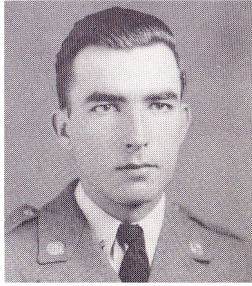


Harry Muldrow Etheredge



Like many of our WWII heroes from Clemson College, Harry Etheredge was from a small South Carolina town, Springfield, and studied Agricultural Education. He attended Clemson College from 1938-1942. Prior to entering the service he taught agriculture in the Williston-Elko school system.

Private Etheredge was assigned to the 143rd Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division. The 143rd Infantry was instrumental in taking Mount Sammucro in Italy, one of the steepest peaks scaled during WWII.

According to Army Military History, this operation occurred during the second phase of the Winter Line Drive, 1943. This was the Fifth Army's main effort against the German defenses in Italy, from Mount Sammucro to Mount Lungo. In the narrow valley between these mountains, the village stronghold of San Pietro was a key point in the German defenses and became a symbol for success or failure in the early attacks.

Two German battalions held the main line of resistance behind an outpost line of mutually supporting pillboxes. These emplacements, almost impervious to our constant artillery fire and to frequent attacks by A-36 fighter-bombers, were deep pits covered by three layers of logs and further protected by earth and rocks. Each had only one opening, just large enough for a man to crawl through. To approach these pillboxes, our troops had first to go through a field of S-mines, then through barbed wire and more S-mines. If these outer defenses were penetrated, the enemy could bring down artillery, mortar, and heavy machine-gun fire without danger to his own troops hidden in their shelters.

From their higher positions on Mount Sammucro and Mount Lungo, the Germans had every approach to the village of San Pietro covered. The attack was designed to capture these heights and thus outflank the strong enemy positions in the valley. On the north flank of the sector, the 3d Ranger Battalion and the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, were given the mission of capturing the crest of the Sammucro Mountains. Two battalions of the 143d Infantry would strike west along the lower slopes of Mount Sammucro and gain the high ground just above San Pietro. If our forces took these objectives, it was expected that the enemy defenses between San Pietro and Mount Lungo would be untenable.

At 1700 on 7 December 1943, Company A of the 143d Infantry, began the climb, a steep 4000 foot ascent. The men were in excellent spirits and confident of success, although their mission was one which normally would have been assigned to specially trained mountain troops. So skillful was the approach that Company A was able to get within thirty or forty yards of the enemy before being discovered. The Germans were blasted out of their emplacements with grenades as our troops swarmed over the peak just before dawn.

But the 71st Panzer Grenadiers were not to be defeated easily. At 0700 on 8 December they counterattacked and caused heavy casualties in Company A. By 0930 they had nearly succeeded in regaining the peak. Two platoons were sent in as reinforcements; with this added strength the enemy was thrown back. On 9 December the Germans attacked with two companies. When this effort failed, they brought up their heavy weapons company and tried again, but our infantry held in the face of heavy concentrations of enemy artillery and mortar fire. During the fighting twenty-one German prisoners were taken, including a company commander.

On the night of 9/10 December heavy artillery concentration cleared the enemy from the pocket between the hills where most of the counterattacks had begun. With the crest of Sammucro in our possession, the enemy's positions were threatened all the way to San Vittore. The fighting strength of the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry, was down to 340 men on 10 December. It was on this day, December 10th, 1943, that Private Harry Muldrow Etheredge gave his life during this intense battle in Italy. Private Etheredge joined the long list of our

Clemson heroes who gave their lives during that terrible threat to our freedom, WWII.

The First Battalion received a Fifth Army Commendation for its part of the operation.

Private Etheredge was awarded the Purple Heart.