



33rd INFANTRY REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM ASSOCIATION



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 33RD INFANTRY REGIMENT

During World War I the United States Congress enacted the National Defense Act on June 3, 1916. This law provided for an increase of our armed forces. As a result War Department General Orders No. 22, dated June 30, 1916, ordered seven new regiments of Infantry to be organized; four in the United States, one in the Philippine Islands, one in Hawaii, and one in the Canal Zone.

The 33rd Infantry Regiment was activated on July 6, 1916. This was a new regiment, with new Regimental Colors and a new Regimental Crest. Enlisted personnel for this new regiment came from the 5th Infantry Regiment and the 10th Infantry Regiment, both of which were already on duty in the Canal Zone. The officer personnel and some selected enlisted men were drawn from the 29th Infantry Regiment. The Headquarters, Supply, and Machine Gun Companies and Companies A, B, C, D, E, and F were organized at Camp Empire while Companies G, H, I, K, L, and M were formed at Camp Otis. The Band Section of Headquarters Company came from Fort Jay, Governors Island, New York.

For the first four years of its existence, the 33rd Infantry was distributed by battalions and detachments throughout the Canal Zone and the Republic of Panama. While so distributed, elements from the regiment explored and charted the jungles of Panama bordering the Canal Zone. During World War I the 33rd had the important assignment of guarding the vital installations of the Panama Canal.

In November, 1920 the 33rd Infantry assembled for the first time as a unit at Fort Clayton. This new post was named in honor of Colonel Bertram Tracy Clayton who was killed in action in France in 1918.

During the period 1920-1940 the regiment carried on with the mission of protecting the Canal Zone and continued its jungle training.

In 1940 the 33rd provided Anti-Sabotage and Transit Ship Guards as well as conducting long marches and field training at many locations in the Republic of Panama. On September 10, 1940 the regiment received over one thousand new M-1 rifles and a regimental school was formed to train selected officers and enlisted men with this new weapon.

In 1941 the 33rd was transferred from the Panama Canal Department to the Caribbean Defense Command. On September 6, 1941 the First Battalion left Fort Clayton for Trinidad, British West Indies. On November 21, 1941 the Surinam Base Force made up of elements from Headquarters Company, First Battalion and three composite Rifle Companies under the command of Col. Parley D. Parkinson moved to Surinam. This force, designated Force "A", was charged with the important mission of guarding vital bauxite (aluminum ore) mines.

December 7, 1941, the day of the Pearl Harbor attack, found the 2nd Battalion with Headquarters and Service Companies carrying the Regimental Colors enroute to Fort Read, Trinidad, B.W.I. for a permanent change of station. The 3rd Battalion joined the 2nd Battalion at Fort Read in early January, 1942. These two battalions were the backbone of the Trinidad Mobile Force and performed meritorious service as guard units in Trinidad.

In June 1943 the 1st Battalion (Force "A") was withdrawn from Surinam and moved to Aruba, its duties taken over by Dutch troops. In December 1943 the 1st Battalion was inactivated.

On the night of 4 March 1944 the Regiment was alerted and moved by train to Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, B.W.I. for transportation to the United States. The Regiment departed Trinidad at 0600, 5 March 1944 on board the Navy Transport "ANTAEUS" escorted by two destroyers. The transport anchored at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, at 1513, 7 March 1944 and sailed again at 0711, 8 March 1944. The "ANTAEUS" arrived at Staten Island, New York at 1545, 11 March 1944. For the first time in the history of the Regiment, the Regimental Colors were taken off the transport and arrived on American soil.

The Regiment proceeded from Staten Island via ferry boat 25 miles up the Hudson River to a dock at Piermont, New York. The Regiment arrived at Camp Shanks, New York, at 2115 with colors flying. Quarters were furnished and the men were fed. The day of 12 March 1944 was spent at Camp Shanks. The Regiment departed Camp Shanks on the evening of 13 March 1944 on three troop trains for Camp Claiborne, Louisiana.

The Regiment arrived at Camp Claiborne on the morning of 16 March 1944. This was a permanent change of station for the 33rd Infantry. The 33rd Infantry was assigned to the Fourth Army, with headquarters at San Antonio, Texas, and the XXI Corps, headquarters at Camp Polk, Louisiana.

Pursuant to General Orders Number 96, Headquarters Fourth Army 10 June 1944, the 33rd Infantry Regiment, under the command of Colonel Keith K. Tatom, was inactivated at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana on 26 June 1944.

After the end of World War II, the 33rd Infantry Regiment was reactivated at Fort Clayton in the Canal Zone in February 1946 as Combat Team 33 that included the 45th Cavalry, the 37th Engineer Combat Company, and the 71st Army Band. It was again inactivated in September 1948 at Fort Gulick, however most of the personnel continued serving as members of the First Infantry Battalion.

On 4 January 1950 the 33rd Infantry Regiment was again activated and assigned to Pacific Sector Headquarters, United States Army Caribbean (USARCARIB). The Regiment was given a permanent station assignment at Fort Kobbe, Canal Zone. In April, 1950 the 504th

Field Artillery Battalion moved from Puerto Rico to Fort Kobbe and was attached to the 33rd Infantry Regiment. The missions of the 33rd Infantry consisted of guard duty in the Canal Zone, cadre training, and tactical jungle training in the Republic of Panama.

In August 1950 the personnel of the 3rd Battalion of the 33rd Infantry were assigned to the 65th Infantry Regiment, which was on its way through the Canal from Puerto Rico bound for Korea. This 3rd Battalion, 65th Infantry, distinguished itself in action during the conflict in Korea. Many of these personnel were reassigned back to the Canal Zone to serve again with the 33rd Infantry.

In July 1952 Pacific Sector Headquarters was dissolved, and in addition to the 504th Field Artillery Battalion, the 45th Reconnaissance Battalion, the 37th Engineer Combat Company, and the 71st Army Band were brought under the control of the 33rd Infantry. It was now designated the 33rd Infantry Regimental Combat Team.

On 2 December 1954 the 33rd Infantry Regiment became part of the 23rd Infantry Division (Americal Division) as was the 65th Infantry Regiment in Puerto Rico and another regiment in Fort Benning.

The Regiment was inactivated for the third time on 26 May 1956. The Colors were furled and placed in storage, and one of the oldest Regular Army regiments passed into history. The personnel of the 33rd now became the 20th Infantry Regiment.

During its 40 years of existence, the 33rd Infantry did not participate in any campaigns or battles in World War I, World War II, or Korea. Although there are no battle streamers on the Regimental Colors and it did not earn any campaign ribbons, the 33rd Infantry Regiment successfully performed its mission of guarding the vital installations of the Panama Canal and the Caribbean area during three major conflicts. It can take pride that there were no losses to these facilities due to enemy action or sabotage and the flow of vital supplies through the Canal was uninterrupted. In World War II many former members of the 33rd Infantry went on to serve in combat in Europe, the Pacific, and with Merrill's Marauders in Burma. Also, personnel of the 3rd Battalion saw action in Korea while serving with the 65th Infantry.

Colonel Tatom expressed it best when, at the first inactivation of the Regiment in 1944, he wrote: "Circumstance has determined that the colors of the Regiment be furled and stored and its name be only a proud memory in the hearts and minds of those who have been privileged to serve in it. It is hoped that some day it may be re-born and that the colors of the 33rd Infantry will again fly over an organization whose motto 'Ridentes Venimus' typifies the love and attachment we all have" for the Regiment in which we proudly served.

Colonel Tatom's wish has come true. The colors of the 33rd Infantry again fly over our Association at every reunion.

EDITOR'S NOTES

There have been several Army regiments in the past with the numerical designation of "33rd Infantry Regiment." According to the Army, the regiment in which we served has no relationship, or official lineage, to any prior unit with the same number.

The information contained in this history of the 33rd Infantry Regiment has been extracted from official Army documents located at the Office of Military History and the National Archives in Washington, DC. There remain many gaps in the record, and many unanswered questions.

Why was the 33rd Infantry, which was created specifically to guard the Canal, withdrawn from the Canal Zone and sent to Trinidad, Surinam, and Aruba, during WW II?

What occurred in Surinam (Dutch Guiana) with Force "A"? There are some anecdotal reports of incidents when it traded fire with Nazi agents in the jungle and with German U-Boats in the mouth of the Surinam River. Were the U-Boats supplying the German agents or were the U-Boats being refueled and resupplied?

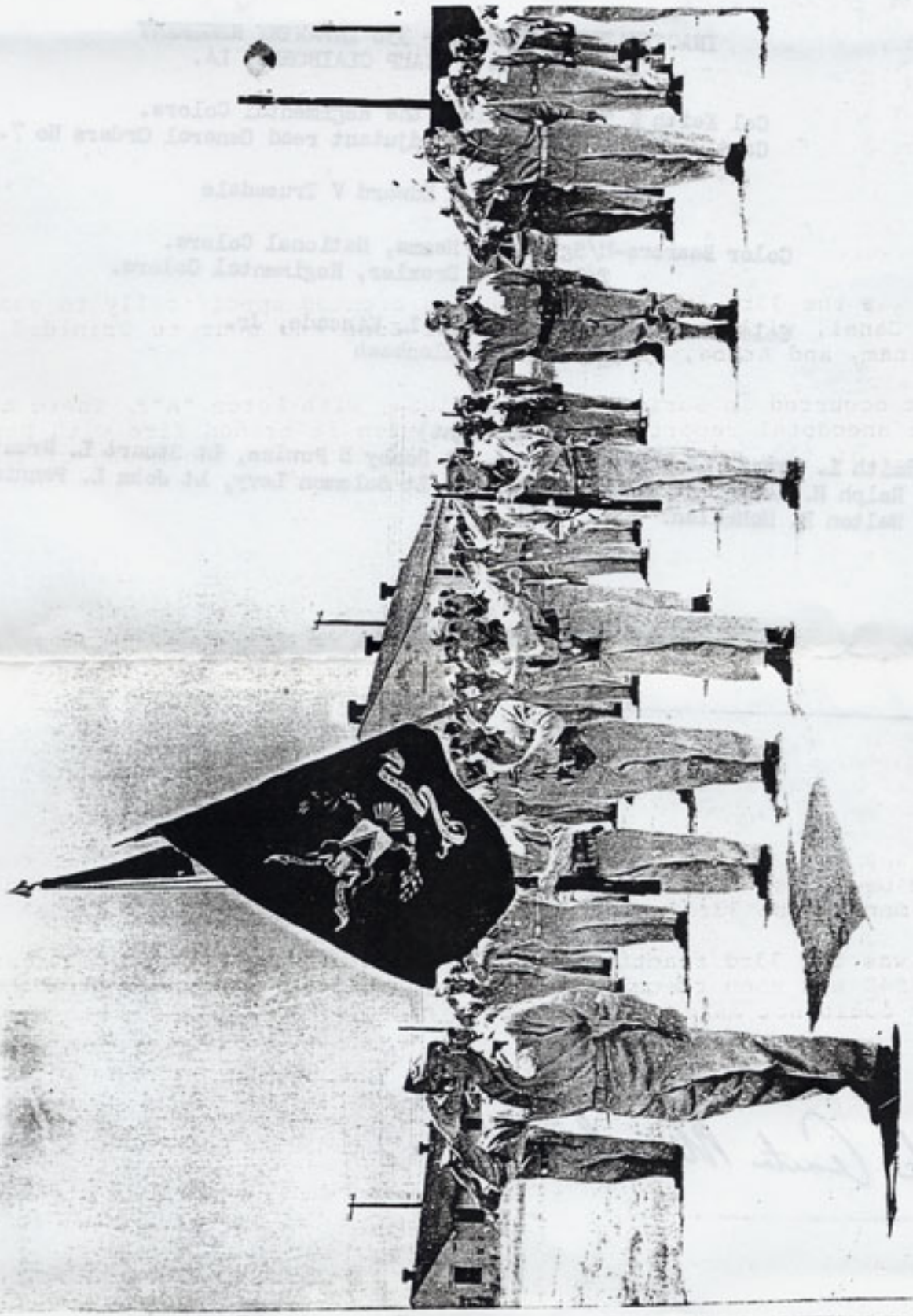
Why was the 33rd Infantry sent to Camp Clairborne, Louisiana, in March, 1944? Why was it sent by such a round-about route through Camp Shanks, NY? In March, 1944, Camp Shanks, "Last Stop, USA", was a major port-of-embarkation and was shipping thousands of troops to England in preparation for the D-Day Invasion three months later. The 33rd Infantry must have presented a strange sight travelling in the opposite direction. Hopefully, the men were issued winter uniforms and blankets. The Hudson Valley in March usually has temperatures below freezing at night and not much higher in the daytime. This would be quite a shock for men who had spent years in the tropics.

Why was the 33rd Infantry inactivated at Camp Clairborne? It could have been just as easily inactivated in Trinidad. What happened to the men of the 33rd when it was inactivated at Camp Clairborne?

Why was the 33rd reactivated in 1946 only to be inactivated again in 1948 and then reactivated in January 1950? It looks as if the Army could not make up its mind.

The last inactivation of the 33rd in 1956 appears to have a reason. It was decided to keep the 20th Infantry active because it had a long history dating back to the Indian Wars and possessed many combat honors. This was a paper move in that the troops of the 33rd became the 20th Infantry Regiment. The men only changed regimental crests and addresses.

Perhaps more documents will be located to answer some of these questions. Maybe some of you can provide me with your own recollections to shed more light on these events. I welcome your comments and any information you may contribute is appreciated.



INACTIVATION CEREMONY - 33D INFANTRY REGIMENT - 26 JUNE 1944 - CAMP CLAIBORNE, LA.

LOSER PHOTO COPY OF COPY-PRINT BY DAVID E. CURRY OF ORIGINAL PRINT AT NATIONAL ARCHIVES

INACTIVATION CEREMONY - 33D INFANTRY REGIMENT
26 JUNE 1944 CAMP CLAIBORNE, LA.

Col Keith K Tatom received the Regimental Colors.
Capt Joseph O N Desilets, Adjutant read General Orders No 7.

Lt. Col. Edward V Truesdale

Color Bearers-M/Sgt LeRoy Hemma, National Colors.
T/Sgt Leo J Drexler, Regimental Colors.

Color Guards-S/Sgt Alexander L. Kincade, Jr.
Sgt John E. Aulenbach

Officers

(Left to right)

Maj Smith L. Myers, Lt LeRoy P Buckel, Lt Bobby E Powlus, Lt Stuart L. Draut,
Capt Ralph H. Lodde, Lt Wilbur E. Wilson, Lt Solomon Levy, Lt John L. Pennino,
Capt Walton B. McMullen.

3-2-4-5-6-7-8-9-10

PHOTO BY

Pfc Anita Monclova (USA)