

Old State Road, R.D. #2  
Brookfield, Connecticut  
August 6, 1968

Major General James C. Fry  
The National Press Inc.  
128 C Street, NE  
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear General Fry,

I have just read your recently published account of the 350th, and, knowing the effort and agony that goes into writing a work of this nature, I thought you might appreciate knowing that this reader found the results of your efforts most rewarding.

In my opinion, the very special character of the book is the clear picture of the role of the regimental commander in a combat situation, for other reports of the war which I have seen generally concentrate either on the overall view of the fighting or focus on such smaller units as the squad or the company. In popular accounts, at least, the place of the leader in the intermediary echelons indeed has been slighted heretofore.

Of course I probably read with greatest personal interest those sections devoted to the particular battles with which I had direct acquaintance. Inasmuch as I left the 88th after we reached San Miniato, when I was appointed a 2nd lieutenant MAC and transferred elsewhere, I feared I might find the remainder of the book less exciting. But this was not the case. In fact, I found the account of the fighting north of the Arno even more vivid than earlier sections. Moreover, I learned for the first time what had happened to battalion members I had known so well, although it was distressing to see so many of them, one by one, disappear from the scene.

Reading your book has also induced me to resurrect old memories and to search out a few notes I had made immediately after the war as well as the letters I had written home to my family. As you noted, each person sees a different war, depending upon his particular situation, and my viewpoint was that of a medic with the 3rd Battalion aid station. Consequently, my memories attach events to where aid stations were located and not to larger military strategy. In most instances, however, I am able to coordinate the war as I saw it with your account and that recorded in the division history. However, in one section of the fighting -- from Fondi to Roccasecca -- I cannot always match the details. A few examples will illustrate what I mean:

1. If I follow your chronology correctly, the 1st and 3rd Battalions reached Roccasecca on the evening of May 22nd. The division

history, The Blue Devils in Italy, claims (page 85) May 24th as the proper date. By my reckoning the 22nd could be correct, although I am sure we did not occupy the house above the town that served as our aid station until the 23rd.

2. You speak of a medic named "Sam Levine". You would find no record of him because the correct name you were trying to recall was Sam Rubin, a 3rd Battalion company aid man. The division history notes that he received the Bronze Star Medal. He came from California, the San Francisco area I believe.

3. Probably because of space limitations you did not note that one of the piper cubs which came over the area with messages crashed on the high ground above Roccasecca. These planes also dropped supplies, including mortar shells, boxes of chocolate to supplement our dwindling food supply and carrier pigeons. (We in the aid station ate one of the latter that had broken its wing when the cage landed too roughly!)

4. You note the arrival of U.S. tanks while we were in the valley on the 26th. However, you may not have known that they had come up on our left flank during the afternoon of the 25th. Captain Stratman and I crawled out to an observation point and with field glasses watched them far below pass our position and blast enemy-held houses in the valley ahead of us, perhaps in the area of Priverne.

5. At least in terms of aid station movements, too many events relating to the capture of the Amasene Valley and Roccasecca seem compressed into too few days. I well remember the 26th, for all the 3rd Battalion aid station personnel came near to being obliterated while crossing the valley when we were caught in the open by shells from a German 88. Fortunately not a single individual was hit, but we, and all who were watching, thought we were done for. Captain Hotchkiss was wounded shortly after this and we treated him, along with a good many others, in a station established in a small church. My memory places the tanks firing into our own troops as being on the following day (27th). We were not far in advance of the tanks themselves as they fired over our heads into the hill directly in front of us. Perhaps Roccasecca was secured that day also, but I do not know. It was not until the following day (28th) that the aid station moved to a house in the hills above Roccasecca, where we were located for several days until the battalion moved by truck to rejoin the push for Rome -- and I went to a hospital at Anzio with a raging fever. (According to the division history the Amasene River line was cleared late on the 28th, and the division moved back into the line on June 2nd.)

Unfortunately, by chronology of these happenings is based on memory, scanty notes, and some comments in my letters home. It certainly is possible that your recollections are more accurate than mine, but I think it worth checking for the sake of historical

accuracy. And happily, no matter which version is correct, these are but minor details that do not alter the essential elements of the account itself.

Throughout the book you have made reference to official diaries or histories of the various battalions. I assume these are in manuscript, and I would appreciate knowing where they are deposited and if they are available for research purposes.

I did not mean to be so wordy when I began what was to be a brief note expressing my appreciation of your book. I hope you will excuse my excess of enthusiasm, but I got carried away in recalling these events that in many ways seem so long ago and , in other ways, so very recent.

Sincerely yours,

Truman A. Warner