

PFC. RALPH MINEO

HELPED YANKS TAKE

ISLAND OF LUZON

3-1-45

NEWTON BOY IN THICK OF BATTLE TO TAKE PHILIPPINES FROM THE JAPANESE

With The 40th Infantry Division On Luzon — Forces of the 40th Army Corps entered Manila triumphantly after Major General Rapp Brush's California—New York 40th Infantry Division secured the right flank of Central Luzon, the gateway to the Philippine capital, and Pfc. Ralph E. Mineo son of Mr. and Mrs. John E. Mineo of Newton helped to do the job.

The 40th Division, consisting of men from the 48 states as well as former California, New York and Utah National Guard units, was still driving the Japanese deeper into the Cabusilan Mountains southwest of Bamban, when advance elements of General Douglas MacArthurs lightning Luzon liberators sped into Manila.

But the right flank of the XIV corps was secure and the vital routes down the central valley were beyond the reach of Japanese through the division's 'hammering. The division's Infantry-artillery team had silenced the Japanese toms which could blast the highway to Manila and impede the liberation drive.

The Japanese still had powerful artillery pieces, but the 40th Divisions pounding had driven them back into the mountains beyond even nuisance firing range. And those Japanese who did not withdraw, but stayed in their mountain caves and concrete pill-boxes, were eliminated.

Besides clearing the strategic gateway to Manila, the division swept clean the hills dominating Clark Field,

Since the Japanese selected to fight in the hills instead of the open terrain in Central Luzon, it was the XIV Corps' right flank, carried by the 40th Division, that met the stiffest resistance and bore the brunt of the Manilaward battle.

This battle developed in the strategic Bamban-Magalang area. The Japanese were making the most of the terrain when they took stand in this area dominating Highway 3 to Manila.

In the Bamban-Magalang sector, the wide Central Luzon plain is split by towering Mt. Arayat. To the east of this natural obstacle lies another barrier, the Candaba Swamps. To the west of this passage, barely more than 10 miles wide at the throat, stands the Cabusilan Mountains of the formidable Zambales range, ideal for a stubborn defensive stand.

It was this vital approach to Manila which the 40th captured and secured in 25 days after launching its lightning attack from Lingayen January 9.

During this time, the division dashed from Lingayen to Fort Stotsenburg

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a distance of about 75 airplane miles. It continued on further with advance elements to San Fernando, Gua Gua and Dinalupinan, a distance of 22 miles to make a juncture with the XI Corps, thus severing Bataan peninsula from the mainland.

Scores of important towns, including Lingayen, Alaminos, Sual, a port town and Tarlac, a railroad junction and a dozen airports or airstrips from Lingayen Gulf to Clark Fields, were captured by the 40th Division.

Countless other barrios and small communities were liberated with wild acclaim of the Filipinos freed from the grip of the Japanese.

Down through the Central Luzon valley, the 40th drove Japanese rear guard forces backward so fast they abandoned valuable equipment including 120 millimeter dual purpose rifles which 40th Artillerymen turned against their former owners.

Tanks were knocked out, machine guns eliminated and for the 25-day period the division killed 1,679 Japanese and captured 39 Japanese soldiers, 175 Formosans and 73 Chinese forced laborers.