

May 14, 2009.

Dear Silvio Passalalpi:

Thank you very much for the 45 photographs you took of Villamagna and vicinity. You are a very good photographer and must have an expensive camera. You also spent much time and money. Since I spent only one full day in Villamagna I saw very little of what is shown in the photographs so they were quite a revelation.

As you know the 349th Infantry took Villamagna on July 14, 1944. We left the next day and by July 26 all the Germans had been driven from the southern bank of the Arno River. On July 28 we were relieved by the U.S. 91st Infantry Division and were sent back into a rest area in Villamagna where we stayed in tents until August 31, a little longer than one month. We were in a meadow surrounded by olive groves. We did not see any houses and I doubt if any of us realized that the town of Villamagna was somewhere near by. We were not permitted to leave our rest area and explore the country side. However passes to Rome were issued.

We trained more than we rested. For the first ten days my unit underwent intensive training in all phases of river crossing operations. We carried imaginary boats from a forward assembly area to the banks of a dry river bed, loaded them, and then launched them to cross what would be the Arno River. For the entire month the rifle companies continued training. We also awaited replacements since from the time we left Rome my battalion had over 250 casualties. The area of Villamagna which was our rest area must therefore still contain many artifacts left behind by the men of the 349th. I just cannot remember along what slope in Villamagna we camped for a whole month and never saw the houses of Villamagna.

On the night of August 31 we moved out of the rest area to a jumping off spot to cross the Arno River about 4000 yards southwest of Florence. We remained here for about 17 days, just loafed, ate figs and grapes. On September 17 we broke camp and piled into trucks and crossed the Arno River without ever

<getting our feet wet. What I had trained for for many hours I never used. While we had been in the resting area in Villamagna the British very slowly and methodically had captured Florence with several bridges intact.

In regard to the dog tag of Clarence Foulk that you found in Villamagna: On a dog tag was engraved only the soldier's name, his serial number, the year of his last tetanus shot (T-44), a capital letter to denote his blood type (A), and a capital letter to denote his religion (P). A soldier's unit was never on his dog tag. Here is why I think Faulk's dog tag was found in Villamagna. Around July 1, 1944, battle casualties had been excessive both in Normandy and Italy and these needed replacement. The 9th Infantry Division still in the U.S. was combat ready. Usually before any Division is sent to a new location an advance party of only a few men is sent ahead to report on the condition in the new location. Faulk could have been a member of such a party and went to Villamagna in Italy. There he lost his dog tags. His report to the 9th Inf. Division still in the U.S. was probably unfavorable and the Pentagon in Washington decided to send 9th Division to Normandy instead of Italy. Thus Faulk probably never left the his 9th Division. All this could have happened between July 1 and August 11 when he was killed in St. Lo in northwestern France. All the above is of course just a wild guess but it does make some sense.

When a soldier was killed overseas the Graves Registration Command usually buried the casualty in a crude temporary cemetery, closest to the area in which most of the fighting occurred. The relatives were then asked if the casualty should be permanently buried in the country in which he was killed or do they wish him shipped back to the U.S. Most preferred that the body be buried in the country in which killed because he would then be with his comrades in arms, his buddies.

Yours,

*W. Lewis Huebner*