

# **Italian Town of Villamagna Again Celebrates Its Liberation from Nazi Germany, Thanking US 349th Infantry Regiment**

By Klaus Huebner

When you write a bit of history and this is later published you can never tell who might eventually read it and when.

On 14 July 1944 the town of Villamagna, a northern suburb of the city of Volterra was liberated from the Germans and this year the annual celebration of the occasion was to be on 12 July 2009. To keep memories alive, an Italian gentleman, Mr. Silvio Passalalpi, of Genoa, Italy, had spent much time money and energy. He wanted to be certain that the good work of the U.S. 349th Infantry Battalion would never be forgotten since it was this U.S. Army unit that liberated from the Germans the town of Villamagna. Mr. Passalalpi became aware of my involvement in the liberation of Villamagna when he saw in a copy of my book, *Long Walk Through War*, that I was the doctor for the Third Battalion, 349th Infantry Regiment when it captured Villamagna on 14 July 1944. He wanted more information of my experience since he had found very little information of the fighting for Villamagna in either German or Italian Army reports. I sent him all the information I remembered, the plan my battalion had to attack, the defenses we could see surrounding Villamagna, the excellent view the Germans had from the top of Villamagna to the approaches of the town. Mr. Passalalpi later sent me a CD and many photographs which verified my observations.

In 1987 Texas A and M University Press published my book, *Long Walk Through War*, which describes my experience as a doctor with the Third Battalion, 349th Infantry Regiment, 88th Infantry Division.

After the fall of Rome on 6 June 1944 the Third Battalion, 349th Infantry proceeded to go around the right flank of the city of Volterra and advance on the town of Villamagna, which is a suburb of Volterra in the north. German resistance was heavy and stubborn. The Germans held the high ground surrounding Villamagna and could observe us approaching from all sides.

Sometime in April 2009 an Italian boy, Silvio Passalalpi who lived in Genoa, Italy, was a guest in Villamagna, and was enchanted with the town and its environment. However war going on both north and south of the town did not make the town a suitable vacation resort, and he never learned exactly details of the fighting that occurred when the American forces stormed the town. I might have many of the details he was looking for because German and Italian Army reports were scant and poor.

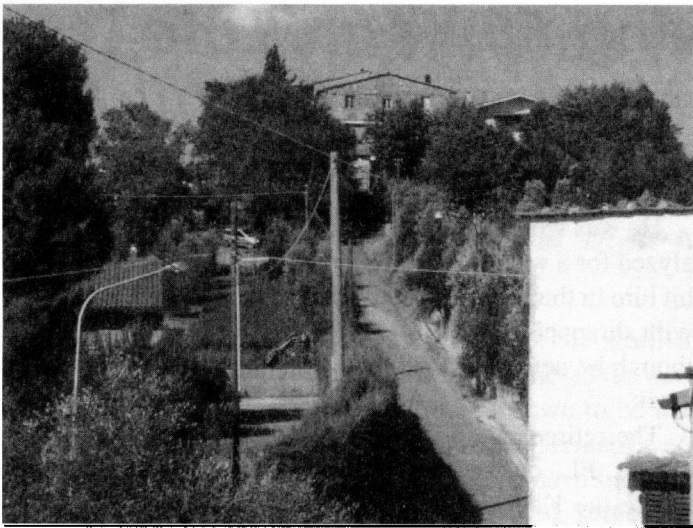
I sent him all the personal information I had on the capture of Villamagna and he was delighted. He said that he shortly would be going back to visit Villamagna, make a CD of the town and its approaches and thus refresh my memory. He would attend the town's celebrating its liberation from the Germans on 14 July 1944. Mr. Passalalpi said



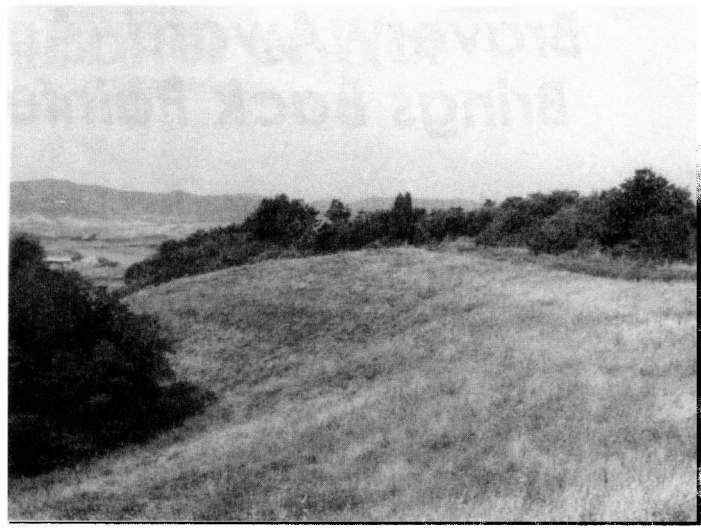
In the upper side of this photo you can see the town of Volterra.



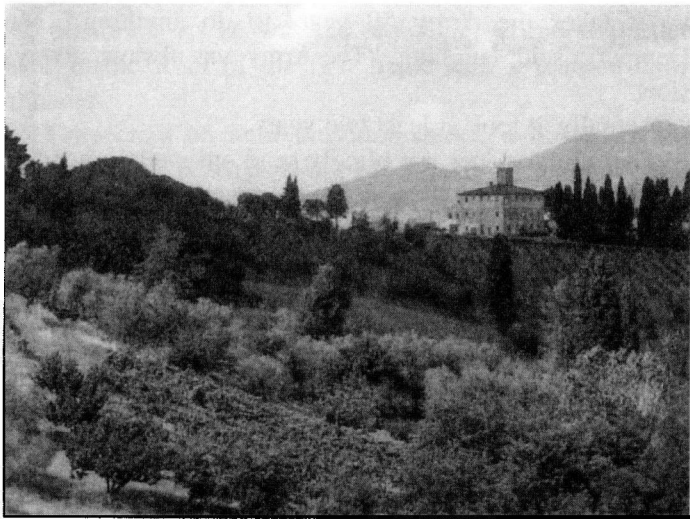
Villamagna is surrounded by beautiful countryside.



The house on the top hill is the highest point of Villamagna and is called Il Poggio. From that point, German soldiers took control of a very large area.



In this picture you see a wood edge that is called Sistri. That wood is plenty of American foxholes. In that wood, I found and still find dog-tags, bullets, bombs, collar disk, etc.



In the background the clock tower. It is close to the villa of S. Donnino.

he tried to buy my book in the U.S. (Order from the U. of Chicago Press Shopping Cart Services for the Texas A and M Press Consortium) and the reply was that for years Europe had to get its supply from Urospan in London.

However I made Mr. Passalalpi's day when I sent him one of my last copies. He had sent me a CD of Villamagna and about 45 excellent photographs of Villamagna and its surroundings. Some of these could be posted in your newsletter showing how the terrain always favored the Germans.

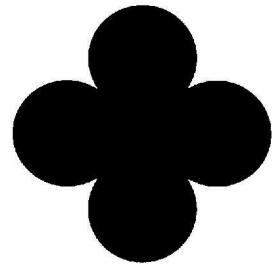
On 12 July 2009 Villamagna had a great feast for the 65th anniversary of its liberation. At 11 AM. U.S. soldiers in Italy distributed sweets and chocolate to all the kids. Later in the day they were all given a ride in jeeps, the best known auto during World War II in Italy. At 4 PM the mayor of Volterra arrived and gave a speech. Mr. Silvio

Passalalpi then talked to the audience for about an hour informing it of my communications with him. At 6 PM a crown of laural leaves were left at the graves of many who had died during the war. After a big dinner a girl read two pages out of my book regarding the liberation of Villamagna.

On 12 July 2009 I received a telegram from the town of Villamagna reading:

On the occasion of the 65 Anniversary of the liberation of Villamagna we want to send you our heartfelt thanks for what you and your comrades in arms did for our freedom. Regards from the people of Villamagna, Italy.

## Blue Devil Membership Cards



Even though your Blue Devil Membership Card is non-expiring, dues still need to be paid annually. If you haven't paid your dues for 2009, please do it while you're thinking about it.

Send \$15.00 for your 2009 dues to:  
88th Infantry Division Association  
PO Box 8795  
Lancaster, PA 17604