicinity of Piansinatico and Mt. Spigelino engaged the enemy in fire fights. On the night of the 16th of January, 2d Lt. Parr led a combat patrol into Piansinatico and engaged the enemy in the first fire fight of the 10th Mt. Division.

From 27 January until 4 February 1945, the Battalion went into a training area at Prunetta. Companies were billeted in homes and buildings of villages and participated in a training program which consisted of conditioning marches, range firing and unit problems.

On the 4th of February the Battalion moved to Mutigliano on the outskirts of Lucca. Training was continued and the Battalion was alerted for immediate movement if the action in the area of the 92d Division became unfavorable. Simultaneously, the staff and Company Commanders were briefed by the Battalion Commander on the next employment of the Battalion in the vicinity of Vidiciatico. On the 16th of February General Crittenberger presented the Soldier's Medal to 1st Lt. Culbreath, Sgt. Bechdolt, Sgt. Curtis, Sgt. Perry-Smith and Cpl. McDonald, the men of the Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon who participated in the removal of the injured and dead from the mine field at Quercianella.

The Battalion left Mutigliano 17 February at 1315 by truck and arrived at Castelluccio about 2200. From there the Battalion moved by foot to the general area of Vidiciatico and reported to Regiment that it was closed in by 0330 18 February. All companies went under cover for rest and preparation for action. Before the contemplated 10th Mt. Division action on Mr. Belvedere could be attempted with successful probability, Riva Ridge to the west, overlooking Rocco Corneta, had to be taken and occupied. The first Battalion was scheduled to take M. Cappel Buso. F company, reinforced, was given the mission of taking le Page, Mt Bure and Mt. Biachette; G. Company was in reserve and scheduled to follow F Company in case of difficulty; E company, reinforced and in vicinity of Plinardo, protected the right flank of the Regiment against counter attack. F company started at 0300, 19 February for it's objection and got on position at 0830 after one of the most rugged climbs in the 10th Mt. Division Combat history and a forty five minute engagement with the enemy in which three prisoners were taken, thirty of the enemy killed and the rest routed. The mission was successful

and achieved without a single Battalion casualty. F company remained on top of Riva Ridge until the morning of the 20th when it was relieved by elements of the 10th AT Battalion. That afternoon the entire Battalion except for one reinforced platoon of E Company which remained at Pliuardo to protect the First Battalion's right flank against a possible counterattack, moved into Vidiciatico and remained there until 26 February as Corps Reserve.

The 3d Battalion, 86th Mt. Infantry was north of Gaggio Montano where they had taken up positions on Mount della Torraccia. The battalion moved in behind them on 26 February. The Battalion was scheduled to pass through the 3d Battalion and attack on 1 March but weather delayed the move until 3 March. G Company had the objective of Hills 953 and 952 on the left and E Company was to take Terminale, pass through Iola and continue north and east keeping its right flank on the highway. After a 30 minute artillery preparation the two leading companies jumped off at 0700. G company was on its first objective at 0728, E company reached the top of Terminale at 0600 but stubborn resistance in Iola necessitated house to house fighting by E company until 1400. The Battalion by passed E Company fighting in Iola and captured Hill 920 and 921 by 1300 with G Company in the assault. F Company then passed through G Company and captured Hill 916 and the small village of Il Monte. By 1830 of the 3d of March the Battalion had moved forward of Il Monte and movement stopped for the night with F and G Companies in the line and E Company in reserve. The Battalion had advanced over three miles during the day, captured 200 prisoners, including a battalion commander and his staff and had suffered 15 killed and 87 wounded. Among the casualties were 1st Lt. Nicholson, Battalion Communications Officer, Lt. Peterson of E Company, Lt. Wendorf and Lt. Byerly of G Company.

On the 4th of March all companies were in line in defensive positions behind Sassomolare. Major Green, the Battalion Executive Officer, left to take command of the 1st Battalion and was later replaced by Major John E. Seamans. The fighting of the 3-5 March had caused heavy casualties, necessitating 113 EM and 4 officer replacements. On the 5th of March the Battalion positions were as follows: F Company was to the east of Sassomolare, E company went into positions between Sasso Baldino and Sassomolare to prevent infiltration behind the 1st Battalion, and G Company was to the West of Sassomolare. Until the 9th of March the mission of the Battalion was to hold the positions and to send out patrols to the west.

The 2nd Battalion was closed in its area by 0300 10 March 1945 in the vicinity of Madna di Brasa after relieving the 1st Battalion of the 87th. G Company moved into Castel D'Aino, F Company took up positions on Hill 813 and E Company was in reserve to the south of Madna di Brasa, with one platoon, under Sgt. Lovelly remaining in the area of Pian di Sota. On the 19th the Battalion was relieved and arrived at Montecatini for a three day rest period on the 20th of March.

The 24th of March saw the Battalion returned to Pictra Colora where it remained until 26 March when it replaced the 3rd Battalion in the Sassomolare area. E Company was in position on Sasso Baldino, F Company on Mt. Grande and G Company on Mt. Neuvoletti. Again the mission of the Battalion was to hold the positions and send out contacting patrols.

On the 4th of April the Battalion was relieved and spent four days in the training area near Piastre which it left 9 April 1945 for Mt. Della Castellana, the rear assembly area for the next offensive.

Originally scheduled for 12 April 1945, the attack was postponed on the 12th, again on the 13th and on the 14th the time for the crossing of the LD was moved from 0700 to 0845 because of the poor weather for air support. The plan for the Second Battalion was as follows: To attack in a column of companies, F Company, leading, was to seize Rocco Roffeno. E Company was then to pass through F Company and capture Hills 857 and 760. The AT platoon, now converted into a 50 cal. MG Platoon on ¼ ton trucks, with one rifle platoon from G Company, was to accompany the two companies of attached armor on the right flank of the Battalion with the mission of clearing the valley and seizing the town of Cereglio in the vicinity of Hill 760.

The Second Battalion was the only element of the 86th to be in the attacking echelon. The First Battalion of the 87th, to the left, was to make the attack on the high ground to the North of the highway and F Company was to cross the LD when B Company of the 87th had moved out, which it did. But it became

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committed and started to move north across country from Casa Peli. The Battalions moved in two columns: E Company went to the right and was followed by F, G Company was the attacking element to the left. Spurred by the information that the 1st and 3rd Battalions, which were also moving across country, toward the Po Valley, were making rapid progress, the 2d Battalion pushed thru the intermittent fire which was particularly harassing at 757487 and reached the Valley of the Po about 1630. In the vicinity of LaStanga the Battalion, by acquisition of German horses and wagons, became a semi-horse drawn unit. By 2130 the Battalion went into defensive positions along the Canale Di S Almaso.

The next day the 21st of April the Battalion was supplemented by armor and supporting artillery and sent to Bomporto. Trucks were assigned to the Battalion and the move started at 0830. By 1650 the Battalion arrived at Ravarino from where the Battalion Commander and General Duff went forward to reconnoiter Bomporto for defense of the bridges there. At 1830 the Battalion moved into Bomporto and 2030 was alerted to move forward. A German armored column got into a fire fight with one of our xxx columns on the outskirts of town and the

order to move forward was postponed. Generals Duff and Ruffner were joined by General Hays in the Battalion CP and about 0430 the Task Force started north again – this time on foot.

The Po River was reached at S. Benedetto Po on the afternoon of the 23rd. The Battalion crossed the Po early in the morning of the 24th and bivouaced in the vicinity of Governola. Capt. Ciccaralli, a replacement, was given command of F Company. A full 24 hours rest was obtained and the Battalion entrucked at 1500 on the 25th. The Battalion detrucked at 0330 and proceeded on foot to the outskirts of Verona with the mission of securing any bridges which might be left intact. Although no bridges were left which could handle vehicles, the men from the Battalion patrol did cross the river into the main section of town. The Battalion was the first unit to enter Verona.

At 1800 on the afternoon of the 26th the Battalion was sent to Bussolengo to protect the electric generating plant at that place. On the afternoon of the 27th the Battalion entrucked as part of a Regimental Task Force and left Bussolengo to take the road along the east side of Lake Garda. The Battalion detrucked at Malcesine and proceeded on foot with E Company the leading company at 0330 on the morning of the 28th. E Company was fired on by three MG's when they crossed a small bridge just south of Navene. At dawn the tanks accompanying the column were able to fire on and destroy all three enemy positions. F Company then passed through E Company and became involved in a fire fight at the first tunnel. Because it was imperative that the road be taken DUKs were brought up and G Company under Lt. Borcuk made an amphibious attack which brought the first three tunnels under our control. The entire Battalion went into a defensive bivouac at Pian di Tempesta that night.

On the 29th the 3rd Battalion passed thru the 2d Battalion and became the leading element of the column. Major Seamans went to the head of the 3rd Battalion column on reconnaissance. An 86 round lit in the opening of the tunnel killing Capt. Ely, commander of H Company, and seriously wounding Major Seamans. Capt. Carpenter assumed command of the Battalion, Capt. Ciccarelli became Executive Officer, leaving Lt. Foster in command of F Company, while St. Walker took over H Company.

On the morning of the 30th the 3rd Battalion took Torbole and the 2d Battalion moved in to town until that afternoon when the Battalion following a patrol led by Capt. Carpenter moved into Riva and established road blocks, and sent companies into defensive positions north and west of town.

The war in Italy ended 2d May 1945. Major Bowerman took command of the Battalion until Lt. Colonel Townsend returned on the 8th. Capt. Carpenter remained Executive Officer, Capt. Rideout was made S-3, Capt. Ciccarelli returned to F Company and Lt. Sanborn command H Company. The Battalion went into bivouac near Brescia until it was sent to the area of Cave del Predil

where it arrived 20th of May 1945. The Battalion occupied three different locations in this area. The first was to the west of the lake, the second in town and the third at Plezzut.

On receipt of orders the Battalion, with other elements of the division, left 16 July, and headed for the staging area at Florence to be shipped to the States. The Battalion sailed from Leghorn on July 29th and arrived at Hampton Roads on the 10th of August 1945. After the men had received 30 days recuperation furlough they reported back to Camp Carson, Colorado, where another 15 days was granted all personnel except a skeleton crew. Reassembly started during the middle of October, at which time the Unit started deactivation procedures.

Gordon E. Randall
Capt., Infantry
2d Battalion Adjutant