

Sergeant William H. Biagioni

By Irving T. Shanley

William H. Biagioni was drafted in February 1943 into the 8th Armored Division stationed at North Camp Polk, LA. He volunteered to Fort Benning Parachute School in August 1943 after completing basic infantry training at Fort Polk. Bill was assigned to 541st Parachute Infantry Regiment at Fort Benning and from there went to Camp Mackall, North Carolina. From Camp Mackall, he was assigned to the 508th P.I.R. in Northern Ireland as a replacement.

Bill remained with the Regiment during the parachute invasions of Normandy, France on D-Day, June 6, 1944, and Nijmegen, Holland on September 17, 1944. During the war in Europe, the Regiment served with the 82nd Airborne Division commanded by Major General Matthew Ridgeway and Major General James Gavin. After the drop in Normandy the 2nd Battalion made an heroic stand on Hill 30 near Picauville. The German infantry was engaged on three sides. Germans attacked the roadblock on the west end of the Chef du Pont causeway all day with about a battalion, plus tanks, mortars and artillery. They were driven out after dark by a night attack made by Lt. Millsaps with Lt. Pollette and a 30-man combat group. During the attack about 30 Germans were killed in hand-to-hand fighting. The remainder withdrew. PFC Biagioni was the radio operator of an SCR 300 for that mission. After the stand on Hill 30, the Battalion moved out toward Bauppte. They were confronted by two fast-moving enemy tanks heading directly toward the advancing troopers. One tank was stopped by a gammon grenade and the other was stopped by a bazooka resulting in death for all the Germans.

While in Holland during a heavy German artillery barrage on Voxhil, PFC William Biagioni was awarded a Certificate of Merit. The Citation reads as follows:

William H. Biagioni, PFC, 508 PIR. For heroic conduct in action on 1 and 2 October 1944 at Voxhil, Holland. PFC Biagioni, a radio operator, HQ Company, 2nd Battalion, 508 PIR, demonstrated unusual bravery and devotion to duty in the performance of his duties as radio operator of a SCR 300 during attack by the enemy against the 2nd Battalion Sector of the Regimental MLR near Voxhil. Wire lines between the Battalion's CP and Rifle Company in position on the Battalion MLR had been knocked out by enemy artillery fire. PFC Biagioni moved with his Battalion unit, operated his radio despite continuing heavy artillery and machine gun fire which was sweeping the area. The courageous and efficient performance of his duties at a time when his Battalion position was seriously threatened by a fierce enemy attack along the entire Battalion MLR enabled his Battalion Commander to coordinate the units within the Battalion and repel the enemy attack.

(signed) James M. Gavin

PFC Biagioni also participated in the Battle of the Bulge during the winter of 1944-45. When the war ended in Europe in May of 1945 Bill and his Regiment were transferred to Frankfurt, Germany to become General Dwight D. Eisenhower's honor guard. Bill returned to the United States in January of 1946. He was honorably discharged and returned to Bridgeport, CT.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, Parachute Wings, Combat Infantry Badge, Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, Europe-

Africa Campaign Medal with 4 battle stars and one invasion arrowhead, World War II Victory Medal, World War II Occupation Medal, National Defense Service Medal, United States Presidential Unit Citation, French Fourragere, Belgian Fourragere and the Militaire Order Degree of Knight from Holland.