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Section II

THE 100<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY BATTALION  
ROAD TO ROME

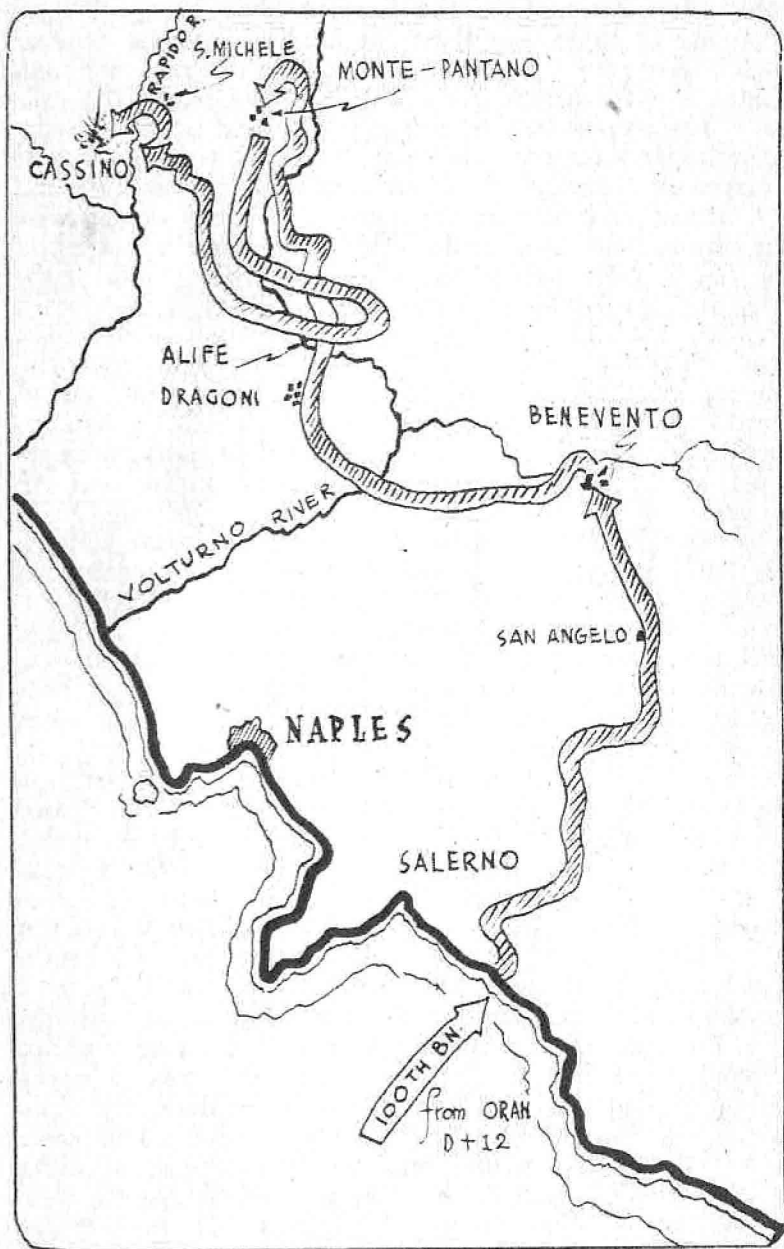
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Fifteen months after the 100th Infantry Battalion had been activated, the men stepped down the gangplank on an alien shore. The port: Oran, North Africa. The date: 2 September 1943. One week later, on the 8th, the battalion was assigned to the already battle-tested 133d Infantry of the 34th Division, victors at Hill 609 in Tunisia. The battalion took the place of the 2d Battalion of the 133d, then acting as security guard for Allied Force Headquarters in Algiers.

Then came the news the world had long been waiting for, the landings on the beaches of Paestum and Salerno on 9 September 1943. On the 22d, D plus 13, the 133d landed at Salerno beach and began the march inland. Immediately, the two extra rifle companies (E and F) which the 100th had been authorized on activation were placed under Fifth Army control to guard airfields and supply dumps. The employment of these extra companies remained a recurrent problem all through the campaign until heavy losses absorbed and deactivated them. After a few days awaiting orders in an assembly area, the 133d, with it the 100th, took off 27 September in pursuit of the retreating enemy. Successively, the battalion occupied Montemarano and, after a short, sharp battle, the important road junction of Chiusano where they set up a road block. Meanwhile, the 10th German Army had been slowly withdrawing to the high ground northwest of Benevento, key road and rail center on the Fifth Army's right flank. Quickly, the other two battalions of the regiment swept ahead and seized the approaches to Benevento, and the 100th was ordered to move up and support the attack. Enroute, new orders shifted them to the left of the 3d Battalion which would assault the town while the 100th swung through to take the heights to the northwest. After a spectacular twenty-mile forced march, both units secured their objectives. The only opposition came from harassing artillery as they

slogged through a pouring rain that turned roads into ankle deep quagmires. Now the 45th Division took up the pursuit, supported by the 133d, until 5 October, when the regiment went into Corps reserve near San Martino. Casualties had been comparatively light: three men killed, and two officers and 29 men wounded or injured. On the 10th, the 100th, in division reserve, had moved up in preparation for the first Volturno River crossing. The initial smash was successful, however, and the division went across around midnight of the following day in the vicinity of Limatola, the 100th Battalion still in reserve.

Mid-month found all units steadily moving forward, with the 100th in the vicinity of Bagnoli. In the meantime, the Red Bull Division was making plans for the second crossing of the Volturno on 18 and 19 October. The 133d was ordered to occupy the central sector of the division layout, assaulting to secure a bridgehead astride the Dragon-Alife road. The 100th would delay its crossing for a few hours to protect the rear of the regiment. The 1st Battalion made its crossing under a smoke screen the afternoon of the 18th and the 100th, after cleaning up the remaining pockets on the south bank, crossed late the following night. They then moved up to the flats south of Alife, sending patrols out to contact the enemy, the 29th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, which was defending behind thick minefields and dug-in machine gun nests. The night of 20 October, the 100th moved out to seize the road junction 1,000 yards east of St. Angelo d'Alife. Before the battalion could get into the high ground it was caught in a murderous fire from the German defense perimeter, backed up by artillery and the multi-barrelled "screaming meemies," and casualties soared. The battalion hung on in the face of the concentrated fire while the 1st Battalion swung around to the right flank in an attempt to envelop the resistance. Failing this, the 100th was pulled back to an area that offered more protection, and remained there for two days while the regiment was reorganized under a new commander. The morning of the 22d, with the 100th and 3d Battalions in assault, the regiment renewed the drive on Alife. A and C Companies advanced slowly across the flats and by dark had driven half way to their objectives where they halted in the face of intense machine gun and



sniper fire. Meanwhile, the Germans had brought up a company of tanks to bolster the sagging defenses. One of these was destroyed at 25-yard range by the battalion's tank buster, Private Masao Awakuni, bazooka man extraordinary. The remainder were driven off by artillery fire. Forty-eight hours after the jump off, A and C Companies had stormed and seized Alife, where they were relieved by E and F Companies, who were then ordered to push on and seize the heights west of Castello d'Alife. By 0900 of the 25th, the 100th had advanced to within a thousand yards of the crest of "Castle Hill" and was ordered to dig in there while another battalion swung around on the enemy's left rear and drove them back. The action was successful, and the regiment consolidated, having driven the enemy out of another of his "strong delaying positions" that characterized his defensive tactics throughout the Italian campaign. This particular one cost the 100th 21 killed and 66 wounded.

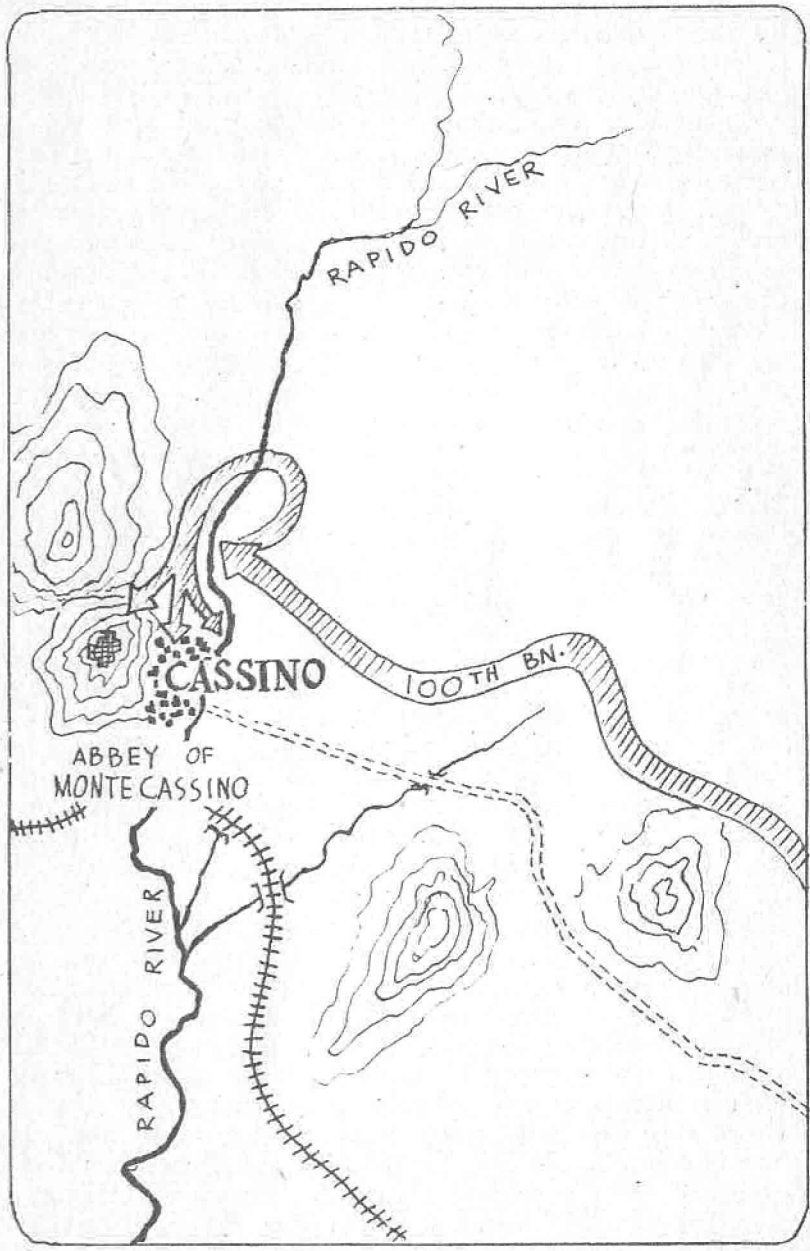
Four days later, 29 October, Lieutenant Colonel Farrant L. Turner, who had commanded the 100th since the day it was activated, was relieved. Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) James J. Gillespie took over the battalion, in time to prepare for the third and last crossing of the serpentine Volturno River. By 1 November, the 133d controlled the high ground near Giorlano which overlooked the Volturno where the battalion would have to make its crossing. The enemy, as always, held the high ground on the other side. At daylight of the 1st, the 100th cleared what opposition remained as far as the river bank, losing 12 casualties to six strafing Messerschmitts in the process. This, of course, was in the days before the *Luftwaffe* started having troubles of its own. The next two days were spent in pre-assault planning. The night of the 3rd, the attack was mounted with the 100th echeloned to the left rear of the division so that contact could be maintained with the 45th Division. Troop opposition was light, being confined to small arms fire, but the inevitable mines took a heavy toll as the battalion struggled through the dark. By 0740 of the 4th, the 100th was astride the railroad 2,000 yards from the river and making good headway when the enemy defense began to harden, requiring stiff fighting to dig them out of the battalion sector. The morning of the 5th, the

1st Battalion of the 133d was counterattacked and driven off Hill 550. A coordinated attack was then planned with the 1st Battalion retaking the hill it had lost while the 100th stormed Hills 590 and 610 on the next ridge line to the northwest. The assault jumped off in daylight in the face of heavy enemy artillery fire and progressed rapidly, catching the Germans off guard. Both objectives having been taken, the battalion rolled on to take Hill 600 near Pozzilli in the face of determined enemy resistance. The enemy tried desperately to retake these heights with assaults from the front and flanks, but was consistently driven back, partly through the efforts of Lieutenant Neill M. Ray and Corporals Katsushi Tanouye and Bert K. Higashi of D Company's mortar platoon. These men remained at an observation post in advance of the line of platoons and directed mortar fire each time the enemy tried to form for a counterattack through the morning of the 6th, even though their position was made almost untenable by constant shelling. They remained at their posts until all three were killed instantly by a direct hit. At the same time, E and F Companies had been moved into line to close the gap between the 34th and the 45th Divisions on the left, thus cutting down the threat from the flank.

Meanwhile, the 45th Division had broken through into Venafro and the enemy began another withdrawal, enabling the battalion to pull back for a short rest on the 11th. Casualties had been heavy; three officers killed and 18 wounded; 75 men killed and 239 wounded; one man missing. These losses, together with the endless rain and fog and cold, combined to lower the spirits of the men. Then, to cap the climax, the battalion was recommitted in the vicinity of Colli-Rochetti the day before Thanksgiving, relieving elements of the 504th Parachute Regiment. Immediately, the battalion was ordered to attack the hills to its front to secure a Line of Departure for the 133d in a general assault which was to take place 1 December. The 34th had been ordered to attack down the Colli-Atina road, which ran east and west, and seize the high, difficult terrain around Atina. Such a move would flank the Liri Valley and force the Germans to abandon their Cassino defenses where the high command anticipated they would make their winter stand.

Early, the morning of 29 November, the battalion jumped off against Hills 801, 905, and 920. Resistance was fierce, and the enemy threw artillery, mortar, and nebelwerfer in an effort to stall the attack. The riflemen of A, B and C Companies who had moved up the reverse slopes of all three mountains hung on grimly, and on the 30th, with the troops moving behind heavy artillery concentrations, the high ground was taken. There the battalion stayed for nine days while the other battalions of the regiment tried to push through on the right and break the stalemate, but to no avail. Finally, 9 December, the 100th came down from the hills and counted its losses: two officers and 43 men killed; five officers and 135 men wounded or injured; six men died of wounds; two men were missing. E and F Companies had both been disbanded to fill the ranks, but fighting strength remained low. Lieutenant Colonel Gillespie, the commanding officer, had been lost through illness, and was replaced temporarily by Major Alex E. McKenzie, then by Major William H. Blytt of the 133d. On the 10th, the 100th went back to Alife, where they rested and trained until the 30th. In that area, Major Caspar Clough, Jr., formerly with the 1st Division, took over the battalion.

New Year's Eve of 1944 saw the 100th close into the Presenzano area under control of the veteran II Corps. The next few days were spent in reconnaissance to the front and flanks, preparatory to joining the 1st Special Service Force near the Radicosa Hills on the 6th. The night of 7 January, the battalion engaged in an attack on Hill 1109, one of a series of mountains overlooking Cassino. The objective was taken against light resistance and held until the 11th when the 100th jumped off against the last barrier, meeting heavy fire from artillery and mortars as well as from carefully laid out defensive positions. Finally, the Special Service Force executed a coordinated attack, sending its 1st Battalion down the ridge while the 100th attacked to the front behind a thunderous demonstration of fire power. On the 13th, Hill 1270 fell. Two days later, led by Lieutenant Harry I. Schoenberg's A Company, the battalion struck out for San Michele, situated on the bluffs below Hill 1270 and looking across the valley at Cassino. The town fell by 1930 hours and for the next six days, after



going back to control of the 133d, the battalion waited for the assault on Cassino, and patrolled to the front and flanks. At 2330 hours of the 24th, the 133d initiated the first attack against Cassino by way of the Rapido River. After an hour and twenty minutes' barrage, the 100th jumped off with Companies A and C leading, along with elements of the Ammunition and Pioneer platoon. By the following morning, the two companies had gained the river wall, and held there to establish a Line of Departure for an attack across the river. The morning of the 25th, B Company, which had secured the original Line of Departure, was moved up to force the river line, but the enemy was not to be fooled twice. The company was caught in a terrific artillery concentration, and only fourteen men reached the river. The remainder were killed, wounded, driven back, or forced to find shelter where they could. Still, the order was to attack. The commanding officer, Major Clough, was wounded the same day and Major Dewey of the 133d took command. On the 25th, when Major Dewey went on a reconnaissance with the executive officer, Major Johnson, and Captain Mitsuho Fukuda, commanding officer of A Company, the party was caught by machine gun fire. Major Dewey and Major Johnson were hit, and in trying to disperse, one of the party tripped a mine which killed Major Johnson. Its leaders lost, the 100th was pulled back to San Michele. Providentially, Major James W. Lovell, the battalion's original executive officer, returned from the hospital and took command on 29 January, readying the unit for an attack on the castle northeast of Cassino, halfway up the mountain to the famous monastery. The 135th and 168th were to attack the monastery and the remaining two battalions of the 133d were to take Cassino itself from the rear. At 0645, 8 February, the battalion moved out and advanced rapidly, despite heavy shelling, until ordered to hold on Hill 165 and protect the right of the regiment. All other units had been stopped by fierce resistance. Both flanks of the battalion were now exposed, and a change in the wind pulled away its smoke screen, exposing it to direct observation and murderous fire. Grimly, the 100th held for four days and then withdrew on order, sending B Company into that part of Cassino that had been taken, and with-



drawing the rest of the battalion to regimental reserve. Major Lovell had again been wounded seriously on the first day of the attack, and Major Clough returned to command. The division launched another abortive attack on 18 February sending the 100th to storm the same objective. Four days later, the battalion pulled back to Alife for rest and reorganization.

For the 100th Battalion and for the 34th Division, this was the end of the forty-day struggle against impossible odds, plus the cream of the German Army. Rest meant relief from cold, bitter weather that left men chilled to the bone and swelled their feet to the point where it was torture to take a step. The ranks were thin, so thin that when the medics carried a man out now, there was no one to take his place, only a gap in the line and an empty foxhole where he had been. This was the end of the fighting in Cassino itself, fighting that was never measured in yards or miles. It was measured instead, in houses taken, in rooms of houses, and in cells of the jail wrested from the German paratroopers one by one.

These men had seen all that there was to see, endured all that there was to endure. They had seen Cassino and the ancient Abbey crumble under the weight of thousands of tons of bombs and shells. They had attacked, only to find the German infantry risen from the rubble and the ashes to drive them back. They had learned that air power was not enough.

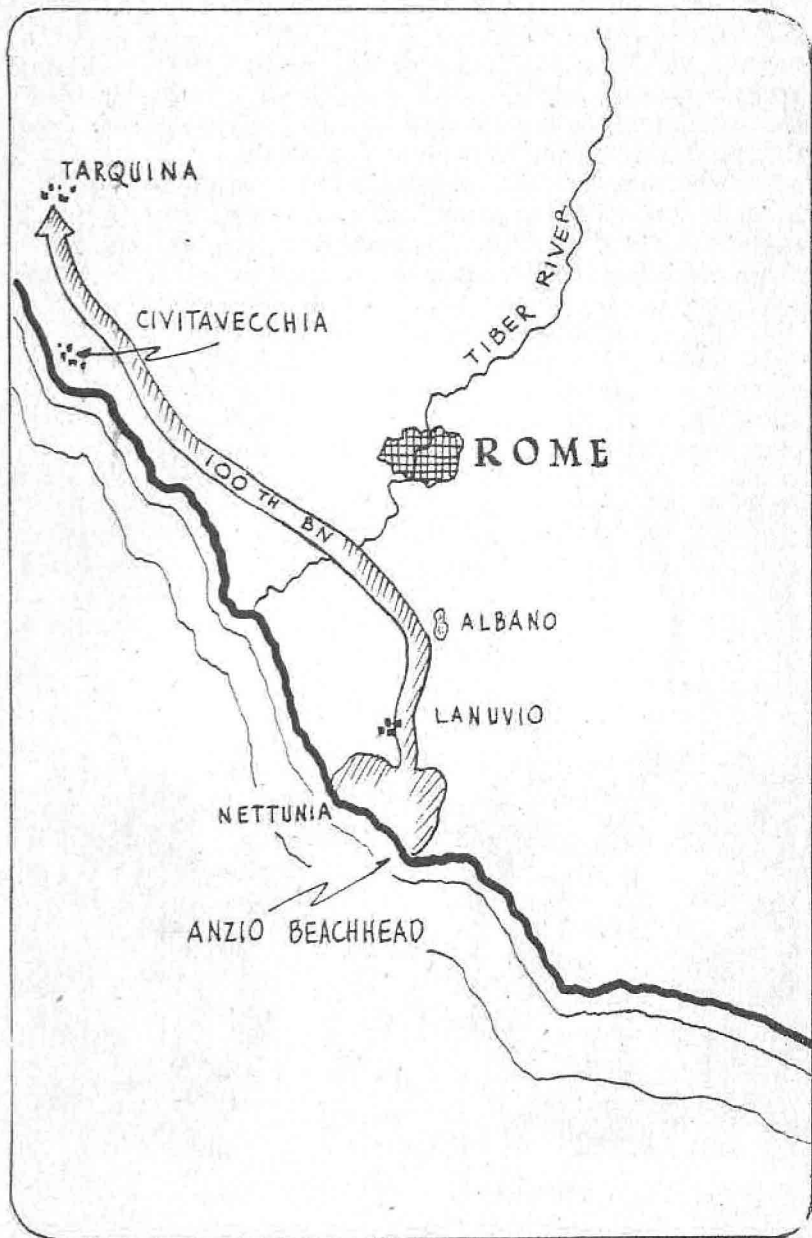
The attack on Cassino had failed, that much was clear. But history will record that when the line was finally broken and the enemy reeled back, five fresh divisions took on the job that one division so gallantly attempted and so nearly completed. History will also record that among the foremost in the ranks of that division were the men of the 100th Infantry Battalion. Among their ranks were fewer and fewer of the men who had started overseas with the battalion, because casualties had again been heavy: four officers and 38 men killed; 15 officers and 130 men wounded or injured; six men died of wounds; two men missing; and one officer and one man, prisoners.

In the meantime, all was not too well at Anzio. The battle had been long and decimating; reinforcements were badly needed. So, on 26 March, the 34th Division landed

at Anzio Harbor, with it the 100th. On 30 March, the 2d Battalion of the 133d returned, replacing the 100th. Fifth Army, however, left the battalion with the 34th Division. During this time, replacements from the 442d Combat Team (The Combat Team was in Camp Shelby and preparing to come overseas) had come in, bringing the battalion nearly up to strength. Through April and on into May, the opposing forces fenced and sparred, sending out patrols and raiding parties for prisoners and information. The German "Anzio Express" and smaller guns constantly kept the beachhead under fire, causing casualties and keeping nerves stretched taut.

Finally, on 24 May, 1944, the Anzio beachhead which had smoldered so long, burst into flame and exploded in the faces of the Germans. Behind tremendous air and artillery preparations, the race for the Eternal City was on. The 100th Battalion was initially given the mission of protecting the VI Corps' right flank along the Mussolini Canal, with a frontage that eventually reached 14,000 yards. The great drive rolled on until the 2d of June, when the enemy put up a last ditch defense around Lanuvio and La Torretto, creating a bulge in the 34th Division's line which had to be reduced, and the battalion was ordered to take on the job. After an intense 36-hour battle in which the 100th suffered 15 killed, 63 wounded, and one missing, the line was cracked and the Road to Rome was open. For this single action, six members of the battalion were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, and one, the Silver Star. About noon of 3 June, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Singles, who had assumed command of the battalion at the beachhead, was put in command of a task force. This force crushed the last German resistance in the sector. The next day the task force began to roll. They swept through Arricia and Albano, marching, riding when they could on what they could, until they were ordered to stop eleven kilometers from Rome while armor took up the chase. At 2200 hours, 5 June 1944, the 100th Battalion boarded trucks and rolled through Rome, along with the rest of the Red Bull Division until that outfit was finally relieved after the capture of the old port of Civitavecchia, many miles from the Eternal City.

It was there that the 442d Combat Team caught up



with the 100th in the middle of June, having come from Naples through Anzio and Rome. There also the 100th became the First Battalion of the 442d Combat Team, which was only fitting, since the original 1st Battalion of the 442d had been bled dry to furnish replacements for the 100th during the long winter campaign.

This was the beginning of an association that was to become famous through two armies: The 442d Infantry Regiment, the 522d Field Artillery Battalion, and the 232d Combat Engineer Company.



*Men of the 100TH INFANTRY BATTALION moving up to the front in the Velletri area.*