

Sharing European Memories at School

History and memories of the Gothic Line (WW2)

Case study: The Monte Sole Massacre

2011-2012

The Gothic Line

The Gothic Line was the last front of the Second World War in Italy, from August 1944 until April 1945, dividing Italy in two from the Tyrrhenian to the Adriatic Sea. On one side was the German army, defending the strategic points of the Apennine uplands, and on the other were the Allies, trying to break through to the Po Valley. As well as the war fought along the front, the area of the Gothic Line was also marked by a large number of massacres of civilians, chief amongst them those at Sant'Anna di Stazzema and Monte Sole (Marzabotto).

Even more than a theatre of war, the Gothic Line was a place where profound changes occurring in the world's political structure were reflected: British uncertainty as the end of the era of the country's colonial empire approached, against the political background of the division of the globe between the new powers, the Americans and the Russians, soon to receive formal blessing at the Yalta Conference. The Gothic Line was also in some ways a forerunner of the global village, since soldiers from more than thirty countries fought there, bringing their cultures into contact with each other and with the local communities.

The SEM@S project continues and finishes the activities started with the students of the Castiglione dei Pepoli school, which was involved in the first “S.E.M.E” project, and the students of vocational training centre “Forma Giovani”.

The students have made the presentation, going over the work done by other students and inserting with their deepen experiences and researches.

The Topic

The construction of identity through family memories of World War II: the students work on a local event and the two classes meet at a memory location where a massacre of civilians took place along the Gothic Line (Monte Sole, also known as Marzabotto)

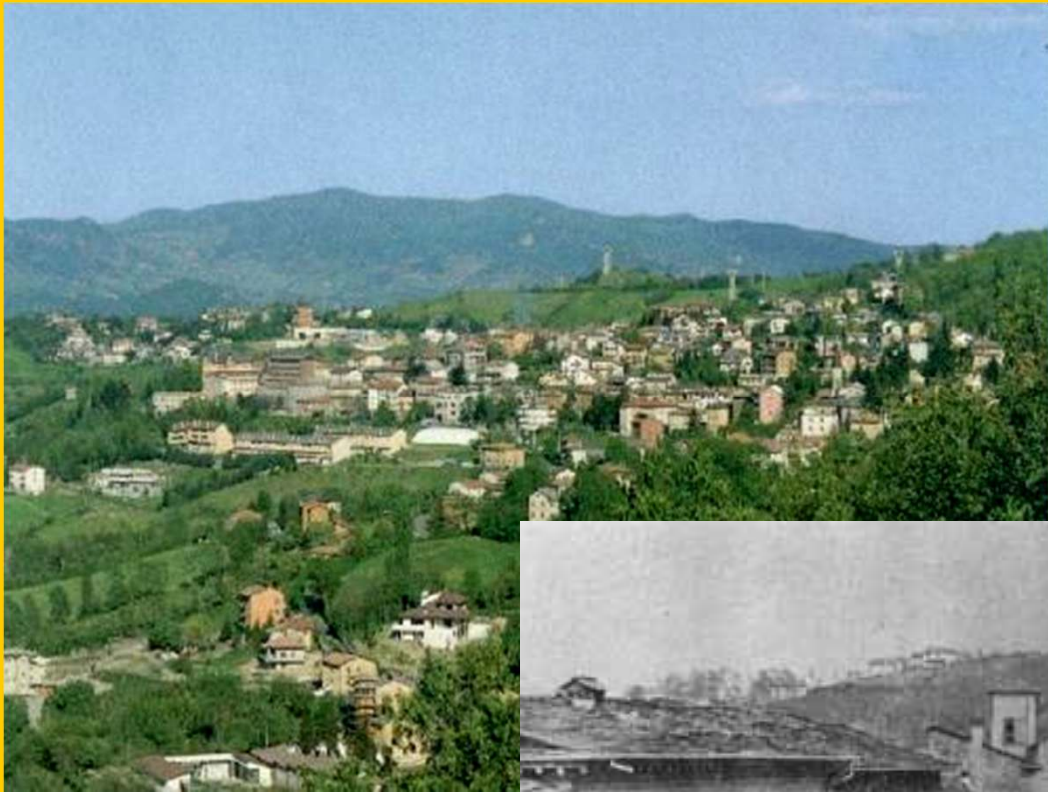
The Monte Sole massacre was perpetrated from 29 September to 5 October 1944 by the German SS and Wehrmacht troops under the command of the 16th SS-Panzer-Grenadier-Division «Reichsführer»: 770 civilians were killed, the largest such atrocity in western Europe.

The method used

- Reconstruction of the historic context and the sequence of events
- Difference between history and memory
- Discussion about how war changes people, the problems of returning home and dealing with memories.
- Critical discussion of the sources:
 - Selected books about the Monte Sole massacre, critically discussed, book by book in chronological order, focusing on what the author is offering: history or personal recollection, which aspects of the massacre are highlighted and questions relating to controversy arising from the publication of the book.
 - On the use of verbal testimonies
- Meeting with eye-witnesses
- Visit to the memory location using the living diorama method.

This is the work made by the students of “ISI.Cast. Caduti della Direttissima” in Castiglione dei Pepoli during the project “Sharing European Memories” 2009-2010.

Castiglione dei Pepoli



Working



***“The cannon shot explode very close us ...
without asking the permission ...”***

Lorenzo Lorenzoni



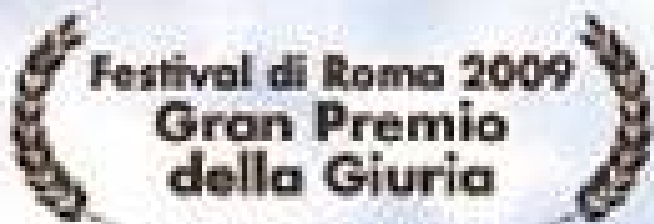
L'uomo che verrà





***Don't think to the debits, otherwise the
grapepicking spoil.***

Is it the way to do that chage things.



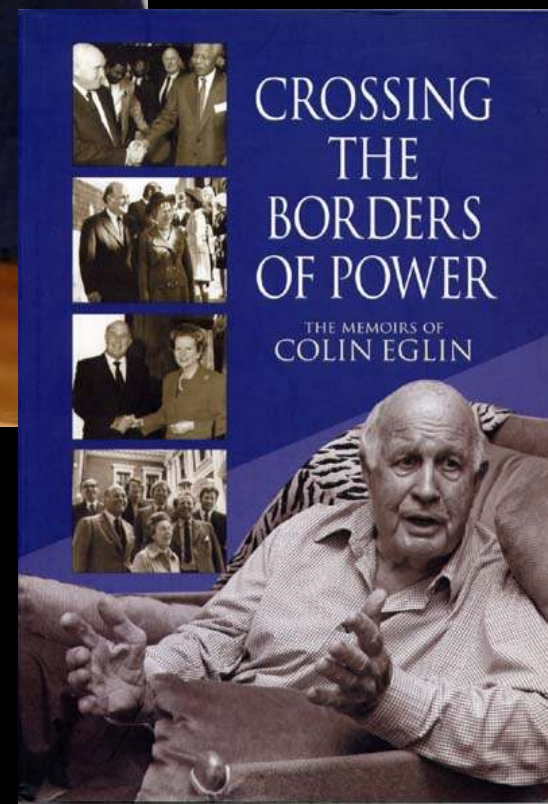
15th April 2010

meeting with South African veterans





Talking to the students: "You are very young but nobody can escape ageing and you will realize you are growing old when your memories outnumber your dreams... So, keep dreaming, that way you won't grow old."



4th May 2010



Living diorama "24th September 1944"



Our mails





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Castiglione dei Pepoli, 07/04/2010

Abschrift für Kenntnisnahme : Sehr geehrte Herr
KARL SCHAPER
Breinumer Straße 37
31196 SEHLEM/HILDESHEIM
GERMANY

Sehr geehrte Herr Neumayr,

wir schreiben Ihnen bezugnehmend auf den beiliegenden Brief des freundlichen Herrn Karl Schaper (dem unsere ganze Anerkennung gilt), der uns auf einen unseren Brief von 17/10/2009 geantwortet hat (auch dieser liegt bei).

Wir wollen höflich nachfragen, ob Sie uns bei unseren Nachforschungen helfen können, und ob Sie vielleicht einige Erfahrungen, die Sie in unserer Gegend gemacht haben, mit uns teilen wollen.

Wir danken Ihnen von Herzen für die Mithilfe die Sie uns geben können, und in der Hoffnung, Ihnen nicht zu viele Umstände zu bereiten, möchten wir Ihnen alles erdenklich Gute wünschen und wir verbleiben mit freundlichen Grüßen.



La Dirigente Scolastica
Prof.ssa Daniela Aureli
D. Aureli

La Responsabile del Progetto
Prof.ssa Anna Marchi
Anna Marchi

Gli Studenti

Elisa Baldi	Daniela Aureli	Giordana Fonti	Paola Lorenzini	Corrado Rappelli	Francesca Santi
Bianca Lanza	Arianna Fabbri	Paola Lorenzini	Paola Lorenzini	Paola Lorenzini	Nicola Santi
Cecilia Dondeni	Paola Lorenzini	Paola Lorenzini	Paola Lorenzini	Paola Lorenzini	Paola Lorenzini



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Elisa Balducci	Paola Eliauti	Giada Elena Fonti	Paola Elena Fonti	Lucrezia Rappelli	Francesca Santi
Benedetta	Arianna Fabbri	Ilaria	Dagmar Virginia	Alfonso	Nicola Sisti
Cecilia D'Amico	Ilaria	Ilaria	Federica	Daniela	Marzia
				Stefano	

This is the work made by the students of “ISI.Cast. Caduti della Direttissima” in Castiglione dei Pepoli and “Forma Giovani” in San Giovanni in Persiceto during the project “Sharing European Memories at School”.

**Monte Sole, Casaglia
cemetery, June 2010.**

The Futura compulsory school
guided by Peace School of Monte
Sole.



16th DIV "REICHSFÜHRER SS"
"Im gleichen Schritt und Tritt"



THE SCOTS GUARDS 1919-1955

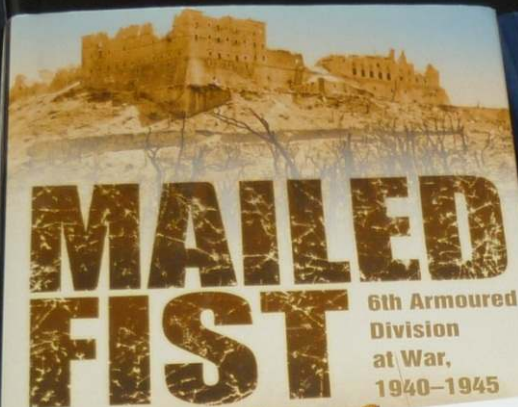


CROSSING THE BORDERS OF POWER

THE MEMOIRS OF
COLIN EGLIN



Die 334. Infanterie-Division



6th Armoured
Division
at War,
1940-1945

Der Einsatz der
334. INFANTERIE-DIVISION
am Truppenübungsplatz, Berlin-Adlershof
und in der Agimontstellung
(18. April bis 10. September 1944)



A YEAR IN ITALY
by Eric Hoffer

Das Reichsmonument
von Berlin-Adlershof
nach dem Entwurf
von Fritz Schupp



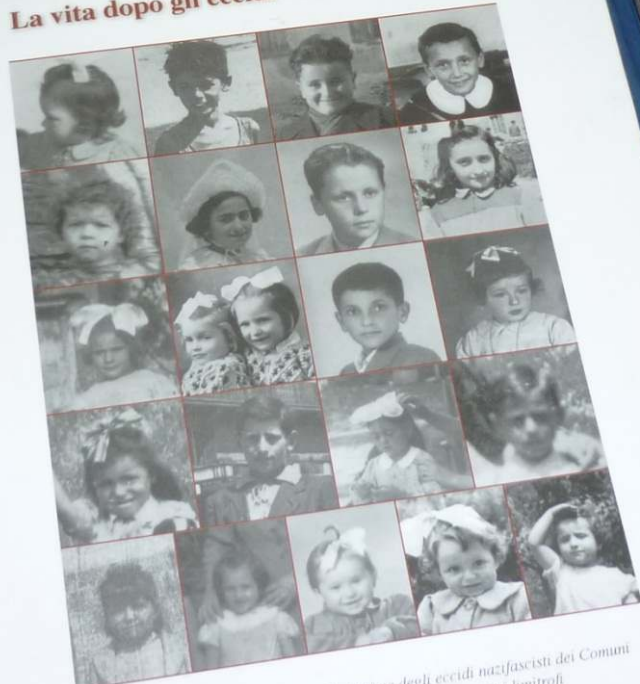
Die „Friedensglocke“ von Rovereto



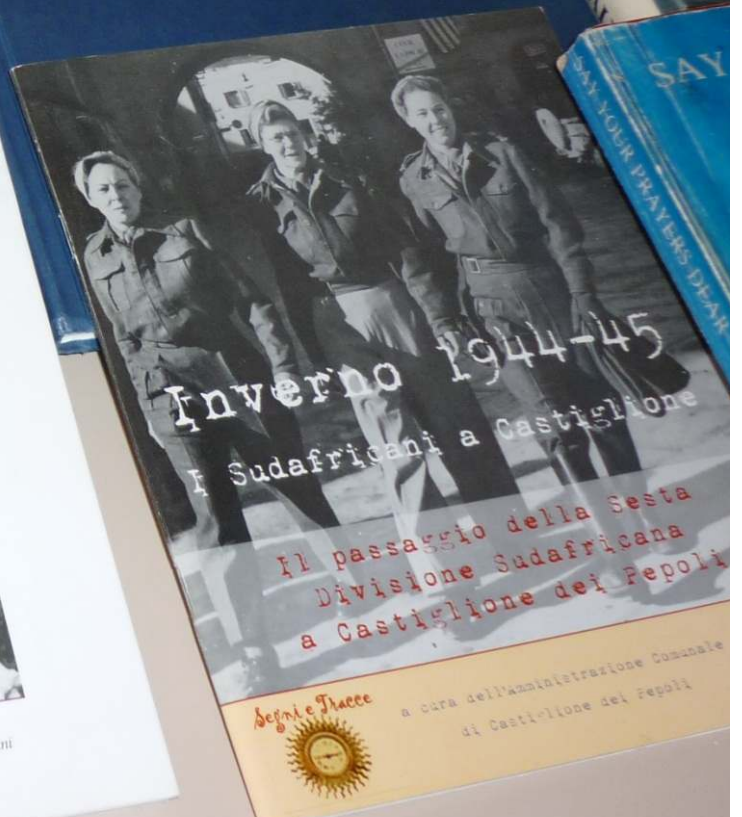
Renato Geronzi
Marzabotto



I BAMBINI DEL '44 La vita dopo gli eccidi - Marzabotto 2008



Associazione dei Familiari delle Vittime degli eccidi nazifascisti dei Comuni
di Grizzana, Monzuno e territori limitrofi



Il passaggio della Sesta
Divisione Sudafricana
a Castiglione dei Pepoli



a cura dell'amministrazione Comunale
di Castiglione dei Pepoli



Castiglione dei Pepoli (Bologna)
16th March 2012: Luigi Montiglioni
and Lidia Muratori (midwife)

Castiglione dei Pepoli (Bologna)
11th April 2012: Cathy Crupi, Prof.
John Nieuwenhuysen, his daughter
Sarah and Piero Bertolini,
Montepiano (Prato)



11st April 2012

Prof. John Nieuwenhuysen,
son of the soldier Johan
went in the classroom to talk
about the story of his father



13rd April 2012

San Giovanni in Persiceto
(Bologna)

Meeting with Adelmo Cervi son of
one of the seven brothers killed by
fascist the 28th December 1943 in
Reggio Emilia.





**Monterumici (Monzuno) memory location:
Living diorama: «11 October 1944»**









My dad was supposed to buy me the black shirt but he got me the cap with the eagle and the green shorts. Instead of the shirt he made me wear my school smock. At the parade, the Fascist who was lining us up saw I was wearing the school smock with my name on it and kicked me in the rear so hard that I fell down. I couldn't walk for a month.

Testimony of Corrado Ginotti

When she was little, my granny lived in Monte Baducco, a small village with a high number of partisans; all her relatives had been partisans; as it was widely known that there were many partisans there, the Germans decided to go and see the place, and once there they decided to stay for a while, to monitor possible revolts as closely as possible. The Germans stayed for a while in the house of my granny's granny. My granny's cousin, who at the time was 8-9 years old, lived in the same house, he was blond and had blue eyes and from the moment the Germans saw him they liked him a lot and often gave him food, sweets and chocolates that nobody else was allowed to eat.

Testimony collected by Denise Nerini

Another time a German officer was seriously wounded near there. So, in reprisal, they took ten civilians who were going to be shot and my great grandmother was with them. Luckily, the officer was seriously wounded but was still alive and the priest convinced him to tell the soldiers not to kill the civilians. In the end the officer agreed and the ten people's lives were spared even though he died shortly after.

Testimony collected by Giada Venturi

My paternal grandfather, born in 1927, was a member of the so-called Salò Republic, because his father was a fervent fascist so he followed in his father's footsteps. Many of my grandfather's friends were partisans and, even if he didn't share their ideas, he was always on very good terms with them. [...]

My maternal great-grandfather had leftist ideas and had a very interesting experience; his grandson was taken prisoner by German soldiers who wanted to take him to a labour camp. My great-grandfather managed to be taken prisoner as well to save him; on the train during the night they were able to escape and went back home unharmed.

Luigi

Some comments by the pupils

This project about the second world war made me think. It made me think about the importance of remembering what happened in those years. Soon all the people who actually experienced the war will be dead, so it is important to preserve their testimonies, because it is important to know what they experienced, as to avoid something similar happening again in the future. Moreover this project made me understand how lucky I am because I was born in this period, even if it is not the best of times and could still worsen. Let's hope that by remembering this tragedy mankind will understand that it should not be repeated.

During this day I have understood the living conditions of people during the war and their thoughts about the war. Moreover, it was also useful to understand how the areas near us witnessed the most relevant events of the war and how different people (Americans, Germans, local people) responded.

(follow...)

In my opinion, a project about testimonies of the second world war is important, not only on a historical basis because of the events, but also to be able to understand and see the war as the civilians and the soldiers experienced it, and not as the history books tell us, considering the human side and not only the anonymous and objective event that took place.

I found the whole project very interesting, especially the trip to Monterumici, because we were able to see the places where the second world war was fought, as they are places very close to where we live now. In my opinion meeting the survivors, who told us about everyday life at that time, was very interesting.

During this visit I understood how people lived and how difficult it was to communicate. Understanding the German language is difficult and if the person shouting at you in German has a gun, it is even more complicated.

(follow...)

This experience of the whole project and the trip has been very important to me because when you are told stories by people, their impact on you is much stronger than when you read them in a book, because most of the time we study history about things that concern us but only on a national or world level, so we do not understand the effects of some events on our region, on our grandparents, or on the people we sometimes meet in the village.

In my opinion this project is important because it shows you the reality of human feelings. We always read about wars, deaths, winners and losers in books but we never think that they were people like us, we never think about their feelings or about what they experienced when living such a difficult time as the second world war.

The schools work



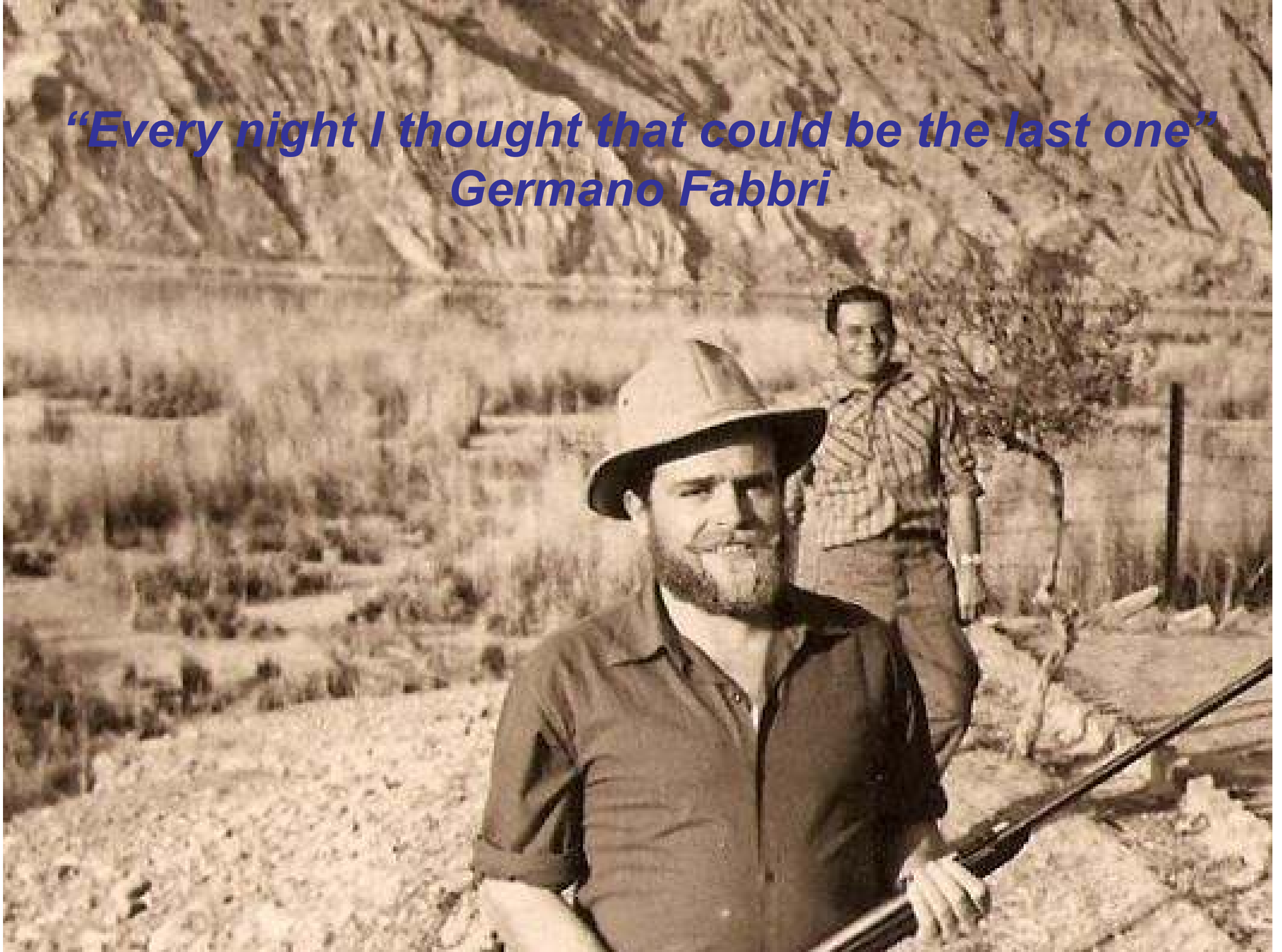
*Lest we
forget!*

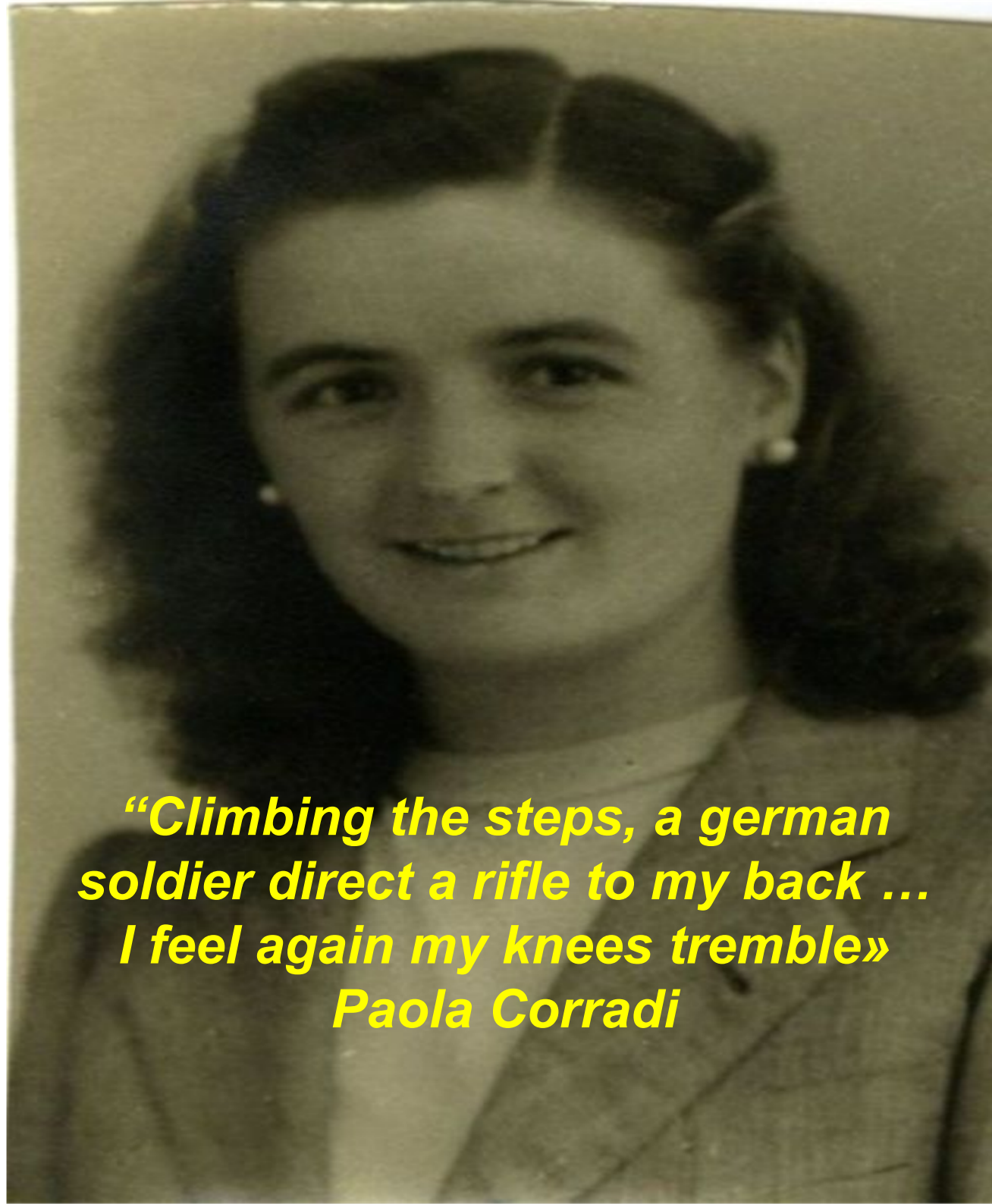


Stories

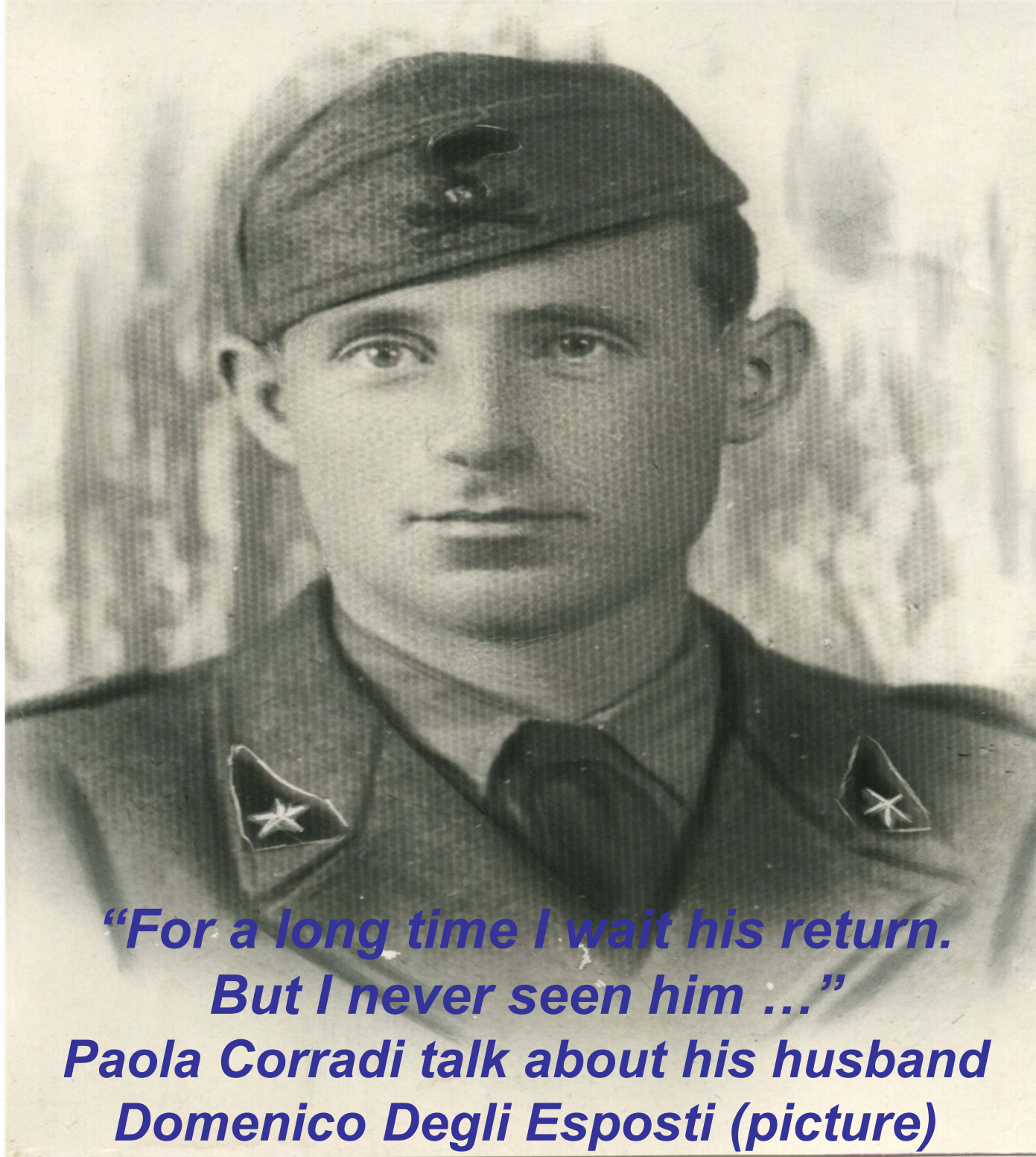


“Every night I thought that could be the last one”
Germano Fabbri





***“Climbing the steps, a german
soldier direct a rifle to my back ...
I feel again my knees tremble»
Paola Corradi***



***“For a long time I wait his return.
But I never seen him ...”***

***Paola Corradi talk about his husband
Domenico Degli Esposti (picture)***



***«then they ask us all the gold we had for the
Country, I remeber that my mother for the rest
of her life used a fake wedding ring.»
Antonietta Tomasin***



The story of Alfredo Albertazzi “Capaprella”

Suddenly, in September 1944, the Germans sprang up from the mule track that connects Serra dei Frascari to Burzanella, using amphibious vehicles and sidecars. The road was in a really bad condition but with those vehicles they could go everywhere. I was young then, I was only 9 years old and I did not fully understand how serious the situation was (my friends and I played several times with gunpowder we took from unexploded bombs and some of them lost their eyes or one hand; I was lucky!)

When I arrived home from the field, I saw a German nibbling grapes from the bower in front of the house and I told him they were still unripe! I didn't know he was Reder, the head of SS, and he didn't understand what I was saying. As he thought I was offending him, he aimed his Liger gun at my head. Luckily, my father saw the scene from the kitchen window and came out. He had worked in a mine in Germany so he explained in a broken German that I hadn't meant to offend him but I had just wanted to inform him that they were still unripe. At the time I didn't realize the risk but my father's hair turned white with fear. At that time they set up a radio link in our house and they invited us to stay if we wanted to.

However, my family preferred to move to my grandparents' in Falzone where we spent the night in the cellar. Once again fortune smiled on us... the Allies bombed the area but missed it by about 500m (thus hitting the area that presently is the landslide of Morracino lake) and so we survived... Leaving the house was a wise decision; in Bel Poggio di Burzanella (just a little lower on the same mule track) a family chose to stay; during the night the Germans had a party, got drunk and when the family refused to hand them two girls they killed 7 people.

The next day a local boy cut the radio wires (to bring them home and sell them); the Germans thought it was a sabotage and moved to another house, taking the radio link to the hill (near Poggio). However, we evacuated to Camugnano and only went back home after 12 days.

Interview to Adriana Sgarbi



Baragazza

Baragazza, a hamlet of Castiglione dei Pepoli, was bombed on 11th September 1944, with an air raid by the Allied forces that caused the death of 11 German soldiers and 33 civilians. Two days later Castiglione was struck by the same fate.

On 25th September the Allied forces entered Baragazza (after conquering Passo della Futa on 22nd September) and on 27th they entered Castiglione, coming from Montepiano.

INTERVIEW

Q: When did it happen?

A: On 11th September 1944. I was at home with my mother and I heard a boom; it was the first of a long series of bombs dropped by Americans on that day.

Q: What did you do then?

A. As soon as we realized what was going on we went out onto the street and we ran into a shelter on top of the mountain not far from our house.

Q: What kind of shelter was it?

A: It was, and still is, a big rock hollow in the centre, a sort of cave.

follow...

Q: How long did you stay there?

A: We stayed there for three days and three nights without any food supplies, only plain biscuits and a bottle of water.

Q: How many people were there?

A: There were about ... thirty people.

Q: After three days what did you do?

A: We decided to go down to the village to get something to eat and some warmer clothes because it was very cold, even though it was still summer.

Q: Did many people die?

A: Most of the bombs fell on the square of the village. The names of those who died are written on a memorial plaque outside the Church in Baragazza; more or less fifteen people died.

Q: How long did you stay in the shelter?

A: We went back home on 3rd October.

Q: Why did you stay in the shelter so long if the bombing lasted only a few hours?

A: Because the German army was in retreat and we could not move. We were also stuck by our fear.

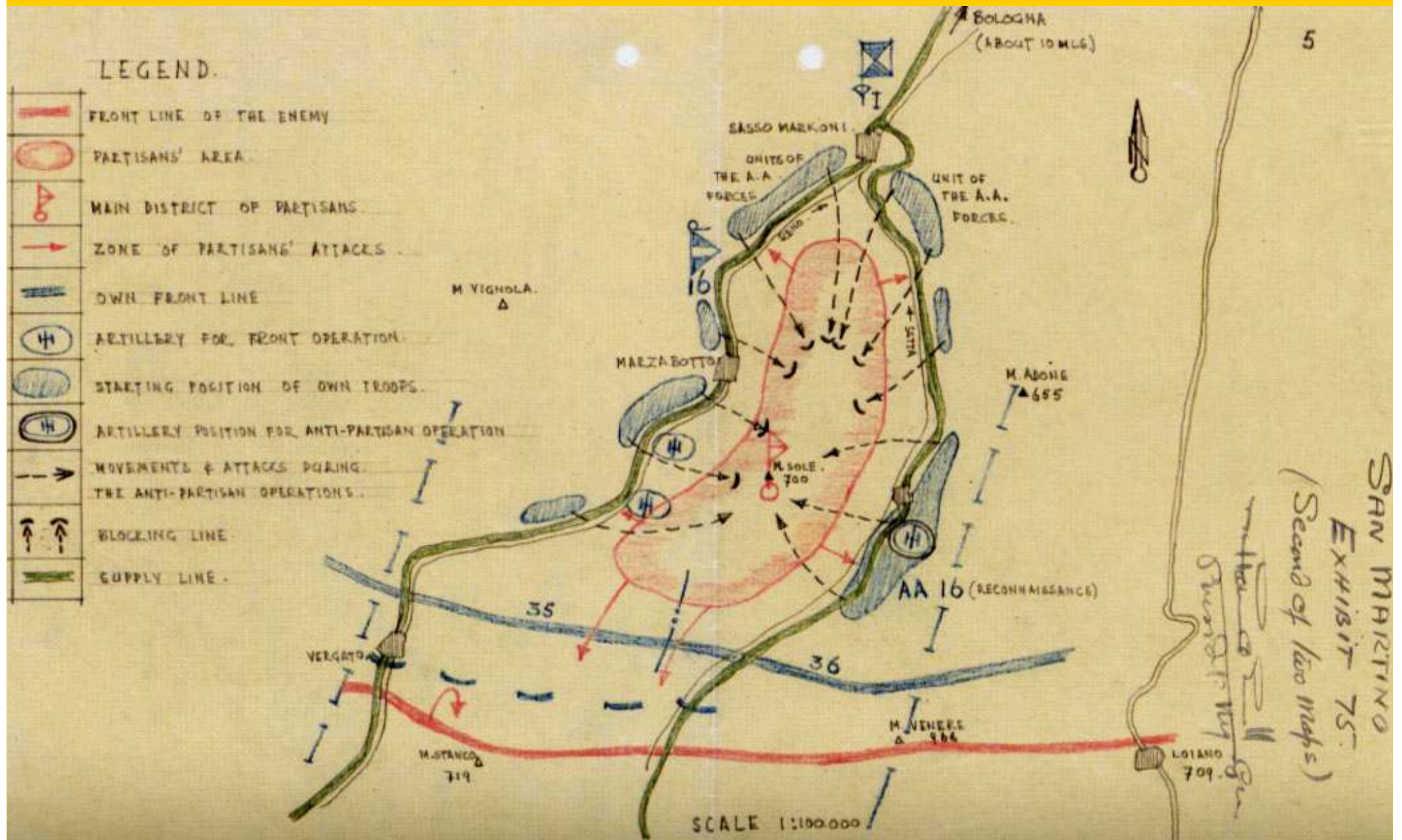
The Partisans



The Brigade Stella Rossa (Red Star), was one the most famous formation of the Bologna province



The target of the Germans was to clean up the mountain between Grizzana and Sasso Marconi from the all partisans.



Map of the Monte Sole massacre

The South Africans



The liberation of Castiglione dei Pepoli

On 27th September 1944 the *Imperial Horse / Kimberly* Regiment (6th South African Division) occupied Monte Bagucci and sent a patrol to Lake Brasimone and to Roncacce. Then they took possession of Monte Coroncina, and finally entered Castiglione dei Pepoli. The regiment had been preceded by the soldiers of the *91st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron* (attached to the *34th Infantry Division «Red Bull»*) and followed by Indian soldiers of the *4th/13th Frontier Force Rifles*.

On 28th September the headquarters of the 11th Brigade (6th South African Division) was set up in the village.

Castiglione: South African cemetery



*“Thanks to this guys arrived faraway, if today we
enjoy of our freedom”*



“To save the humanity, you have condemned yourselves”





Joahn Nieuwenhuysen close the wheel. «My father often told me about the advance of the division towards Florence and about Major-General W H Evered Poole, the division commander, who counted the explosions that blew up the town bridges. My father was his executive secretary».

The English



*Anna Poppelsdorff wife of Leonard
soldier of the 24th Guards*



“Around 14-15 March 1945, I was in low spirits when two friends of mine came to invite me to a party at the hospital. When we arrived I found out they had a date with two soldiers while I didn’t.

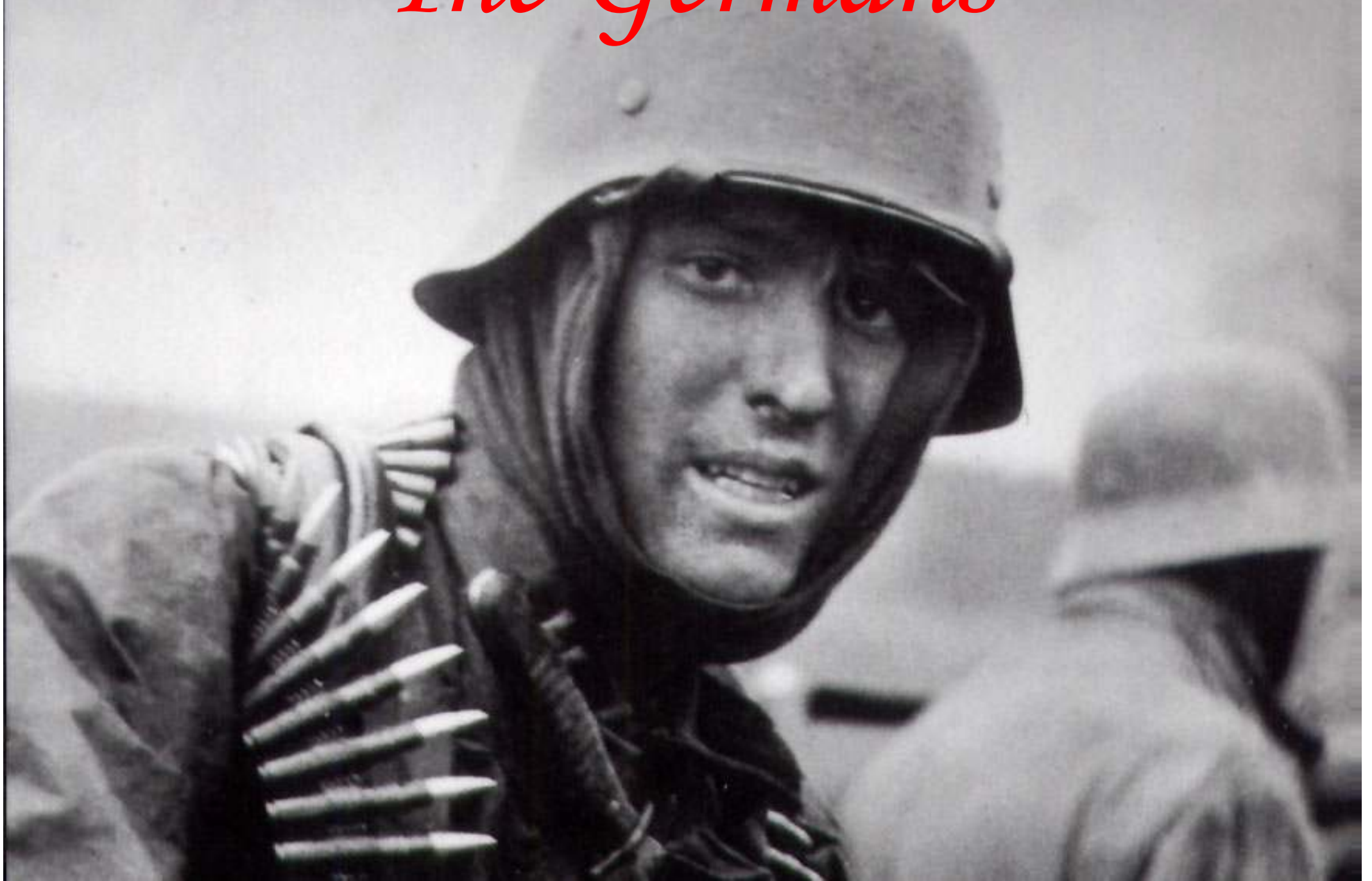
I got angry with them and the man who would later become my husband told me he fell in love with me when he saw me so furious.”

SAY YOUR PRAYERS
DEAR



Leonard H. Poppelsdorff

The Germans



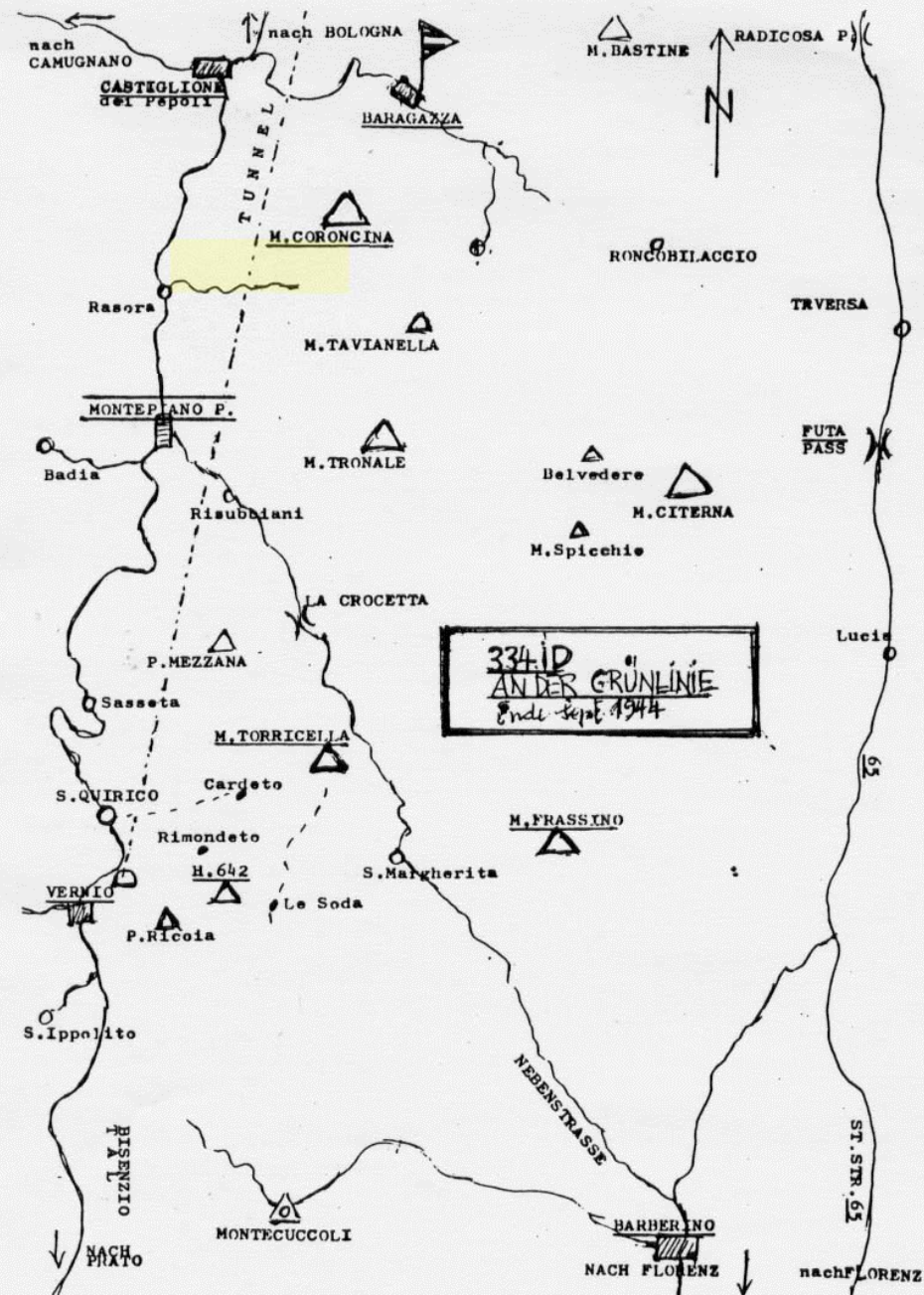
Der Einsatz der 334. INFANTERIE-DIVISION

am Trasimenersee, beim Arno
und in der Apenninstellung
(20. Juni bis 30. September 1944)



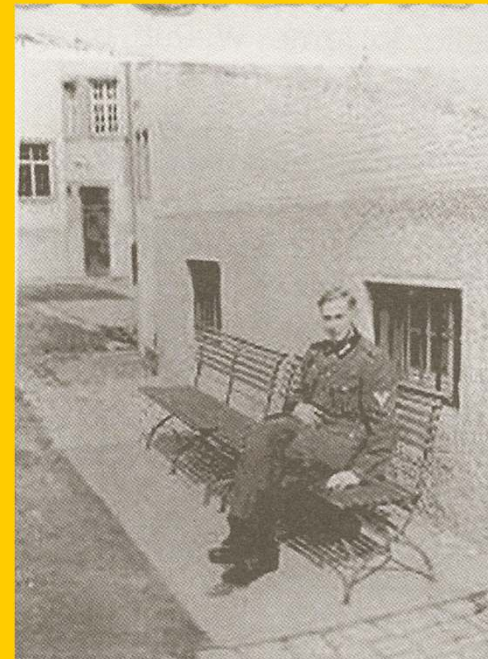
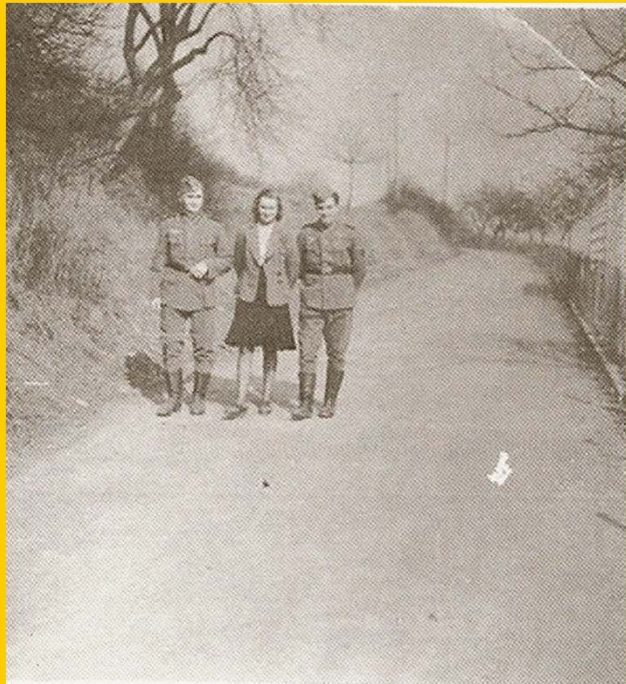
für die Divisionskameraden:
geschrieben von Josef Fössinger
herausgebracht vom
Kameradenkreis der 334. ID
i.A. Georg Obermeyer

1991



Josef Fössinger
soldier of the 334. Infanterie Division

We were worn-out because of the long march up and down the mountain, being closely followed by the Americans. We hadn't eaten for almost two days: along the road we had found a couple of figs and some grapes. Of course we hadn't slept... In the meantime it was getting dark. A hot soup would have encouraged and comforted us a little... Flashes and blasts followed one another incessantly on the crest like horrible fireworks. Luckily that night our hill was spared by the enemy artillery. (22nd September 1944)





Soldiers of 16. Panzergrenadier Division SS

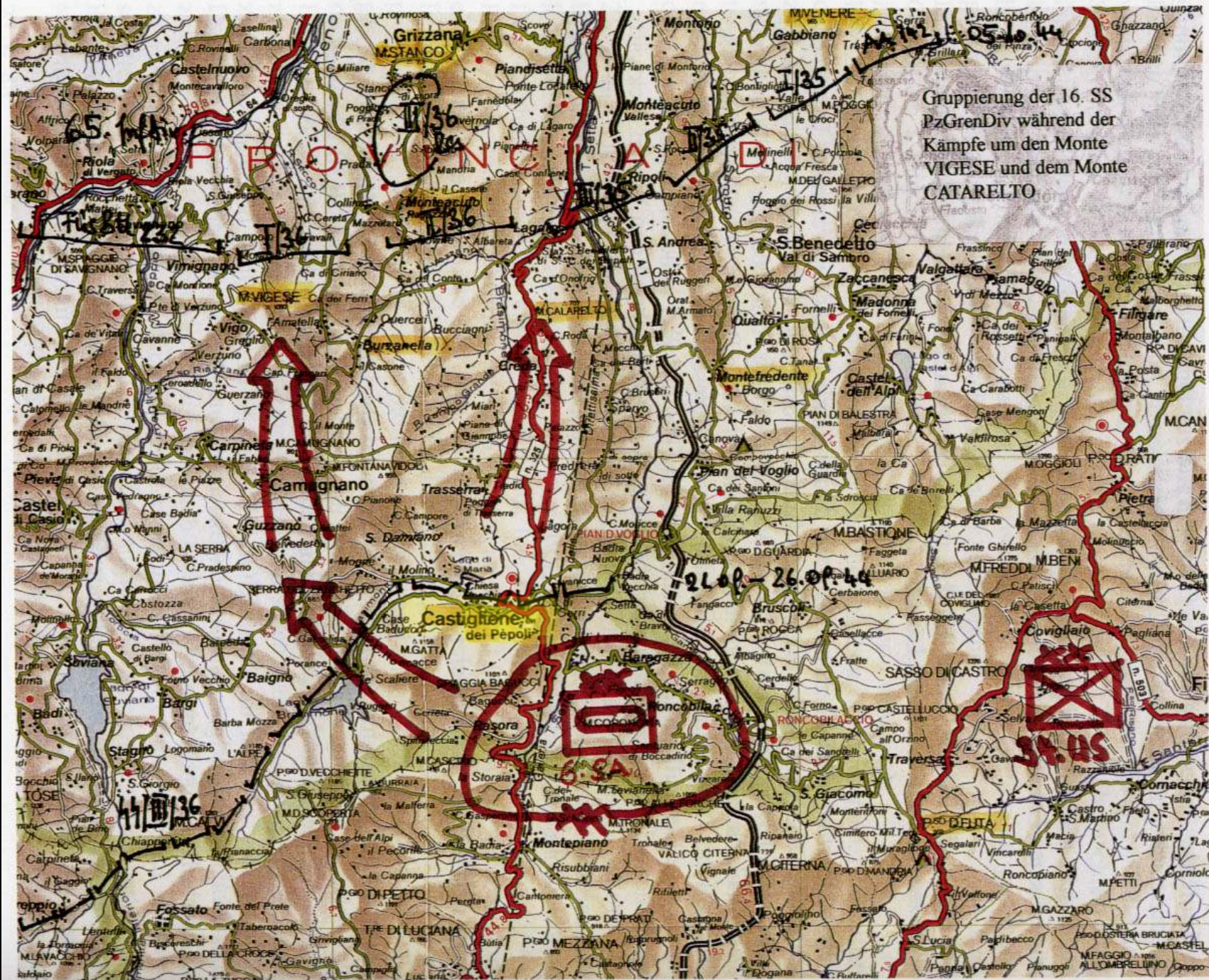
The first morning on the mountains Willfried Segebrecht got out of the trench and stretched out in the sun. Less than thirty metres away, the Unterscharführer Bühler got out of the trench and stretched out too. Willfried called him and a moment later the “express train” of an artillery bullet echoed among the mountains. The next second Bühler had disappeared, exploded into thousands of pieces. Willfried was shocked. He knew him well and they had fought side by side since the time of the Blitzkrieg, in the west; they had been to Holland, France, Russia and the Balkans together. «I couldn’t believe it », wrote down Willfried, « I crept back into my bunker and I was not ashamed of my tears...» Segrebet, scout of 16th SS

Truppenkameradschaft
(Hrsg.)

„Im gleichen Schritt und Tritt“

*Dokumentation der 16. SS-Panzergrenadierdivision
„Reichsführer-SS“*





The Italians





Aldo Bertani, soldier of the 210^o Divisione italiana

HEADQUARTERS FIFTH ARMY
APO 464 US ARMY



CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION
FOR

Att. Bertani 9166
(NAME)

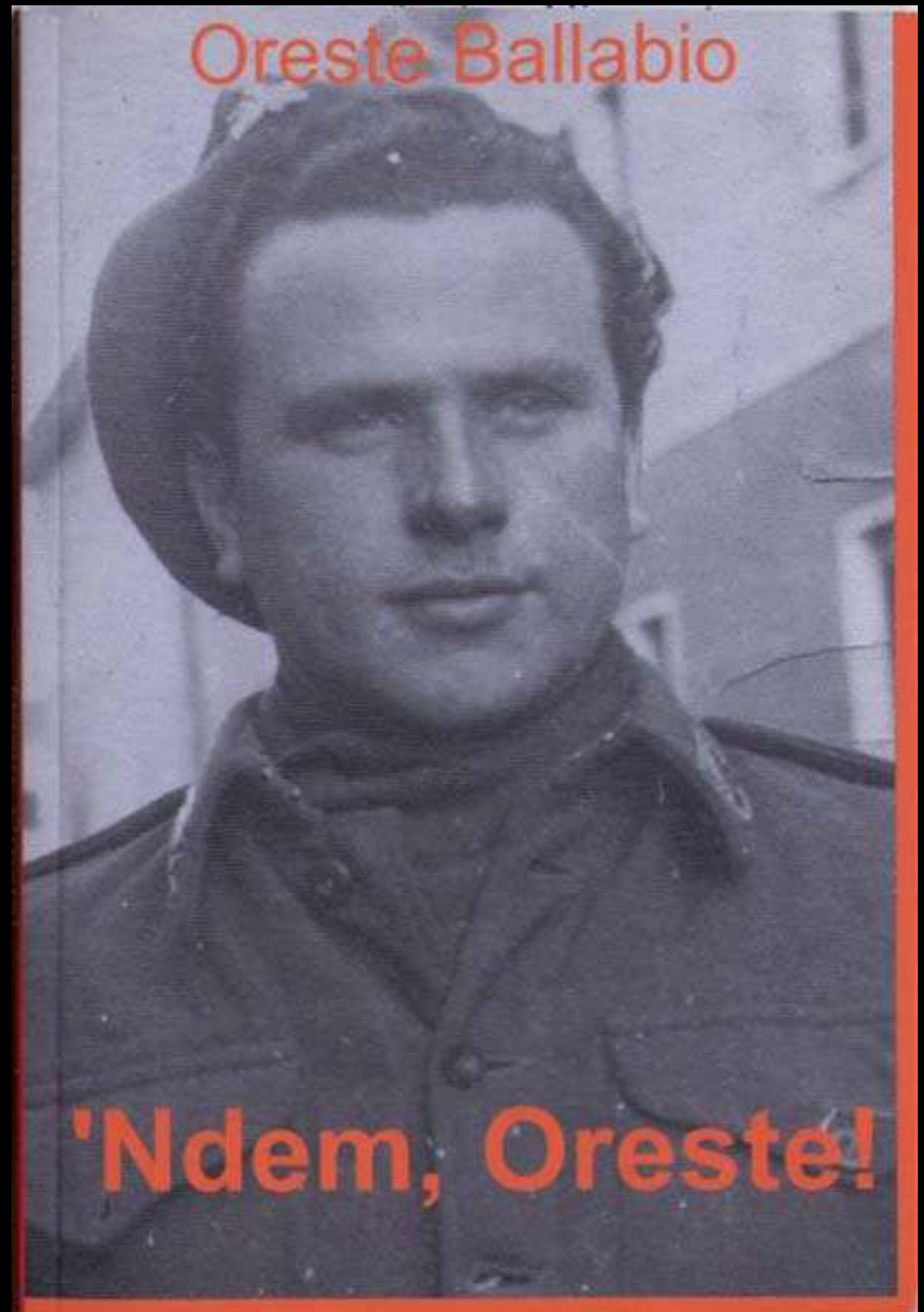
This certifies that the above named soldier of the 210th Italian Infantry Division, attached to the Fifth Army of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, rendered commendable service in the ultimate defeat of the common enemy and the liberation of his country.

L. K. TRUSCOTT, JR
LIEUTENANT GENERAL, U. S. ARMY
COMMANDING



Oreste Ballabio, soldier of “Legnano”

“On 25th April we were fighting; after the armistice [end of the war] I went back home. I hadn’t been home since February 1943. ... There were 10 of us, all from Lombardy; we took a lorry and we left. We crossed the river Po on a bridge of boats and we reached the north. The driver was from Como.”





The Americans



34th INFANTRY DIVISION

«Red Bull»

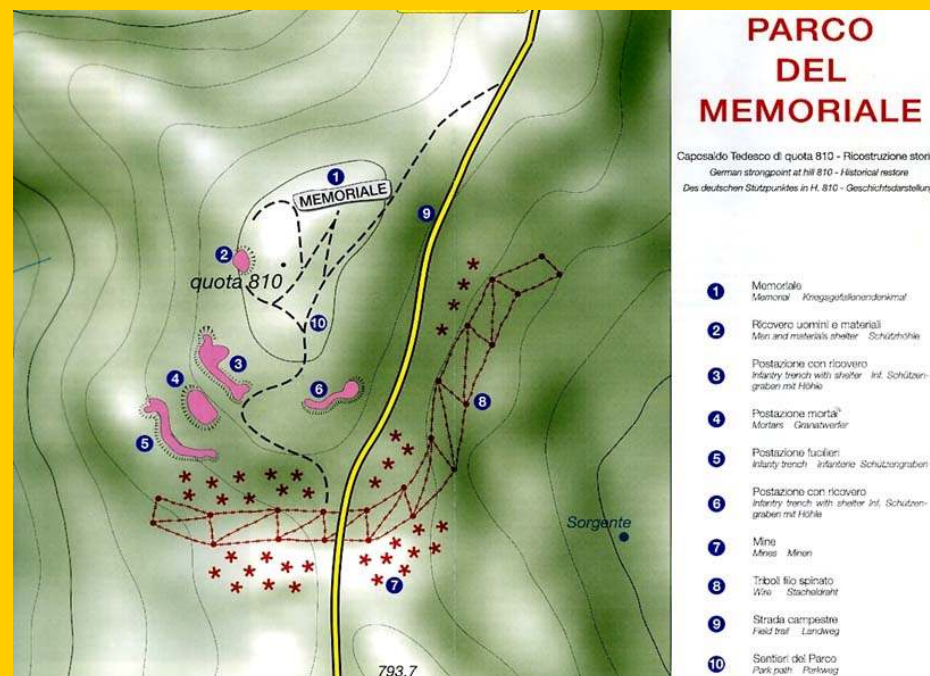
The 34th infantry division is a division in the US Army National Guard that participated in World War I, World War II and continues to serve today.

It holds the record among all American divisions of having the highest number of soldiers deployed in Europe in World War II. They took part in the North Africa Campaign, the Salerno landing, the attack on Monte Cassino until they reached the Gothic Line.

In autumn 1944 they reached the Gothic Line south of Bologna. The 133rd regiment fought on Monte Tronale in the area of Montepiano (24th September), while the 91st cavalry squadron, attached to the 168th regiment, occupied Castiglione dei Pepoli (27th September).



Memorial Park of the Gothic Line (Vernio, Prato)



During the Italian campaign doctor James W. Ruff was a young medical student who joined the 133rd Rgt of the 34th Division "Red Bull" as a nurse. The memory of the battle of Torricella has never left him; he clearly remembers that experience and here he recounts what happened moment by moment:

"When the Company I belonged to suffered many casualties as a consequence of an enemy counterattack, I worked for 5 hours under a heavy artillery fire, giving first aid to thirty-five wounded soldiers. Although the shots fell so close to me that I was covered in soil and stones, I kept working and when the Company lined up I directed evacuation operations for each wounded person along the slopes of the mountain. I was then informed that other people were wounded, five of them very seriously. They belonged to another company and they were lying in an open camp that was subject to mortar shots and other enemy weapons. So I moved to the area with another soldier and together we took the wounded under the shelter of a rock. When the allied forces were close again, we urgently needed to evacuate fifteen wounded people. Once again, with the help of the other soldier we evacuated them carrying them in our arms, one by one. We ran for 100 yards in the open camp under enemy fire until we were safe in a trench."

James W. Ruff, first class soldier of the medical department of the 133rd Infantry Regiment, was awarded a "Silver Star" medal for military value for his behaviour during the action of 21st September 1944 in Italy.

DARIO ZANINI

MARZABOTTO E DINTORNI 1944



BRICKBATS from F COMPANY



By Sergeant Milo L. Green
CAPTAIN PAUL S. GAUTHIER
EDITOR

IL SOLE DI MONTE SOLE

UOM
DEL POI
E DELLA

Quel giorno a
Baragazza...

Il bombardamento dell'11 settembre 1944



A cura del Comune di Castiglione del Pepoli

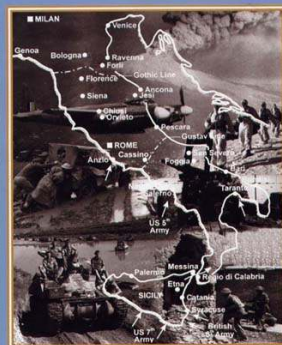
Dogfaces Who Smiled Through Tears



An outstanding
chronicle of
heartbreak, heroics
and humor
of the North African
and Italian Campaigns
in World War II

By Homer R. Ankrum

Foreword by
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Clark R. Mollenhoff



FROM SICILY TO THE ALPS

Personal Accounts and Recollections of World War II
Written and compiled by Glynn B Hobbs

Wege der 334. Infanterie – Division im Italienfeldzug 1943 – 1945



Erweiterte Fassung der beiden Vorträge gehalten beim
Kameradschaftstreffen der ehemaligen Angehörigen

DER 334. I. D.

am 18.09.2002 in Füssen und am 17.09.2003 in Leinfelden

von

Gerdhard Pabst

TO THE LAST MAN

The Chronicle
of the 135th
Infantry Regiment
of Minnesota

Collana Storica

Marco Ruzzi

GLI ITALIAN PIONEER NELLA GUERRA DI LIBERAZIONE

A fianco degli Alleati dalla Puglia alla Venezia Giulia 1943-45



Prefazione di Michele Calandri

FRATELLI FRILLI EDITORI

F3

Inverno 1944-45

I Sudafricani a Castiglione

Il passaggio della Sesta
Divisione Sudafricana
a Castiglione del Pepoli



a cura dell'Amministrazione Comunale
di Castiglione del Pepoli

n. 5

STUDI
E STORICHE
GUERRA DI LIBERAZIONE

LIONELLO BOSCARDI

DALLE PUGLIE ALLA VALLE PADANA

LA 210ª DIVISIONE DI FANTERIA
ADDESTRATA NELLA
GUERRA AMERICANA

3 - 2 MAGGIO 1944

TERRACINA
MONTANARO
CASSINIA
BRINCHIO
VIGEVANO
VIGEVANO

Nazionale
delle Forze Armate
di Liberazione

GIAMPIETRO LIPPI

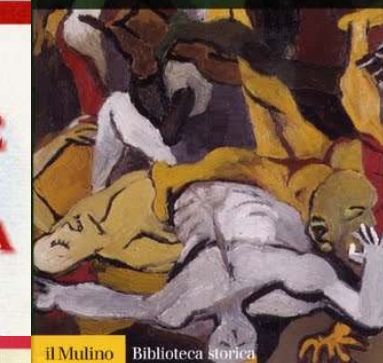
La Stella Rossa a Monte Sole



Luca Baldissara - Paolo Pezzino

Il massacro

Guerra ai civili a Monte Sole

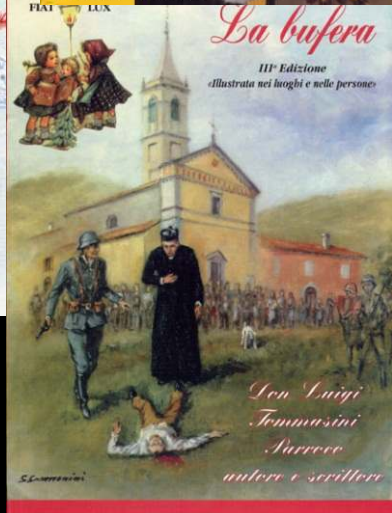


il Mulino

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La bufera

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Don Luigi
Tommasini
narra
l'autore e scrittore