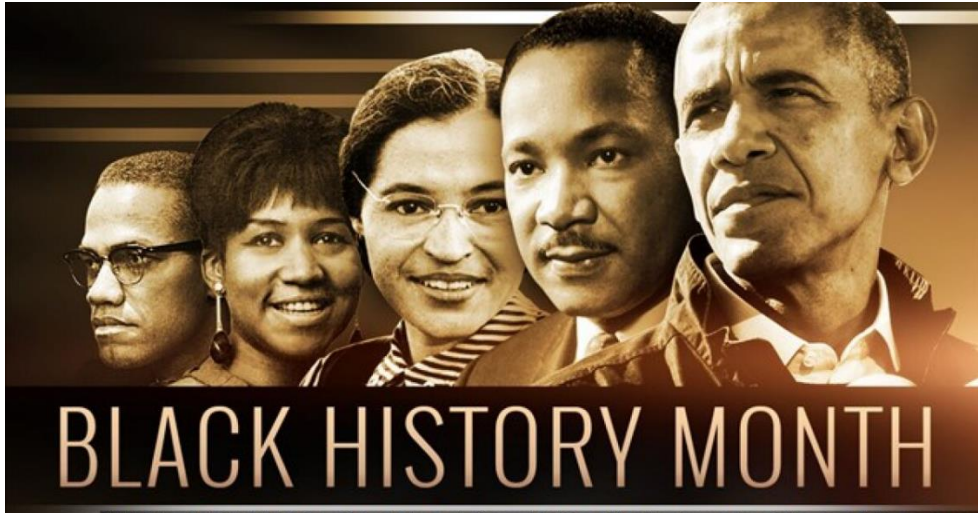




# The Howler

Cary American Legion Post 67, (January 2024)



## Commander's Corner:

Welcome to February 2024! This month we honor Black History. We also celebrate Valentine's Day.

You may have noticed that the driveway and parking area of the Post Home have been updated with new gravel. The contractor is still working on this project and plans to finish sometime during the week of 12 February. The new security system is working well, and the PEC is in the process of determining the correct amount of monitoring we need from SimpliSafe.

The Post Oratorical Contest was held on 13 January, and it went very well. Post 67's contestant that went to compete in the District Contest is the same contestant we had last year, Arjun Kamineni. He won the District Contest that was held on 3 February and will compete in the Division Contest on 2 March at the Henry K. Burtner American Legion Post 53 in Greensboro. Doors will open at 11:00am with the competition starting at 12:00 noon.

The General Meeting will take place on 13 February. We will hold our annual First Responders' Dinner. Dinner will start around 6:00pm. Lee Wood has

volunteered to prepare our dinner. The plan is to have chicken parmesan with salad and dessert. The meeting will start at 7:00pm. Come and enjoy the comradeship and have some great food. The cost for a meal is \$8.00/person.

I have some very good news. For me and for you. This will be the last Howler that I am Editor. We have a new Post Historian. Demita Passley has volunteered to take on this position. She has a writing background and I believe she will do a great job. Please give her your support.

We are planning a Veterans Appreciation Day on Armed Forces Day, 18 May. Details to come. If you would like to be part of the planning committee, please let me or Joe Veilleux ( [joeveilleux@gmail.com](mailto:joeveilleux@gmail.com) ) know.

Our Adjutant, Richard Spyrison, is starting to work on the next Cary Veterans Benefit Live event. The event will be held in September this year. Richard will provide more information on the event as it becomes available.

As we move forward, let us continue to uphold the values of the American Legion: **service, advocacy, and community**. Our commitment to veterans, their families, and our local neighborhoods remains unwavering. Together, we can create a brighter future for all.

Thank you for your dedication, and I look forward to the continued growth and impact of Cary American Legion Post 67. Also, thank you for letting me be your Commander.

**Commander, Dennis Tackett**



## **CHAPLAIN'S CORNER**

Isaiah 26:3-4. "You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord Himself, is the Rock eternal."

You and I can have peace. Authentic peace. God-breathed peace. Not because we live in some make-believe world, repeating positive-thinking

statements in an attempt to alter reality. Not because we have been able to avoid adversity or opposition. We can have peace simply because we trust our Heavenly Father.

God simply wants our complete trust. He calls us to lean confidently on Him and His faithfulness, rather than fretting over, and focusing on, our circumstances.

This is not saying we will live without difficulties. But when we make the commitment to trust our Heavenly Father, He guards us and keeps us in His peace. For He is our Rock of Ages.

Let us pray: Our Father in Heaven, grant us the ability to trust You, come what may. Allow our eyes to focus on You, not the challenges we face. We give you honor, glory, and praise. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen! God Bless!

**Chaplain, Marie Faulkner**

### **1<sup>st</sup> VICE COMMANDER'S CORNER**

Buddy checks are continuing. We are approximately 50% complete.

Thank you,

**First Vice Commander, M. Wayne Leazer**

### **AMERICANISM, 2<sup>nd</sup> VICE COMMANDER**

The District 11 Oratorical Contest occurred on February 1 at the Apex Senior Community Center. Our contestant Arjun Kamineni gave an excellent performance.

Arjun is a senior at Green Level High School and will represent Legion Post 67 at the Division 3 Contest on March 2. The Henry K. Burtner American Legion Post 53 in Greensboro has been scheduled to host this event. The Address is 729 Creek Ridge Road, Greensboro, NC 27406. The doors will open at 11 AM and the competition will begin at noon. Volunteers to staff the Division contest are needed. However, you must have completed the legion Youth Protection Training associated with the background check.

The Department Oratorical Contest will follow on March 23, at Westwood Baptist Church-200 West High Street In Cary. This contest will be under the

chairmanship of Frank Stancil. Frank heads the Department Oratorical and Education Committee. Participants are asked to arrive by 11:00 AM for information and instructions. The competition will begin at noon.

The National Finals will be held May 17-19 (Friday, Saturday, & Sunday)-Mandatory orientation on Friday. The Finals will be held at the Hillsdale College Campus in Hillsdale, Michigan. Previously, the National Finals were held in April in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Second Vice Commander, David Christensen**

### **PUBLIC AFFAIRS, 3<sup>RD</sup> VICE COMMANDER**

The Cary Chamber of Commerce is holding a Business Expo on February 29<sup>th</sup> starting at 12:00pm. Our Business Expo features approximately 75 member companies and invites anyone to stop by and see what our members have to offer! **Attending this event is free & open to the public.**

#### Itinerary

12:00pm - 5:00pm | Expo

2:00pm - 4:00pm | Educational Seminars

3:30pm - 5:00pm | Social

#### **Education Seminar Speakers:**

2:00 - Liz Rossilli, Sales Savvy: Grow Your Sales Today

2:30 - Scott Lewis, First Bank: SBA Lending

3:00 - Annie Francheschi, Greatest Story Creative: Website Makeover: How to Turn Clicks into Clients

3:30 - Virginia Mutter, StephensonLaw: Legal Advice for Small Businesses

The Cary Chamber of Commerce's **Reverse Car Raffle and Silent Auction** will be held March 27<sup>th</sup> at the Prestonwood Country Club's Grand Ballroom! There will be hundreds of items to bid on in our silent and live auctions, plus a chance to win a brand-new car. Food, Beverages & Silent Auction from 5:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. with the Reverse Raffle to begin at 6:45 p.m. Early Bird Entry Tickets are \$40 (available until February 27<sup>th</sup>!) or FREE with a donated auction item worth \$50 or the purchase of a Car Raffle Ticket. Each Car Raffle Ticket purchased will admit two people into the event. The cost per Car Raffle ticket is \$125. If you would like to purchase a ticket, please let me know.

The **Military Mission in Action's Inaugural Founder's Day Black Tie Gala**, presented by Smithfield Foods, will be at the historic Fair Barn in Pinehurst on Saturday evening, April 13, 2024. The Gala will bring together over 400 community members, military leaders, Veterans, and their families. Guests will be treated to a three course, plated dinner prepared by Chef George of Pinehurst's Tartare restaurant. The evening will include an address from a distinguished leader: retired four-star General and former FORSCOM Commander, Michael X. Garrett, a performance from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Chorus\*, as seen on America's Got Talent, a presentation of the colors for the Navy JROTC program at Union Pines High School, a string ensemble from the Moore Philharmonic Orchestra, a heartfelt testimonial from a recipient of services from MMIA, and an one-of-a-kind silent auction. Resources raised from our Gala will allow us to continue to meet the rising need in the Veterans community. We completed 40 home modification projects while also delivering home furnishings to 120 Veterans and their families across North Carolina. **Our Veterans and their families need your support now more than ever.**  
**Third Vice Commander, Curtis Leary**

### **SGT-AT-ARMS**

Triad Honor flight has some planned DC Memorial Flights upcoming and accepting veteran applications. I have served as a guardian on 3 of these flights and each has been an incredible experience for everyone on board. If interested in this once in a lifetime experience apply at the link below.

<https://triadhonorflight.org/application/>

**Sgt-At-Arms, Bruce Dale**



## INFORMATION FOR NEW POST MEMBERS

To all new Post 67 members, thank you for joining. We encourage you to purchase Legion hats and shirts from Emblem Sales so when we are at Legion meetings or taking part in a community activity, you will be in uniform. For Color Guard, Rifle Detail, funerals, and other more formal activities, the uniform will be your Legion hat, gray pants, white shirt, and blue jacket with tie, black shoes, and socks. At other times the Legion hat, a polo or golf type shirt with the Legion emblem is usually worn by most Legionnaires. This may be called Business Casual dress. Emblem Sales: <https://www.legion.org/promos/230360/shop-online> If you need help, contact a PEC member.

### POST 67 MEETINGS

We hold the monthly meeting the second Tuesday of each month starting at 7:00 pm at the Post. Usually, we have dinner at 6:00 pm before the monthly meeting.

The Post Executive Committee (PEC) meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm at the Post Home. We encourage members to come and speak of any concerns or recommendations concerning Post business at that time.

We may need to hold Post meetings using virtual meet from time to time, due to the viruses and guidelines, so be on the lookout for announcements via email. If you need assistance in setting up your computer or tablet for Zoom meetings, please contact a PEC member.

### POST 67 HOME INFORMATION

8523 Chapel Hill Rd., Cary, NC 27513

Post Home Phone: 919-481-4811

Post Home Web & Facebook Page:

<https://www.alncpost67.org> Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/alncpost67.org>

## A FEW PICTURES FROM JANUARY 2024



Figure 1. Initiation Ceremony 16 Jan 2024



Figure 2. Post 67 Oratorical Contest Staff 13 Jan 2024



Figure 3. Commander Tackett presenting a Certificate to 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander David Christiansen 16 January 2024



Figure 4. Fixing Parking Area Jan 2024

## CARY AMERICAN LEGION POST 67 OFFICERS 2023-2024

<b>POSITION</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>PHONE#</b>	<b>EMAIL</b>
<i>Commander</i>	<i>Dennis Tackett</i>	<i>703-340-9941</i>	<a href="mailto:commander.alncpost67@gmail.com"><u>commander.alncpost67@gmail.com</u></a>
<i>Adjutant</i>	<i>Richard Spyrison</i>	<i>919-441-8295</i>	<a href="mailto:adjutant.alncpost67@gmail.com"><u>adjutant.alncpost67@gmail.com</u></a>
<i>1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander</i>	<i>Wayne Leazer</i>	<i>919-319-9062</i>	<a href="mailto:mleazer32@gmail.com"><u>mleazer32@gmail.com</u></a>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander</i>	<i>David Christiansen</i>	<i>919-650-3848</i>	<a href="mailto:dchristi7@gmail.com"><u>dchristi7@gmail.com</u></a>
<i>3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Commander</i>	<i>Curtis Leary</i>	<i>919-270-2136</i>	<a href="mailto:gssi36@earthlink.net"><u>gssi36@earthlink.net</u></a>
<i>Finance Officer</i>	<i>Elizabeth Russell</i>	<i>919-302-2518</i>	<a href="mailto:finance.alncpost67@gmail.com"><u>finance.alncpost67@gmail.com</u></a>
<i>Service Officer</i>	<i>Lee Wood</i>	<i>843-301-9663</i>	<a href="mailto:LWoodhhi@aol.com"><u>LWoodhhi@aol.com</u></a>
<i>Chaplain</i>	<i>Marie Faulkner</i>	<i>919-851-9838</i>	<a href="mailto:calebfaulkner@bellsouth.net"><u>calebfaulkner@bellsouth.net</u></a>
<i>Judge Advocate</i>	<i>John Ferdinando</i>	<i>919-469-5214</i>	<a href="mailto:anna81mill@yahoo.com"><u>anna81mill@yahoo.com</u></a>
<i>Sgt-At-Arms</i>	<i>Bruce Dale</i>	<i>919-602-7393</i>	<a href="mailto:advracin@hotmail.com"><u>advracin@hotmail.com</u></a>
<i>Historian</i>	<i>Dimeta Passley</i>		<a href="mailto:historian.alncpost67@gmail.com"><u>historian.alncpost67@gmail.com</u></a>
<i>At-Large</i>	<i>Joe Veilleux</i>	<i>919-454-3348</i>	<a href="mailto:joeveilleux@gmail.com"><u>joeveilleux@gmail.com</u></a>
<i>At-Large</i>	<i>John Leonard</i>	<i>919-696-6768</i>	<a href="mailto:johnleonardnc@gmail.com"><u>johnleonardnc@gmail.com</u></a>







# Wake County Veterans Services

## Need help navigating the complex world of veteran's services?

Wake County's Veterans Service Division can assist eligible veterans, dependents and/or surviving spouses, children of deceased veterans, members of the Reserve, National Guard, and active-duty service members in two major ways:



- ✓ Veteran homelessness, prevention and housing support
- ✓ Assistance applying for benefits and services from the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs (NC DMVA) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).


Our Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) are highly trained and accredited. VSOs can assist with:

- Disability and compensation benefits
- VA healthcare enrollment
- Survivor and dependent benefits
- VA home loans
- DMV tags
- Employment
- Housing
- Legal assistance
- Discharge upgrades
- DD-214/military records request
- And more!

### Wake County Veterans Service Division

4401 Bland Road  
Raleigh, NC 27609


 **919-212-8356**  
 **wake.gov/veterans**

 Walk-ins welcome but appointments are strongly encouraged.

## Are you experiencing a housing crisis?

Contact the Raleigh/Wake Partnership Access Hub to get connected to services such as emergency shelter, street outreach and financial assistance programs to prevent homelessness.

 **919-443-0096**  
 **AH@partnershipwake.org**

 Any additional questions related to veteran housing services can contact 919-856-5250.

## Important Dates

**Feb 13, 6:00pm First Responder's Dinner, 7:00pm General Meeting**

**Feb 16, 8:00am-5:00pm, Department Mid-Winter Conference**

**Feb 17, 8:00am-12:00pm, Department Mid-Winter Conference**

**Feb 19, President's Day**

**Mar 5, 6:30pm PEC Meeting**

**Mar 12, 6:00pm Dinner, 7:00pm General Meeting**

**Mar 19, 8:30am Veterans Bridge Home's Cary Veterans Coffee, BJ's Restaurant & Brewhouse**

**Mar 29, 1:00pm Women Veterans Coffee, HUMANA Neighborhood Center, Raleigh, Contact: US Army Veteran Laura Happer [lhapper@veteransbridgehome.org](mailto:lhapper@veteransbridgehome.org) or USMC Veteran Merideth Porter [mporter27@humana.com](mailto:mporter27@humana.com)**

### **Purpose and Mission of The American Legion**

**As the nation's largest wartime veterans service organization, the American Legion is devoted to mutual helpfulness, and is committed to:**

- mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome programs in our communities,**
  - advocating patriotism and honor,**
  - promoting strong national security,**
- continued devotion to our fellow service members and veterans.**



## HISTORY WITH JOSH QUACKENBUSH

80 years ago, as planes were fighting it out in the skies above, German artillery bombardments were targeting Allied positions along the Anzio/Nettuno beachhead. Lt. Jesse James with the 39<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Regiment had been serving as an enlisted man at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed. Now as an engineering officer he experienced his first direct contact with German weaponry upon arrival at Nettuno:

The Germans began shelling us immediately. . . . We stayed in this area near the beach for several days and they shelled us the whole time. We had quite a few casualties. One of our men lost it and started running. There were mines in that area near the beach and it was a dangerous place to be running. We caught him and turned him over to the medics. He left and I don't know what ever happened to him. Some soldiers acted crazy and took section 8's. That's what they call it . . . it's a section 8 discharge. Another soldier shot himself so he wouldn't have to fight. A lot of that took place.

Lt. Warren Evans with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ranger Battalion who had been among the first to land and secure the town of Anzio, came upon an unexpected discovery after being assigned to cover an area of the beachhead:

While I was directing my men and putting outposts here and guards here and what have you, I kept hearing a whimper. I thought one of my men was breaking down or something and I kept trying to find out where it was. And low and behold we come into a brushed area and it was a little girl . . . about five years old. . . . I took her picked her up and hugged her, she put her arms around me and from then on she wouldn't let me go. . . . I guess I was her security or something. We were under artillery fire at the time. I was fine, she was company for me and she was a loving little girl. I called her little angel. And she answered to angel, but that was all, she couldn't speak English. . . . Anyway we got orders to move out again and this was before we went into Cisterna, so we knew we had another show to put on. So I radioed the evacuation hospital and asked if there was a nurse there who could pick this little girl up. I told them the circumstances and sure enough this nurse came up in a jeep. I had an awful time unhooking that little girl's arms from around me and giving her to the nurse. She was still holding her arms out to me when they drove away.

On January 29<sup>th</sup>—30<sup>th</sup> British and American forces were ordered to conduct a major offensive inland towards the towns of Cisterna and Campoleone. The attack towards the town of Cisterna was led by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ranger battalions who were experts in night attacks and street fighting. On the hillsides overlooking the beachhead the Germans knew the Rangers were coming. To maximize casualty rates, they held their fire until the columns of Rangers approached to within 500 yards of the town and then the killing spree began. The Rangers, 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regiment, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division were facing experienced German troops, mortars, artillery, and tank forces which included the feared panther and tiger. “We were wiped out,” remembers Lt. Evans, who was knocked unconscious and taken prisoner for the remainder of the war. Out of 767 soldiers from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ranger Battalions who had gone into the attack, only six made it back to Allied lines.

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, the British and the U.S. 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division (less Combat Command B) faced stiff German resistance in the attempt to take the town of Campoleone and as the death toll for Allied soldiers rose the attack turned into a desperate struggle for survival. The 91<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division effectively provided supporting fire for the attack. Captain Marshall Hardy with the 91<sup>st</sup> Armored Field Artillery Battalion later wrote a letter to his father describing the Anzio beachhead: “It was the first time I ever heard near mortar fire, but they were shooting off to one side so I actually wasn’t under fire. Mortars are the only kind of fire I’ve never been under now. I’ve tried (not voluntarily, of course) tank fire, artillery (of all descriptions) day and night bombing and strafing, machine gun fire and sniping. It all scares you, but tank cannons are the most terrifying for my money. . . .”

The Allied attempts to take the inland towns of Cisterna and Campoleone had failed with drastic consequences and as the days passed the window of opportunity for pushing off the beachhead was closing. Being confined to the restricted area put the American and British forces in a precarious position. The U.S. 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had arrived as support and Bill Simpson with the 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment explains why the Battle for Anzio became the ultimate struggle for life: “The Germans were in the mountains, we were down below, and they could see every move we made. It was like being in the stadium, we were on the field, and the Germans were in the stands. They had the advantage of the high ground.”

The signal corps carried out vital functions on the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead, with the most crucial being to establish lines of communication. Using wire rather than radio transmissions was preferable, in order to prevent the enemy from intercepting messages. Part of the process of establishing communication

lines involved digging, placing poles, and then climbing them to string wire. Carl Biggs had the opportunity to try this under enemy fire: “Anzio was a scary place and I damn near lost my life there. I was up on a pole at Peter’s Beach that was on the English flank, and we needed to keep the open wires running up there. Every time we would get are poles setup, or we would be up working on them, the Germans shelled us. They would wait for us to get the poles setup then shoot them down again. They liked to do that, the Germans were that way; they liked to play with you.”

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To the south at Monte Cassino, the rest of the 15<sup>th</sup> Allied Army Group was being held up by German defenders who conducted devastating attacks from several hilltops. The U.S. 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division however, was able to find a relatively safe area for crossing the Rapido River and by February 1<sup>st</sup> men of the 133<sup>rd</sup> Regiment took 54 German prisoners, while capturing a barracks on the northern edge of Cassino. After this success, further progress into the town of Cassino slowed as enemy resistance escalated. “The trouble was the Germans knew the town and we didn’t, John Foott a radio man with the 133<sup>rd</sup> Regiment explains, “and they had fortified quite a bit. We had to really dig them out.” Fearsome German panzer tanks patrolling the town were among some of the hazards the infantry men had to contend with. “When we were in Cassino they brought the Tiger tank down around and the only thing we had to defend ourselves with was a bazooka.” Attacking a Tiger tank with a bazooka was extremely risky and rarely successful. The only chance of penetrating the Tigers thick armor was to make a direct hit at close range, with a 90 degree angle of fire, to the side or back of the tank. Foott remembers, “I had one guy in our outfit, he says, ‘I think I’ll take a shot at it’ and I said, ‘don’t you do that God damn it. That thing will bounce off and he’ll turn that gun around here and blow our heads off.’”

Near the historic monastery at Monte Cassino elements of the U.S. 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division were locked in a life and death struggle for the high ground. One of the objectives of the 133<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment was to take Castle Hill, an important strategic point above the town of Cassino. A Japanese-American battalion made up of volunteers was among those assigned to the task. After war had been declared on Japan, in the most controversial order to be handed down from President Roosevelt, Japanese-Americans who had lost their homes and jobs were sent to detainment camps in the United States. At Monte Cassino the Japanese-American 100<sup>th</sup> Nisei Battalion put their lives on the line and distinguished themselves for bravery under fire. “They were part of our regiment when we left

Africa, remembers Foott, “our 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion stayed in Africa as 5th Army guards and the 100<sup>th</sup> took their place. . . . Oh they were terrific. We always felt very safe with them being on our flank. Their motto was ‘Go for broke.’” The Japanese-Americans would one day help form the 442<sup>nd</sup> which became the most highly decorated Regimental Combat Team in the history of the United States Armed Forces. On 8 February the 100<sup>th</sup> Battalion made a rapid advance ahead of the other battalions. They were ordered to consolidate and hold their position in the vicinity of Hill 165 to protect the regiment’s right flank near Castle Hill. The Japanese-Americans held it for four days, effectively wiping out German resistance in their area. Then they were ordered to withdraw and given another difficult mission, to assist in clearing the enemy from the town of Cassino.

The casualty rate for the 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division’s rifle companies reached 65% by mid February. “It was a horrible, horrible place to try and fight a war,” Foott says, “in my platoon we lost 50%. We had 40 of them at the time, 5 got killed outright, and the rest of them were injured quite severely.” On February 13<sup>th</sup>, Foott found himself in the middle of a mortar attack. “I was lucky, I was just hit in the mouth and like I tell everybody, ‘I was hit at both ends,’ in the rump and in the mouth.” After receiving the light shrapnel injuries he was sent to an evacuation hospital to recover for two weeks. “Boy those nurses were real fine women; they were very dedicated to taking care of the guys.” Colonel Carley L. Marshall commanding the 133<sup>rd</sup> Regiment describes the difficulties encountered by the men on the battlefield:

During the entire period February 1-22nd the enemy held commanding ground and was well dug in, in well prepared reinforced positions and had advantage of observation from the Abbey and the high ground behind Cassino. Enemy mine fields were well prepared and covered by excellent field of fire, MG nests in steel and concrete bunkers had to be stormed. Progress was measured by yards and by buildings. Each building had been converted into an enemy strong-point. Fighting was intense throughout the period. One third of Cassino was captured and held by the Regiment when relieved February 21-22. Casualties were heavy. All three Battalions were below 50% of authorized strength when relieved. . . .

The British, American, and French forces fought courageously in their efforts to dislodge the German defenders around Monte Cassino. With Allied casualty rates soaring, units were replaced by a new Corp from the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army made up primarily of Indians, New Zealanders, and Nepalese soldiers. They would

face the Germans in what would become the second battle for Monte Cassino. The 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division composed of three British and six Indian battalions relieved the US 34<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. “Most of them were Sikh—all wore turbans,” recalls Foott. The Indians had proven themselves in combat during the North African campaign and were given the special mission of taking the monastery at Monte Cassino. They were also given the perilous task of clearing the adjacent high ground from German defenders. The 2<sup>nd</sup> New Zealand Division, highly regarded in North Africa by Erwin Rommel, was given the mission to seize the town of Cassino.

The monastery which stood high on a peak overlooking the town of Cassino provided an ideal location for observing the surrounding hills and valleys. Even though the Germans had given word to the Vatican and the Allies that the historic abbey would not be used for defensive purposes some officers began to believe otherwise. Lt. General Sir Bernard Freyberg from New Zealand, who was leading up the new offensive operations around Monte Cassino, demanded that the monastery be bombed. On February 14<sup>th</sup> leaflets were dropped near the abbey warning the occupants to leave at once. Some fled to safety while others stayed, prayed, and put their faith in God for no harm to come to them. On the morning of February 15<sup>th</sup> American bombers began the air assault on the monastery. The 4/16<sup>th</sup> Punjab Battalion from the 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division nearby witnessed the bombing as recorded in their war diary:

We went to the door of the command post, a derelict farmhouse, and gazed up into the pale blue sky. There we saw the white trails of many high-level bombers. Our first thought was that they were the enemy. Then somebody said ‘Flying Fortresses.’ There followed the whistle, swish and blast of the blockbusters as the first flights struck at the Monastery. Almost before the ground ceased to shake the telephones were ringing. One of the companies was within 300 yards of the target and the others within 800 yards; all had received a plastering and were asking questions with some asperity. We could not offer any explanation; we just had to grin and bear it.

Due to a lack of coordination between air and ground commanders one Punjabi company near the abbey suffered 24 casualties from the bombing. By early afternoon American bombers had dropped an overwhelming amount of high explosive bombs on and around the historic landmark. The monks and the abbot were able to dig themselves out of the destroyed monastery; although, many of the refugees who had taken sanctuary there were not as lucky. The results of the bombing turned the monastery into an ideal defensive fortification. The interior courtyards, church, and monastic buildings of the monastery had been obliterated,

yet the outer walls remained intact at their base. German paratroopers knowing that the rubble would provide an ideal source of protection occupied the ruins in force. The 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Division had requested to delay the bombing until they were in position and ready to take the monastery. This may have contributed to the overall success of their mission by putting them in a position to attack the Germans before they had the chance to recover from the psychological shock of the bombing. The bombers were needed the following day in the skies above Anzio for a large anticipated German counterattack.

To the north at Anzio a discovery had been made within the Allied perimeter of the beachhead. Major William P. Allis with the Alsos Mission received word that an unexploded radio controlled glider bomb that the Germans were using to target Allied shipping had been found. In the early morning hours on 16 February, a major enemy offensive began to crush American formations. The 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division had the key defensive position at the Allied central sector of the beachhead when the German attack fell with vengeance upon the 157<sup>th</sup> and 179<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments. When Joe Santora arrived with the 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment in late January of 1944 he was gripped by memories of his mother who had lived only 40 miles from Anzio before immigrating to the United States. Joe recalls his experiences on the front lines:

We slept in foxholes and it constantly rained. You couldn't get out of the fox hole in the daytime, you couldn't move. They [the Germans] were up in the hills and could see every move we made. So we stayed in the fox holes during the day and would come out at night. The Germans shelled us day and night and my buddy Bill Judge from Minerva OH, who I knew since basic training, was killed in his foxhole when an artillery shell landed on him. We had so many replacements, you don't even get to know the guys names. You're always afraid and scared and looking for a buddy you know. Actually the truth is you're fighting for that guy next to you and he's fighting for you. Like kids that are scared of the dark and holding hands. You're always scared, when you get brave, you're nuts. That's when you go nuts when you start getting brave. You want to end the war right away yourself. That happened to me. I remember a time when there were only three guys left in our squad and they were new replacements. You didn't last long on Anzio. You feel like an old man, I was 19, they were 18 or 19. They felt like they were my kids. You sort of feel sorry for them because they don't know what they were getting into. The combat medic was the worse job. Shells are coming in and guys are hollering medic. They got to get out and run and they see all that blood and stuff you know.



By February 17<sup>th</sup> the German assault on the 45<sup>th</sup> Division became so critical that every available aircraft of the Mediterranean Allied Air Force was sent to support the infantry at Anzio. This was the largest airstrike on the western front to ever fly in direct support of an army up to that time. The Allies utilized every artillery piece on the Anzio beachhead and supporting fire from naval cruisers to fight off the attack. Despite suffering heavy losses, the Germans continued advancing with a determined effort to drive the Allies back into the sea. By February 18<sup>th</sup>, the 179<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 45<sup>th</sup> Division had been driven back and as the numbers of dead and wounded rose, many began to surrender. Some had no choice but to surrender. Felix Subervi, who had been transferred from Headquarters to L Company after a misunderstanding with his Captain, recalls his experience on that fateful day:

I wake up in the morning and were surrounded by Germans. So my new company commander, the sergeant, the 1<sup>st</sup> sergeant, and practically the whole company was captured or wiped out. These two German soldiers come into where we were in a farm house pointing their rifles at us. We jumped up out of bed and they said, 'hands up,' in English. They took us outside the building and I saw that most of the company was already captured and there were Germans all over the place. And then they took a group of us and they put us into a big massive crater formed from ships that had shelled the beach and told us to keep our hands up in the air. So were in the crater and the Germans are on top at the rim and I thought for sure, there were going to kill us. And I had a prayer book with me and I got down and started praying and then a officer came by and he gave orders for us to get us out of there and have us carry their wounded to different ambulances and half track vehicles that were being used as ambulance carriers. In Italy doors are made of solid oak, they are thick and heavy and so they took the doors and put the wounded on them. So we take the wounded and carry them about a hundred yards to where the ambulances were and lay them down and then they put them into the half track or ambulances. And then we went back to get another one. In one of the runs another fellow and I, we took this German and as we put him down, I heard a whoosh. I could tell by the sound that it was a mortar. As I was putting the German down, I tell the other fellow, hit the ground. We hit the ground and when I looked up the driver of the half track had no face. He was screaming and hit the ground. The Americans were counterattacking. My hands were bleeding from some of the shrapnel that hit them. I wrapped my hands and said, 'Let's now go back to the house.' And I looked further on and could see a whole line of prisoners being

marched further down. So I said, 'Let's go to where those guys are and let's get away from here, let's not go back to the farm house.' So we both ran and caught up with that detail, to the line of prisoners being taken further back. They were going to take us to some POW shelter. As we were marching along the road one of our planes started strafing the road shooting everything in sight. We could see the plane coming so we took off our jackets and helmets—waving them to the pilot. Finally he recognized that we were prisoners and he came low and tipped his wings. Finally they had us march about 5 or 10 miles further back and they put us in some farmhouse that was being used as a prisoner of war shelter. From then on, to one camp, to another camp, then another camp. . . .

The Allied counterattacks halted the German advance, but offered little help to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, who had already been overrun causing them to lose contact with their supporting units. Cut off from supplies and reinforcements, many would have surrendered, but Lieutenant Colonel Brown, who commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, ordered his men to withdrawal into a series of caves nearby for protection. Here they began a fight for their lives as Joe Santora remembers, "The Germans had cut us off and we were running out of supplies. So at night we would sneak out to fill our canteens with water in this muddy area. I remember drinking the water, spitting out the stones and leaves. Once after gathering water, this guy comes over and says, 'Guess what, God damn it, I had three canteens, the one in the middle filled with water, the other two empty, and you know they shot the one in the middle.'"

The American infantrymen who had been in the caves for four days were outnumbered, nearly out of ammunition, and surrounded by the Germans. With British troops fighting their way into relieve them the exhausted men were ready to break through the German positions and make their escape as Joe Santora recalls:

It was pitch dark. . . . Next to me was Colonel Brown . . . and Captain Sparks comes up telling me to get out and cover our flank. I said, 'I don't have any more ammo.' . . . After leaving the cave we got near this road and all hell broke loose. The Germans had machine gun positions set up and waiting for us. Good thing I was up near the brass because the machine guns cut the men behind us all off. There was still this one machine gun nest on the road ahead. So then it starts getting light and Captain Sparks tells us, 'Go into the field and see if you can find any way to get the hell out of here.' I bumped into two British, one was wounded in the leg and the other was patching him

up. They had knocked out the machine gun nest that had been giving us so much trouble and told us it was safe now to continue.

The British serving with the Queens Royal Regiment suffered heavy casualties in their valiant efforts to rescue the Americans. They were a welcome sight for sore eyes though. When the battle began, Lieutenant Colonel Brown had over 800 American soldiers under his command. Only 225 would make it out of the caves alive. Most of those who survived, suffered from grievous wounds or mental agony. The mental wounds can stay with people for the rest of their lives. Joe Santora, in his late eighties, is still haunted with memories of his time on the Anzio beachhead, "Anyway I'm always kicking with these nightmares you know; these haunting images of battle still come to my mind after all this time."

By February 22<sup>nd</sup> the Fifth Army had sustained 72,982 casualties since landing at Salerno as noted in Mark Clark's diary. With the use of an overwhelming number of artillery barrages, airstrikes, and fresh reserves of troops the Allies were temporarily able to quell the German offensive. After receiving advanced warning of another attack, Lt. Jesse James received orders from his captain that his company in the 39<sup>th</sup> Combat Engineers would end up "staying to the last man to hold the beach," if the situation became critical enough. Then on February 29<sup>th</sup> the next assault struck the US 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, the 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, and the 509<sup>th</sup> Parachute Battalion. Lt. Charles McKinney recalls his experience:

Day and night you're attacking or being attacked. They were determined we were not going to move in and we were determined we weren't going to be pushed back into the water. I remember one morning in Anzio, when the Germans decided they didn't like the ground we were on and they wanted it back. About 1:00 AM I got called on my field phone, and was told 'they're coming at you tomorrow morning at daylight.' I was young. I had never received a call like that, to say hey your ass is going to get it tomorrow morning. It's scary. So you spend the rest of the night doing the best you can to get ready, ammunition piled up, guns locked and loaded, ready and sure enough, just before daylight, here comes the artillery. It comes for about thirty minutes and all hell breaks loose with small arms. In my unit the 509<sup>th</sup> Parachute Battalion, I would say that that was the worst fighting we were in, maybe, in entire the war. We had a lot of people die at Anzio and my buddies are still buried over there.

For outstanding performance of duty, the 509<sup>th</sup> were among the first paratroopers to receive the Presidential unit citation. Part of the citation written by General Mark Clark reads, "The 509<sup>th</sup> held its fire until the last possible moment

then every weapon opened up cutting huge gaps in the first attacking wave. The soldiers of the 509<sup>th</sup> fought desperately, disdaining retreat, and engaging the overwhelming German force with rifle butts and even fists. Late in the afternoon the German attack was halted. The courageous and determined stand made by officers and men of the 509<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Battalion resulted in the retention of a vital sector of the beachhead and prevented a dangerous German wedge between two infantry battalions. . . .”

**Joshua Quackenbush**

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