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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1st BATTALION, 16th INFANTRY
IN THE SECOND PHASE OF THE MEUSE - ARGONNE.

CAPTAIN LEONARD R. BOYD, INFANTRY.

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Helsley; Captain G.E.Butler; Captain G.R.F.Cornish;
Captain B.Caffey; Sergeant E.M.Smith.

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION 16TH
INFANTRY DURING THE SECOND PHASE OF THE MEUSE-ARGONNE.

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INTRODUCTION.

The operations of the 1st Battalion 16th Infantry in the second phase of the Meuse-Argonne is no doubt similar in many ways to operations of other battalions of the American Army. The Division Commander, in drafting the final attack order of this phase of the Meuse-Argonne, saw fit to divide the attack of the First Division into three phases; one dealing with the 1st. Brigade; one with the 2d Brigade; and one with the 1st Battalion 16th Infantry.

It is believed that the Division Commander saw in the operation of this battalion the success or failure of the entire division to reach the objectives set by the Corps Commander.

The author, with the perspective of some six elapsing years, cannot help but feel the tendency to atone for the errors made and to glorify successes of the unit of which he was a member. Justice to the officers and men of the battalion cannot be done without realizing the limitations imposed by heavy casualties, fatigue and its corresponding mental depression and the disorganization of units: all of which are inherent to combat such as is set forth here. The training and experience of the commissioned and non-commissioned officer personell naturally played an important part in

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the operations of the battalion. Twelve of the sixteen officers starting the assault had commanded the same unit in one or more divisional engagements. Practically all of the non-commissioned personell had served under combat conditions. A majority of the privates in the battalion had served with their units in the St.Mihel Offensive.(1)

(1) Personal Experience.

The Division History, in its account of the operations of the 1st Battalion 16th Infantry, states:

" This assault must ever stand as one of the most brilliant exploits of the Division and it opened the way for the success that crowned the remainder of the operation." (2)

(2) Hist.1st Div.p.208.

GENERAL SITUATION.

On October 7, 1918, after three days fighting, the First Division had advanced as follows: the 16th Infantry (less the 1st Battalion in Divisional Reserve) was in position on the left of the sector in front of Fleville. This was the third divisional objective and the Corps Final Objective. The 18th Infantry, in position on the forward slope of Hill 240, had been unable to take the Second Objective. The 28th Infantry, prolonging the line of the 18th Infantry to the right through the southern extremity of le Petite Bois, had likewise been unable to take the Second Objective. The 26th Infantry, while slightly in advance of the 28th Infantry, had not reached the Second Objective. (3)

(3) Hist.1st Div.p.202. Operations Map of F.O. 49, 1st Div. 1918.

On October 7, every combatant unit of the division, except the 1st Battalion 16th Infantry, had made at least one assault and had received its heavy toll of casualties. (4)

(4) Hist.1st Div.p.207.

The enemy line " in front of the 1st Brigade was held by the Fifth Guard Division, whose prisoners stated that their orders were to organize and hold the position at all costs. The front of the 2d Brigade was held by the 52d Division. Both were fresh first class divisions" (5) Elements of eight enemy divisions were identified by units of the First Division in this operation. (6)

(5) Hist. 1st
Div. p. 182.

(6) Hist. 1st
Div. p. 213.

TERRAIN.

Situated in the center of the 2d Brigade sector rose Hill 272. Running nearly east and west the hill lay squarely across the entire sector of the brigade. Its crest rose some 221 feet above the broad plane to the south, giving unobscured observation and field of fire to the southeast, south, and southwest. The eastern slopes of the hill were covered by the dense growth of le Petite Bois. Small irregular patches of woods were scattered over the remaining portions of the hill except the southern slope which was barren. The ground swelled gently to the base of the hill, then broke off in a steep difficult slope.

The Cote de Maldah, reared its tree-crowned head some thirteen hundred yards north of Hill 272. From its crest, rising some one hundred forty feet above the plain, the wooded ravine lying between the Cote de Maldah and Hill 272 could be completely dominated. The northern slope of the Cote de Maldah dropped gradually and leaves the hill the one outstanding prominence in an open plain stretching two miles northward. (7)

(7) Personal
Diary.

SPECIAL SITUATION.

- The Germans had realized the value of holding Hill 272 and had fortified its crest, slopes and flanks with machine guns and direct fire 77mm guns. (8) Several officers who studied the defense of the hill shortly after the assault estimated that approximately fifty machine guns had been used by the Germans in the defense of the hill. (9) Small thickets near the base of the hill had been converted into machine gun nests, most of which also contained one or more small caliber minenwerfers. (10)
- The 2d Brigade, suffering extremely heavy casualties, in advancing to their lines of October 7, has been unable to advance further solely on account of the stubborn German defense of Hill 272. (11) On October 5, the 26th Infantry, after taking Arietal Farme, was stopped by fire from Hill 272. Its losses were heavy. (12) On the same day the attack of the 2d Battalion 28th Infantry had been stopped by 77mm., minenwerfer and small arms fire from Hill 272. (13) An eye witness stated that as the battalion advanced beyond the cover of Hill 240 a hurricane of fire met the lines. Enfilade and frontal fire wiped out entire platoons. Direct 77mm., fire and minenwerfer fire broke up the attack formation and completed the disorganization of the battalion. In a period of a few minutes after the jump-off the battalion lost over fifty per cent casualties and retired to the cover of the woods, unable to bring in their dead and wounded. (14)
- On October 6 the 3d Battalion 26th Infantry attempted to advance against the east end of Hill 272 and met a

regiment of German troops moving to counter-attack. This force was defeated but the attacking force was unable to take Hill 272. Later on this date efforts to push patrols forward and to infiltrate toward Hill 272 from Arietal Farm were repulsed.(15)

(15) Hist. 1st
Div. p. 202.

Two battalions of the 26th Infantry attacked Hill 272 on October 8. Again enemy infantry moving to counter-attack were sighted and defeated but no advance was made against Hill 272.(16)

(16) Hist. 1st
Div. p. 204.

The advance of the 2d Brigade had thus been checked five times by enemy resistance on Hill 272. Three of these efforts had been made with the sole object of reducing this position. The Division History, in view of the above facts states : " Hill 272, which had defied all efforts to advance, was by far the most dangerous of the enemy's positions."(17)

(17) Ibid.

PLAN OF ACTION

The First Division was ordered to attack on a front of four kilometers on October 9. The First Objective was a line passing north of Hill 272. The Second Objective was a line passing north of the Cote de Maldah and the Bois de Romagne. The 1st Brigade was to change their direction slightly so as to pass to the west of Hill 272. The 2d Brigade was to change its direction to pass to the east end of Hill 272. The 1st Battalion 16th Infantry was released from Division Reserve and placed under orders of the Commanding Officer 18th Infantry. The zone of action of the 1st Battalion 16th Infantry included Hill 272. The Divisional Artillery was to pay

particular attention to Hill 272 on October 8. They were ordered to use shrapnel, high-explosive and non-persistent gas shells during this concentration.

(18) F.O. 49, . . . "H" hour was set at 8.30 AM. (18)
1st. Div. 1918.

OPERATIONS

During the afternoon of October 7 the Battalion Commander, 1st Battalion 16th Infantry, who was in the sheltered ravine near Charpentry received orders to have the battalion moved at night to Exermont, and himself to

(19) Testimony of Maj. C.W. Ryder. report at once to Brigade Headquarters, 1st Brigade. (19)

Under cover of darkness the battalion led by the second in command, moved four miles across country following dim trails in a drizzling rain. The battalion in single file had elements lost twice because the traffic guides from the battalion joined the rear of a line of men they mistook to be the end of the column. The delays so caused resulted in the leading elements of the battalion remaining in place under intermittent shell fire while the lost elements of the battalion were brought up.

In several places the path led across deep slippery ditches. The column was assisted over these places by men detailed from the leading unit. The men so designated took off equipment and helped each man down and out of the muddy ditch. After moving about the column's length from the obstacle the battalion was halted until word was passed up that all were across. (20)

(20) Personal Experience.

The battalion assembly point in the ravine south of Exermont was reached within the time ordered. Here the Battalion Commander rejoined. After a rest of an hour

the battalion moved through Exermont to the Bois de Boyon, southwest of Hill 240. Here the entire battalion deployed at short intervals and dug individual shelter holes. The Battalion Commander notified units that the front line lay within a few hundred yards of this position, therefore quiet must be maintained. (21)

(21) Personal Experience.

About noon October 8, the Battalion and Company Commanders left their units in the Bois de Bayon and went to Hill 240 to reconnoiter routes of approach for the attack on Hill 272 and to view the hill whose fame had reached the battalion while still in reserve.

The reconnoitering party split into two groups and viewed the terrain from the slopes of Hill 240. During this reconnaissance one party attracted artillery fire from Hill 272 and further reconnaissance had to be abandoned. (22)

(22) Personal Experience.

At dusk on October 8 the battalion moved through the Bois de Bayon to the clearing one-half mile southeast of Hill 240, where ration and water carts were met. The men had been without food except hard bread and tinned meat for thirty hours. After a hot meal the morale rose. The men marched forward in a carefree manner apparently not concerned with the dangers of the coming attack, as long as they had a full canteen and a full stomach. (23)

(23) Personal Experience.

The battalion arrived in the southernmost end of le Petite Bois about 10.30 PM. Companies were deployed at short intervals and the men dug individual shelter holes. Throughout the night the German artillery concentrated on the woods in front of Hill 240, a few hun-

dred yards away. But few shells fell on the battalion position, and few casualties occurred. (24)

(24) Personal
Diary.

Company and platoon commanders were given the plans for the morning attack, and the map of the terrain was studied. It was found that the personal reconnaissance of the afternoon was of little value in visualizing the terrain. The heavy shelling during the observation left the mental picture of the hill hazy and vague. (25)

(25) Personal
Experience.

First Day, October 9th.

The battalion formed for the attack at 8.25AM, in front of the woods which they had occupied during the night. A thick fog made observation over twentyfive yards impossible. (26) Company commanders found their positions by groping in the fog until the correct adjacent units were located. The battalion was disposed as follows at 8.30AM. From right to left in the assault wave were Companies B and C; in support Companies A and D. Company Headquarters and the 2d Platoon Machine Gun Company 16th Infantry were in the rear of Company D; the 3d Platoon machine Gun Company was in rear of Company A; the 1st Platoon Machine Gun Company was in position on Hill 240 to support the advance of the battalion by fire. (27)

(26) Test-
imony Maj.
C.W. Ryder,
Capt. A.B.
Helsley.

(27) Ibid.

At 8.30 the advance began behind a rolling barrage. Enfilade machine gun fire from Hill 272 swept the plain in front of the hill. Here and there a man was hit. Artillery firing from the top and flanks of the hill covered the jump-off line and later scattered fire over the plain. (28)

(28) Personal
Experience.

Before the support companies reached the line of

departure men were observed coming out of the fog in front and running to the rear as fast as possible. The seed of panic had been sown. Men looked to their officers to see what would be done. (It was a tradition of the regiment that men running to the rear were liable to be shot first and questioned later.) The Company Commander of Company D stopped one of the group moving to the rear and found that he belonged to the 28th Infantry. The attack orders stated that this unit was to stand relieved as the assault units passed its lines. Word was passed along the company lines to let the men of the 28th Infantry go through. When these men were not stopped by the company the knowledge that they were not part of the battalion restored the steadiness of the men.(29)

(29) Personal Experience.

The fog became patchy. Company D marching through heavy spots lost contact with Company C in front and Company A on the right. Extremely heavy firing to the left and many machine gun bullets in the lines of the company resulted in the company moving somewhat to the right. After this area of fog was passed the company resumed its original direction.(30)

(30) Personal Experience.

Company C lost direction and moved out of its zone of advance. A temporary lifting of the fog brought them under a heavy machine gun and minenwerfer fire from a machine gun nest on the left of the battalion. The Company Commander, most of the non-commissioned officers and many of the privates became casualties. The remainder of the company was formed into one platoon commanded by a sergeant. This sergeant led this unit as Company C throughout the remainder of the attack.(31)

(31) Testimony Sgt. E.M. Smith.

Company B at this time was moving forward in the fog, its position unknown to the battalion commander and the Company Commanders of A and D. The Company Commander of Company D using his compass and keeping in contact with Company A on his right advanced up the gentle rise toward Hill 272. The barrage at this time had outdistanced the battalion and was not audible. (32)

(32) Testimony Maj. C.W. Ryder; Personal Experience.

The fog had now thinned in spots and on entering such spaces the lines came under aimed fire of 77mm guns on Hill 272. Company D continues the advance, crossing small islands of good visibility at "double-time", and rested under cover of the fog beyond. (33)

(33) Personal Experience.

The battalion commander, after losing all his runners by fire or being lost in the fog, located Company D and ordered the company to move up abreast of Company B in the assault wave. (34)

(34) Ibid.

The battalion halted in a depression at the foot of Hill 272 and, masked by fog, reorganized. During this period machine gun fire from the slopes ahead and from the left rear caused many casualties. (45)

(35) Testimony Maj. C.W. Ryder; Personal Experience.

On resuming the advance the first enemy machine guns on Hill 272 were encountered at close range. As long as the fog remained dense their capture was a matter of outflanking their position which was indicated by the sound of firing. At times when the fog lifted their aimed fire took heavy toll before the gunners were either sent to the rear or to their Maker, - depending a great deal on the inclination of the leader of the attacking unit. Throughout the entire advance up the slope of Hill 272, Company D at

no time advanced as a unit against resistance. When the sound of firing indicated a machine gun immediatly within the area of the company commander, the latter sent out one or two squads to capture the gun. The normal procedure however was as follows: machine gun firing would be heard to the front; one or two men, on their own initiative, would leave the company lines and disappear in the fog; cessation of fire of the machine gun would be heard; the patrol would return with the gun and at times with one or more prisoners. When the men coming back reported no machine guns to the immediate front, the lines moved forward. (36)

(36) Personal Experience.

During the halt at the base of Hill 272 the Lieutenant commanding the 3d Platoon Machine Gun Company 16th Infantry reported to the Company Commander, Company D. Due to the fog the platoon had been late in forming and had lost contact with the battalion. After thirty minutes of intermittent marching in the general direction of the front line the lieutenant located Company D. The platoon, with four complete gun squads was left under cover to the rear while the platoon commander reported. (37)

(37) Testimony Capt. A.B. Helsley.

A temporary lifting of the fog revealed the front line of the 18th Infantry on the left to be several hundred yards to the rear. Their line had been refused on the right in the vicinity of the machine gun nest which had disorganized Company C. (38)

(38) Personal Experience.

Heavy firing on Company D from the vicinity of this same nest required the company commander to send out a patrol of one squad to reduce this resistance. No direct report of the operation of this patrol was ever made. The only information received was from men rejoining the company after being lost. They reported that this patrol had advanced into an area free from fog, had been observ-

ed by a hostile nest, and the patrol leader and most of his men killed or wounded. The Company Commander of Company D then sent out a combat patrol consisting of two squads under an officer and two machine gun squads under the

(39) Personal
Diary.

Lieutenant in command of the Machine Gun Platoon. (39) The officer commanding the machine gun unit was wounded before getting his guns in position. After having first aid applied he supervised the placing of his guns and remained with

(40) Test-
imony Capt.

A.B. Helsley.

them during the firing until fainting from loss of blood. (40)

The two squads from the rifle platoon were moving to out-flank the nest when the fog lifted and the officer in charge and most of his patrol were hit. The supporting machine guns began firing from the north. The few survivors of the patrol in shell holes to the east of the nest placed rifle and automatic rifle fire on the gun positions. This fire, with that of the two machine guns on the flank, drove the machine gunners from their weapons. This success was temporary as a miniature barrage of minenwerfer shells falling on the position of the patrol killed and wounded more of the patrol and drove the survivors to the shelter of shell holes. (41)

(41) Personal
Diary.

"Private Aleck Carrole, a little Italian, who was reputed to be the worst shot in the company and one of the bravest men, was in a shell hole with a big American from Wisconsin. Carrole told his partner to get out of the hole and go to another to the right. They had an argument but the big fellow finally went. As soon as he got up a machine gunner in the nest got up to his gun and started firing. Carrole took one shot and hit him in the head, at a

distance of about 200 yards. The big fellow got to his shell hole all right and then Carrole told him to come back. More argument but he finally got up and "hot-footed" it back. Another gunner hopped to his gun and started firing. Carrole got him and both were in the shell hole as at the start. Then the Bosche working the trench mortar opened up and made it hot for them. Carrole tried to get the big fellow to move again but he refused. Carrole then jumped out of the shell hole ran forward and took cover in another hole. He repeated this a few times, then made a rush for the trench and got there safely. Proceeding up the trench he came on the lone man working the trench mortar and put him out of commission. He continued up the trench to the end and put two more Bosche out of a job, then started back to the other end. Before he reached the end he came across his big pardner who had followed him and who had cleaned out the other end of the trench. I recommended both for D.S.C.'s but Carrole was the only one to get it." (42)

(42) Personal
Diary.

The top of Hill 272 was reached by all companies of the battalion about 11.00 AM. By this time the fog had thinned so that the 18th Infantry on the left could be seen some two hundred yards to the rear.

The battalion took shelter on the reverse slope of the hill in the pits which had been used by the German machine gunners and received few casualties. Each unit was then reorganized. A check on the companies showed that about half of companies A, B and D

---thirteen---

were present. One platoon, commanded by a sergeant remained from Company C. The Machine Gun Company 16th Infantry was represented by a platoon of four guns commanded by a sergeant. The officers present were the battalion commander, the captain and first lieutenant of Company D, a second lieutenant commanding Company A and one Company B and a lieutenant, the battalion scout officer. (43)

(43) Personal
Experience

Patrols were sent to the woods beyond the top of Hill 272 and brought in many prisoners. At this time no resistance was offered, the Germans apparently being stunned at the fall of their strongest position. One of the prisoners told of a counter-attack to be made against the hill. At this time heavy machine gun fire and direct 77mm fire from the Cote de Maldah raked the top of the hill, making observation to the front impossible. A platoon from Company D was sent to the left of the hill and placed on the forward slope where the fire was somewhat lighter. A group of Germans, forming up in the valley to the left front was brought under long range fire from the platoon on the left and while no casualties were noted from this fire the group moved under cover and did not make a further threat. (44)

(44) Test-
imony Maj.
C.W. Ryder;
Personal
Experience.

During the period of threatened counter-attack no orders were given to the machine guns to assist in the defense of the hill. The platoon was disorganized and at that time was being regrouped into squads and

sections. It was found that the group of twenty odd men represented the three platoons starting the assault. Two of the squads were from the platoon which was in position on Hill 240 at the start of the attack. Heavy shelling and machine gun fire had reduced the strength of the platoon to two gun squads with no non-commissioned officers. The officer in command was killed while leading his unit to rejoin the battalion. A private took command, collected enough men to handle two guns and continued the movement to find the battalion. During the advance toward Hill 272 over a shell swept plain he kept his unit together and reported to the sergeant who was on Hill 272 with two skeleton gun squads. The platoon was ordered to remain in position on Hill 272 during the advance on October 9, and remained there throughout the remainder of the engagement. (45)

(45) Testimony Capt. A.B. Helsley; Capt. James Wheelin.

At 1;20 PM the battalion advanced over the top of Hill 272. The forward line was hardly over the crest when heavy 77mm fire from the Cote de Maldah took its toll of casualties. It was found that double timing across the portions of the hill not covered by woods reduced casualties. During this rapid advance Germans were seen in scattered groups-all willing to surrender. No attention was paid to these groups, and no provision was made to investigate the dugouts and shelters on the north slope of the hill. About half way down the hill a patch of woods offered concealment to the ravine at the bottom. As soon as the battalion had entered the

woods the Germans put down a thin though heavy-sounding barrage. This barrage was laid just in rear of the support line and was being stepped down the hill slightly faster than the rate of march of the battalion. Within a short time the support line was crowding the assault line with the barrage just in rear of the supports. The battalion then advanced at "double-time" and the cadence was well in excess of 180 steps a minute. On reaching the lower edge of the woods the barrage stopped and with it the battalion.(46)

(46) Testimony Major C.W.Ryder; Personal Experience.

The battalion remained under cover of the woods while Company D moved across the open swale to the front.

Machine gun fire from the left swept the draw at intervals but inflicted no casualties. The men of the company in small units rushed across the open space at top speed and thus offered a real "fleeting target".

A combat patrol of two squads, led by the Company Commander, Co. D, moved up the slopes of the Cote de Maldah under direct machine gun and 77mm fire. By utilizing depressions in the ground and by rushing across open spaces the patrol arrived at a point about two hundred yards from the enemy artillery position with no casualties. Here the patrol was divided, a corporal with one squad moving to the left while the remainder of the patrol wormed its way directly up the hill. The gunners using direct fire at the patrol to their front failed to notice the patrol on their right until a Chauchot rifle opened fire on them. The survivors of this group, while

surprised, took enough time to remove the breech blocks from the guns before retreating into the woods on the hill. After driving the crews from their guns the patrols, including the officer in charge, made a detailed inspection of the five guns. This placed the entire group in plain view of any enemy who were observing within a radius of a mile to the north. The patrol had not satisfied their curiosity when a burst of shrapnel drove them to cover behind the Cote de Maldah. In the meanwhile patrols had been sent out from the companies in the ravine and cleared out several machine gun groups in the woods and orchard to the right front. The battalion then moved up the hill and was deployed on the reverse slope of the Cote de Maldah. (47)

(47) Test-
imony Major
C.W. Ryder;
Personal
Experience.

The battalion had moved into position and was digging in when a heavy concentration of shrapnel and high explosive fire was placed on the front, side and rear of the hill. A number of men were wounded by this fire. That portion of the battalion subject to high explosive fire was moved to the right until sheltered by the top of the hill, but no position could be found which gave protection against shrapnel. Observers were sent to the front of the hill and took cover in trenches which had been dug by the Germans. Wounded men were given first aid treatment and those able to walk started to the rear. (48)

(48) Ibid.

During a lull in the shelling three German soldiers came into the area and surrendered. The Company Com-

mander Company D carried on a halting conversation with the prisoners and found that they were an advance element of two rifle companies stationed in Sommerance. They stated that this force was coming to the present position of the battalion within thirty minutes to take up a defensive position. When asked why they were giving this information they replied that the war was over for them and that what happened did not concern them.(49)

(49) Personal
Diary.

The battalion commander was notified of the impending attack, but made no change in the disposition of the

(50) Ibid.

units to provide security in case the attack did come.(50)

An account of subsequent happenings, written shortly after the engagement states;

" We were interrupted in our digging by machine gun fire coming from the left front and rifle fire in good volume from the same locality. I yelled to the men to get out of their holes and form a line facing the left front. The hum of the bullets and the occasional burst of a shell had made most of the men intent on digging and they did not pay much attention to me. If I could catch the eye of a man he would stop digging and get up on the firing line and start firing. The others who were within a few yards of me would not pay the least bit of attention until I either shook them or hit them with clods or in some cases kicked them. Then they would get up as willingly as could be and start in firing. All this time the Huns

were firing rapidly but without much effect. A few men were hit but there must have been thousands of shots fired at us. Our men on the firing line acted like so many wooden dummies-most of them standing up and firing until I shook them and made them lie down. They fired in the general direction of the enemy without looking through their sights and all the time had a peculiar blank expression on their faces. Dumb but willing seemed to be their condition. And all the time I was so busy and so worried over their strange actions that I paid little attention to the enemy. So it happened that the counter-attack failed and I did not know why and did not see the Bosche as they withdrew" (51)

(51) Personal
Diary.

The Germans making the counter-attack had been gone about fifteen minutes when another heavy concentration of artillery fire from the left front began to take its toll of men. Casualties became numerous-so numerous that all of the wounded men could not be looked after. The battalion commander then ordered the general retirement to the ravine to the rear. The entire battalion, merged into one group, hurried from the rear of the Cote de Maldah through the orchard to the woods covering the north side of the ravine. Heavy bursts of shrapnel followed all the way and men being wounded as they ran added to the confusion. Companies were reformed under cover of these woods and a check of those present made. Five officers and less than two hundred men were present. The battalion commander then

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ordered Company D to dig in along the dry creek bed on the right of the battalion sector while the other company, composed of the elements of the three remaining rifle companies, moved to the left and took up a position in

(52) Personal Experience. the woods on the northern slope of the ravine. (52)

Company D was formed in one line and started digging in at three pace intervals. One squad was sent to the right flank and dug in about one hundred yards away. High explosive shells began to hit to the rear of the company soon after digging was started. This shelling was concentrated on the woods from fifty to one hundred yards to the rear. Shells falling short buried deep in the soft earth before exploding so that the men in the line were safe except from a direct hit. (53)

(53) Ibid.

The sun was getting low when two American airplanes circled over the Cote de Maldah and shot flares calling for the front line position. All stopped digging and waved handkerchiefs and papers. The airplanes circled overhead several times at an elevation of about five hundred yards before seeing the signals. They then shot the "Acknowledged" flare, waved a friendly hand over the side and disappeared to the rear. The moral effect on the men was marked. Since noon they had been pushing on with Germans on both flanks and to the front. As far as they knew the group of some two hundred men then composing the First Battalion 16th Infantry might be miles ahead of supporting troops. The airplanes brought proof that the battalion had not been forgotten, and

that in a few minutes the Division Commander would know its location. Men resumed digging with new energy. (54)

(54) Personal
Diary.

Men coming in with water from springs in the woods of Hill 272 reported hundreds of Germans there all trying to surrender. During the advance no organized effort was made to capture prisoners. The mission which had been instilled into every member of the command was, "Keep on to the Objective". The officers of the battalion believed in pushing on while the going was good. Thus it was that the battalion commander found his command out of touch with friendly troops on the right and left and to his rear a body of Germans larger than his force. (55)

(55) Ibid.

Two officers who had been slightly wounded on the Cote de Maldah reported after the operation that as they were going to the rear over Hill 272 they met group after group of Germans looking for someone to take them prisoners. In a few minutes a total of two officers and over eighty men was collected and started to the rear, with one officer at the rear and the other at the rear of the column. Every wounded man reporting in at the aid station brought in groups of Germans collected on the way. (56)

(56) Ibid.

The battalion commander consulted with the Company Commander Company D - who was the only other officer present having previous combat experience - on the advisability of further retirement to Hill 272. Contact patrols sent to the right and left soon after the capture of the Cote de Maldah had not reported in after an absence of three hours. The reported number of Germans

---twenty-one---

in the rear did not increase the element of safety. The battalion commander planned to retire at once to the top of Hill 272, the position of the battalion at noon that day. The Company Commander Company D offered objection and a compromise was effected. Company D was to hold the line of the ravine in its present position and the composite company to withdraw to Hill 272. The movement had not begun when a runner reported that the 18th Infantry had reached the ravine now constituting the front line of the battalion. Plans for retire-

(57) Personal ment were then cancelled. (57)

Exper-
ience.

Plans for the night were made by placing outguards of a squad each on the four sides of Company D, and a system of visiting patrols arranged between the position and the remainder of the battalion.

At dusk a line of Germans, apparently unarmed, and headed towards Sommerance, was seen passing through the ravine about three hundred yards to the right of Company D. Hasty plans to capture this group were discarded when it was realized that a considerable portion of the company would have to be used in the capture and that a guard would have to be sent with them to the rear. It was seen that the operation, even under the most favorable conditions, would so weaken the company that their mission of holding the right of the line might be endangered. Word was sent to the right flank outguard to let the group pass and about two hundred

(57) Ibid. Germans filed back to their lines. (57)

No food had reached the battalion since the night of October 8-9 when the kitchen cart had been met. Men were authorized to eat a box of hardbread each and one can of meat for two men. Many of the men had either

eaten without permission or did not want such rations. The difficulty of control of the eating of reserve rations can be seen in the following example; the Company Commander of Company D found a man eating reserve rations. When asked why, he stated that he had gone through the discarded pack of a wounded man and was eating the rations from it. In proof he showed the required four boxes of hard bread and can of corned beef.

During the night gas shells drenched the woods in rear of the battalion. The walking sentries helped to keep gas discipline during times when the wind blew on the lines from the woods. Gas discipline, at night, with men burrowed in the ground and with no chance of using lights, consisted of the sentries walking up and down the lines and feeling for men's faces here and there to see if masks were on. Then when masks were ordered off or on by the officer on duty they woke each man and told him the order. Mustard gas in moderate concentration blew over the lines throughout the night. Masks were kept on for nearly two hours during one change of wind direction. No men were evacuated as gas casualties throughout this engagement which speaks well for this portion of their combat training. (58)

(58) Personal
Experience.

Just before dark telephone connection was made between the battalion and Headquarters 18th Infantry. The signal sergeant, by utilizing German wire, extended the line over five hundred yards beyond the end of the American wire. Throughout the remainder of the engagement this sergeant with two assistants kept the line open

except for brief intervals. As soon as the line was broken, this sergeant with his detail would start out along the line, through shelling, gas or darkness until the break was found and repaired. This line was of great value to the battalion commander in keeping Regimental Headquarters 18th Infantry informed of the situation at all times. Had the telephone not been in order many of the messages could not have reached higher headquarters (a distance of one and one half miles) in time to be of value. This applied particularly to artillery observation and requests

(59) Test- for artillery fire. (59)

imony Maj.
C.W.Ryder.

At 9:00 PM the first lieutenant commanding the train of the Machine Gun Company 16th Infantry arrived at Hill 272, reorganized the machine gun platoon there, and reported by runner to the battalion commander. The Battalion Commander instructed him to remain in position

(60) Test- on the hill where orders for relief on October found him. (60)

imony Capt.
J.Wheelin.

The Second Brigade, while not in liasion with the First Battalion 16th Infantry, had reached the line in the Bois de Romagne even with the line on the Cote de Maldah,

(61) Hist. 1st. by dark on October 9. (61) Throughout the remainder of

Div. p.
210.

this phase of the Meuse-Argonne the open plain between the Cote de Maldah and the Bois de Romagne was unoccupied by American troops. This thousand yard gap was covered by fire from the platoon of the First Battalion 16th Infantry to the right of the Cote de Maldah and the 28th

(62) Test- Infantry in the Bois de Romagne. (62)

imony

Capt. G.E.

Butler;

Personal

Experience

On October 10 at 7:AM Company D, with the remaining one platoon of Company C, moved forward to the top of the

Cote de Maldah and took position on the sheltered reverse slope. One platoon of Company D, under an officer, was sent to occupy the right hill of the Cote de Maldah, four hundred yards northeast of the other platoon and company headquarters on the left hill of the Cote de Maldah. An observing force of one squad was placed in the artillery cover trenches, dug by the Germans, on the forward slope of the hill. This force, while able to see over the entire slope past Sommerance, a distance of about one thousand yards, was of little assistance in locating enemy artillery and machine gun positions. They were shelled day and night but could not tell the origin of the fire. The composite company, with Battalion Headquarters, remained in the woods about one hundred yards north of the draw between Hill 272 and the Cote de Maldah. (63)

(63) Test-
imony
Maj. C. W.
Ryder;
Personal
Experience

Following instructions received by telephone a patrol was sent out from Company D soon after the company arrived on the Cote de Maldah, on October 10. This patrol consisted of a corporal and his squad. They were ordered to advance to the line of Sommerance and to hold the line until relieved. As there could be no further movement on the plain without drawing fire, this meant that the position must be held till darkness. The patrol advanced from one cover to the next by single men and reached the Ravine du Grasfaux and dug in. It was shelled throughout the rest of the day. At dark two squads were sent out to relieve them. In spite of the heavy fire the patrol had drawn in advancing, and the continuous shelling of the day, the entire squad returned to the company. The corporal was able to point out on the map the approximate location of two machine

guns and indefinitely a battery of light artillery. This information was transmitted to Battalion Headquarters, with the coordinate location of enemy positions. Fire was requested on the indicated points. Supporting artillery placed fire on these points on October 11. It was found, after this artillery concentration that the movement of even single men on the forward slope of the Cote de Maldah drew just as heavy artillery and machine gun fire as before. Hence it was believed that the coordinate location furnished the artillery was not accurate. (64)

(64) Testimony
Maj. C. W.

Ryder; Personal Experience.

The forward slope of the Cote de Maldah was heavily shelled during the afternoon of October 10. Howitzer shells landing on the position of Company D inflicted many casualties. During this bombardment a man crossing an open space at the edge of the position occupied by Company D was hit. Both legs were broken, one arm broken and numerous wounds in the chest felled him. The nature of his wounds made it impossible to move him to a sheltered position. The Company Commander of Company D called for the two Medical Men attached to the company. The entire company relayed the call with no results, although the exposed position of the wounded man was easily seen from the fox-holes of the entire company. The Company Commander of Company D was then forced to dress the wounds of this man under the heavy bombardment of the position. After the shelling had ceased the two Medical Corps men appeared and reenforced the dressings. On being questioned relative to their absence when called for they stated they had neither heard the yelling of the wounded man, the calls of the company for them nor had they seen the man wounded. These two men were strangers in the company

having been attached just prior to the attack of October

(65) Personal
Exper-
ience.

9. (65)

German airplanes were overhead throughout the day. Several times a group of two or three swooped over the hill and dropped small bombs. No casualties resulted as all missiles fell wide of the company position. Throughout the three-day occupation of the hill German airplanes were never molested by either anti-aircraft fire or by allied aircraft. (66)

(66) Ibid.

Ration carrying details were sent to the rear on October 10 and brought up the only food furnished during the active portion of this engagement. This meal consisted of two meat sandwiches and a cup of cold coffee.

All officers of the battalion were assembled at battalion headquarters on the morning of October 11. The Battalion Commander read an attack order to them which provided that;

1. Patrols would be pushed out from each front line company to the Line of Exploitation.

2. If resistance was encountered the patrols would retire and artillery fire would be placed on known enemy locations.

3. "After artillery preparations were completed the patrols would again advance and if resistance is still encountered more artillery preparation would be demanded."

4. " IF NECESSARY THE DIVISION COMMANDER WILL ORDER A ROLLING BARRAGE TO BE PUT DOWN AND AN ASSAULT BY THE INFANTRY TO TAKE THE TRENCH SYSTEM (south of Landres

(67) F.O.#32, et St. Georges). (67)
1st Div.
1918.

The receipt of this order had a most depressing

effect on the officers of the battalion. They had seen the failure of the rolling barrage in protecting the infantry from long range machine gun and artillery fire in the assault on Hill 272. The failure of artillery concentrations on more or less definitely located enemy positions near Sommerance was apparent. The universal opinion was that a solid curtain of steel was needed to protect the infantry (in case a general assault was ordered) and not a thin line of exploding shells, falling a few hundred feet in front of their lines. (68)

(68) Personal
Experi-
ence.

Prior to the assault on October 9 information had been given by the Company Commander of Company D to his men that on reaching the Cote de Maldah no further advance would be made. This information was given in good faith. The officer concerned either misinterpreted the verbal attack order of the Battalion Commander or had been misinformed. The news that the Cote de Maldah was the final objective had been passed from one company to another and played a major part in the desire of all to get to the final objective as quickly as possible. Company commanders were now seemingly going back on their word. The men, while apparently disappointed, went about their preparation for the assault as usual. (69)

(69) Ibid.

A patrol of one squad was sent forward from Company D over the top of the Cote de Maldah. It received such a hail of artillery and machine gun fire that it was obvious that an attack in formation, by company or battalion, would be broken up within a few minutes. (70) This information was sent by telephone to the Headquarters 18th Infantry, and artillery fire was placed on the supposed enemy

(70) Ibid.

positions. A second patrol then advanced over the same ground and drew as heavy, if not heavier, fire than the first. This information was also sent to Regimental Headquarters 18th Infantry by wire. With it was sent the recommendation of the Battalion Commander that an attack by the battalion

(71) Test-imony Maj. C.W. Ryder. with a rolling barrage be not attempted. (71) While waiting for action on this recommendation plans were made for an attack behind a rolling barrage in case such orders were issued. A telephone message calling off the attack in force restored, to some extent, the shaken confidence

(72) Personal Diary. of the officers and men in their Divisional Staff. (72)

During the afternoon of October 10 a Red Cross Man brought several copies of the Paris Edition of the Chicago Herald up to the position. The principal news was the capitulation of Austria-Hungary and the probability of an early armistice. This news soon spread throughout the battalion and men were openly discussing their chances of getting through the war if they survived this last push. The receipt of attack orders, which gave such forebodings of disaster for the battalion and such small chances of success, depressed all. (73)

(73) Ibid.

Early in the afternoon of October 11 the platoon commander and the platoon from the right flank arrived in rear of the Cote de Maldah. The Platoon Commander stated, in explanation of his unauthorized action, that he had been shelled out of his position and that to stay there would destroy his command. The Company Commander of Company D stated: " He had me at a disadvantage in that I had never

been over to inspect his position. I was at fault there. I was tempted to send him back again but realized that the hardship would fall on the men and not all on the Platoon Commander. Just prior to his arrival I received word that we were to be relieved by the Forty Second Division that night, so I let him stay." (74)

(74) Personal
Diary.

The battalion was relieved by two battalions of the Forty Second Division before dark on October 11. Companies were formed in single file and marched to the battalion assembly point behind Hill 272. The active participation of the First Battalion 16th Infantry in the Second Phase

(75) Personal of the Meuse-Argonne was ended. (75)
experience.

GAINS AND LOSSES

The First Battalion 16th Infantry captured and held the key position blocking the advance of the First Division to the Corps Objective. This operation allowed the Second Brigade to advance to the Corps Objective and the advance of the Second Brigade in turn allowed the Thirty-second Division on its right to continue the advance.

The battalion captured over four hundred prisoners. It lost ten officers killed and wounded and nearly four hundred men killed and wounded. (76) Its losses were high but not out of proportion to the magnitude of the task accomplished.

(76) Hist.
16th Inf.
p. 58.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In the analysis and criticism of the operation, viewed from the standpoint of results gained, it is found that the battalion took its objectives within the time limit and was capable of further attack. Its mission was accomplished. Yet, however great the deed, and the results gained, this attack viewed from the standpoint of tactical procedure was far from a model. It is the opinion of the author that the success of the First Battalion 16th Infantry was due to fortunate weather conditions and in a lesser degree the individual initiative and bravery of the officers, non-commissioned officers and privates of the command.

The night marches of October 7-8 and 8-9, in which the battalion moved across broken ground and steep gullies under adverse conditions of total darkness and wet soft ground, resulted in the battalion arriving at the designated point at the proper time. Credit is given to the system of having the battalion halt after crossing obstacles until all units reformed; and the employment of helpers, stationed at difficult positions of the terrain.

The decision to place the First Battalion 16th Infantry in the Bois de Bayen on the night of October 7-8, and to keep them in that position until darkness on October 8 was tactically unsound. Their bivouac position was within a few hundred yards of the German lines. Had enemy airplanes, which were over the position most of the day, discovered their presence, artillery fire could have

destroyed the assaulting power of the battalion. Thus the safety of the last element of the division, capable of a determined attack, depended on its concealment within hearing distance of the German positions.

✓ The Division Commander, in planning the operation against Hill 272 was faced with a task which was as difficult as that faced by any division commander during the war. One regiment had attained the Third Objective, which was also the Corps Objective: the others had been unable to advance to the Second Objective over a period of four days, mainly because of resistance on Hill 272. On October 8 every Infantry unit of the division, except the First Battalion 16th Infantry, had made at least one assault and had received its heavy toll of casualties. A comparatively fresh battalion had attacked Hill 272 on October 5. Two flanking attacks on the hill had failed. A second frontal attack had failed and like the first resulted in extremely heavy casualties and no gains. Heavy artillery concentration on Hill 272 preceding each of these attacks had not decreased its power of resistance.

In view of the above the Division Commander decided to attack frontally after placing a heavy concentration of artillery fire on the hill on October 8. In as much as previous shelling had not averted the utter failure of all attacks, it is difficult for the author to see how one additional day of shelling could augur success. The author believes that a frontal attack was ordered, based on one of three mistaken ideas; either overconfidence in the destructive power of the Divisional Artillery, or lack of

knowledge of the strength of the defense of Hill 272 or the idea that resistance capable of stopping small units in frontal attack could be reduced by direct frontal attack in force.

Foggy mornings had been numerous ,yet the attack order contemplated no fog,and had the day been clear no change could have been made. It is the opinion of the author,with which the Battalion Commander First Battalion 16th Infantry concurs,as well as the two surviving officers of the Machine Gun Company 16th Infantry and an officer who was present at prior attacks on Hill 272,that the First Battalion 16th Infantry was doomed to failure. It is believed that the battalion would have advanced on a clear day until its ranks had been shattered by fire and its broken units stopped because no more were left to push on,and this action would have been confined to an area of a few hundred yards in front of the jump off line. The gray mantle of fog,which caused such confusion and loss of direction,also limited the scores of machine guns on Hill 272 to only occasional use of aimed fire and thus allowed the battalion to get within assaulting distance. (77)

(77)Test-

imony Maj.

C.W.Ryder;

Capt. G.E.

Butler;

Capt.A.B.

Helsley;

Sgt.E.M.

Smith;Per-

sonal Ex-

perience.

The effect of the hot meal given to the battalion

on the night of October 8-9 was noticeably good. The men who had been without food since the night before,and who had spent the day in damp shellholes,changed from silent almost sullen troops to carefree whistling men ready for whatever the morrow might bring.

It is believed that the disorganization of the Machine Gun Company 16th Infantry could have been averted by having them remain under cover in le Petite Bois until the crest of Hill 272 had been taken. In action in fog machine guns can be of but limited use due to the poor visibility. The assistance they gave in overcoming the machine gun nest on the left flank of the battalion could not compensate for the loss of four of its five officers, more than half of its enlisted personnel and seventy-five percent of its guns.

It is also believed that the four guns left on Hill 272 could have been used to better advantage nearer the front line. Though somewhat disorganized, the platoon could have used its four guns in strengthening the dangerous position of the battalion on the afternoon of October 9. During the counter-attack on the Cote de Maldah two machine guns could have produced more hits than the entire portion of the battalion firing. Mental disturbances and physical fatigue, which was such a serious obstacle in obtaining well controlled rifle fire, would have had little if any effect on the fire of machine guns.

The action of relieved units in running to the rear through the lines of the battalion temporarily robbed the support units of their offensive spirit. The same action on a clear day, with its attending casualties, would have disorganized the entire battalion and resulted in near panic.

The decision of the Company Commander, Company D to take the machine gun nest on the extreme left flank of the sector was reached by the necessity of so doing before an advance could be made. The tactical principle

of reducing hostile strong points on the flank to help neighboring units would not have caused the sending of two officers and three squads to almost certain death. The reasons, as stated, though unsound tactically and selfish, are in the author's opinion no more than can ever be expected under combat conditions similar to this assault.

✓ The selection of the small area in rear of the Cote de Maldah on the afternoon of October 9 was unsound in that defense in depth was not provided for. This was the logical place for men to gather to escape shelling and the concentration of shellfire on the area indicated that Germans guessed correctly the location of the attacking troops. In placing Company D in the ravine instead of the obvious shelter of the nearby woods the Germans were outguessed. This fact was apparent to the entire battalion as the shells fell in great numbers throughout the afternoon and night.

In the movement forward from the First Objective no provision was made for "mopping up" enemy positions on the reverse slope of the German defense line. The fact that numerous enemy groups were seen, all willing to surrender did not remove the danger of their presence in the rear of the battalion.

Information gained from prisoners in the morning of October 9 and units disposed to meet the prospective counter-attack. Nothing was lost by the failure of the counter-attack to materialize. The information of a counter-attack on the Cote de Maldah was disregarded. Later when the counter-attack did come it found the battalion unprepared to meet it. Had the Germans changed

their direction of attack and advanced on the position from the cover of the woods on the right the result probably would have been defeat or capture of the battalion.

✓ The action of the non-commissioned officers and privates in the counter-attack on the Cote de Maldah was far below the standard of the battalion. A few hours previous to this counter-attack and again a few hours later these same men gave quick response to orders. A just criticism cannot be made of their actions without considering the fatigue of the preceding attack and of feverish digging, lack of food and water and the numbing effect of continued shell fire and its attendant casualties. The effectiveness of the fire of these men must have been extremely limited in the number of hits made. The volumes of their fire, coupled with their steadiness and dumb disregard for enemy fire deceived the enemy in the strength of the force holding the hill.

The retirement of the battalion from the Cote de Maldah on the afternoon of October 9 was tactically unsound. A counter-attack had been repulsed. No indications of further enemy aggression were apparent. Shellfire was taking toll of the already depleted numbers of the battalion but a decision to remain in place would not have placed the battalion in a precarious position.

The decision of unit commanders allowing the escape of Germans who could have been taken prisoners was sound. No tactical would have been gained by so doing. The detailing of able-bodied men as guards might have so reduced the strength of the units that the mission of

holding the ground gained was subject to failure.

The German forces on the reverse slope of Hill 272 can be criticised for not making a determined stand against the attacking unit. The fact that the strongest fortified position in their sector had fallen, and that American troops were visible between them and their lines, did not warrant over five hundred officers and men calmly waiting for a chance to surrender.

The battalion commander failed to inspect his main line of resistance on October 10 and 11. The result was that all information of the terrain, enemy forces, and disposition of troops on the main line of resistance came to him from reports. These should have been verified by him, by personal reconnaissance.

The failure of the Company Commander, Company D to inspect his right flank group placed the security of the right of the battalion on the platoon commander. That this officer withdrew from his position without authority can be laid to the company commander's failure to make a proper daily inspection.

The medical personell, attached to the companies, failed to give prompt assistance to wounded men in numerous cases. During the operations, two Medical Corps men attached to Company D, remained strangers in the company where every man knew his neighbor and was willing to help him at grave personal risk. Had these two men lived with the company before the attack they would have soon become one of the company, and there is no reason to believe that they would not have become imbued with the spirit of the company and been the first to risk their lives to help a wounded comrade.

The initiative and courage of the private soldier was never shown to better advantage than in the assault on Hill 272. Much of the success of the battalion can be laid to individuals and small groups going up the hill in the fog, surprising the German gunners and clearing the way for the advance of their companies. Non-commissioned officers and privates assumed responsibilities and carried out the missions given to their units. This was particularly noteworthy in the case of a private of the Machine Gun Company 16th Infantry who assembled enough men to complete two gun squads and reported with them to the battalion position.

In spite of the numerous mistakes made the operations of the First Battalion 16th Infantry in the second phase of the Meuse-Argonne will always remain a marked success.

LESSONS

1. In night marches over difficult terrain a careful check should be made to see that all elements of the unit are over obstacles before resuming the march.

2. "Helping over" details of selected men, stationed at difficult crossings, will expedite night marches.

5. Resistance which has withstood frontal and flanking attacks will not usually be overcome by use of a greater force in renewed frontal attack.

4. Food, especially if hot, plays an important part in the success of an operation.

5. Visual reconnaissance, while of value in keeping direction, should not relieve commanders of the necessity of close map study and the use of compass in maintaining direction.

6. A rolling barrage, beyond its value as a morale booster, is of little value in all but the final stages of an assault in open warfare. In an assault where artillery fire and medium or long range machine gun fire can be directed on the assaulting troops, the rolling barrage does not remove the source of resistance nor does it lessen the casualties in the assaulting waves.

7. Men should never run to the rear through the assaulting lines, no matter what their mission may be.

8. Assistance in the reduction of resistance cannot be expected from flanking units unless that resistance interferes with the operation of the flanking units themselves.

9. Fog increases the difficulty of control by all unit commanders to a greater extent than darkness.

10. Fog will reduce the casualties during the first stages of an assault by sheltering the units from direct aimed fire.

11. Fog will increase casualties at later stages of the assault as control is lost and lines and groups come under close and direct fire.

12. Information of enemy movements given by prisoners should be utilized to its fullest extent when the safety of the unit is not endangered by so doing.

13. The fire effect of machine guns can be of great assistance when a unit is wavering and the effect of rifle fire is doubtful.

14. Obvious positions of shelter are often equally as obvious to the enemy.

15. Prisoners should not be taken when the same will endanger the mission of the unit.

16. When accuracy of fire is impossible volume of fire is of material aid. ?

17. Medical personell which function with companies during combat should live with those companies while in training areas.

18. Battalion and company commanders should make a physical inspection of the advance lines of their units at least once daily.

19. Promises to units of limits of effort are of doubtful value if not kept. Units which can be informed of their final limits of effort will exert a greater effort to complete their task than if they go forward knowing that as long as a few men are left they will be pushed on.

20. A judicious use of the " Spirit of the Game" suggestion will assist small unit commanders in the reduction of isolated strongpoints.

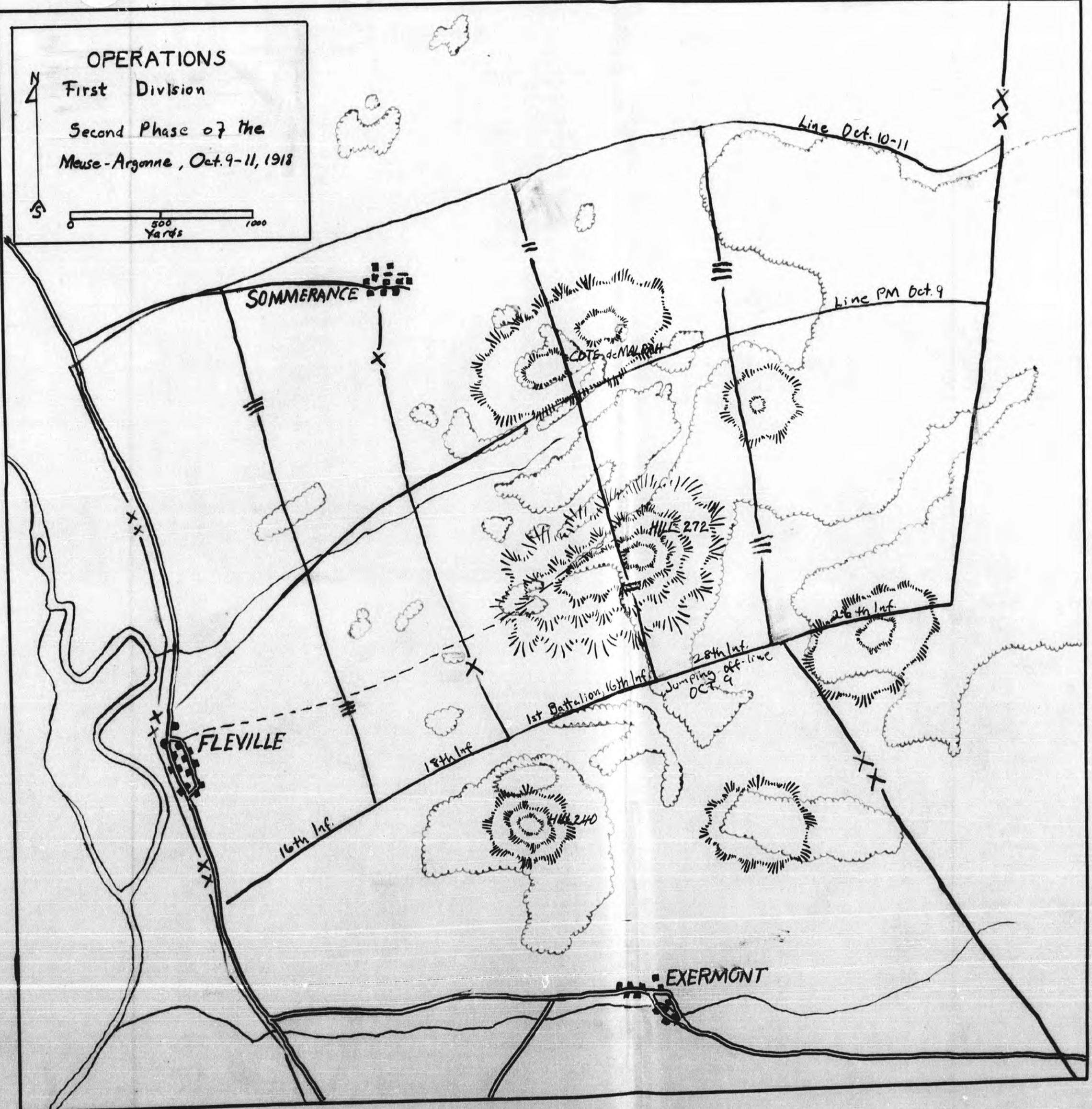
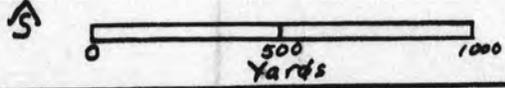
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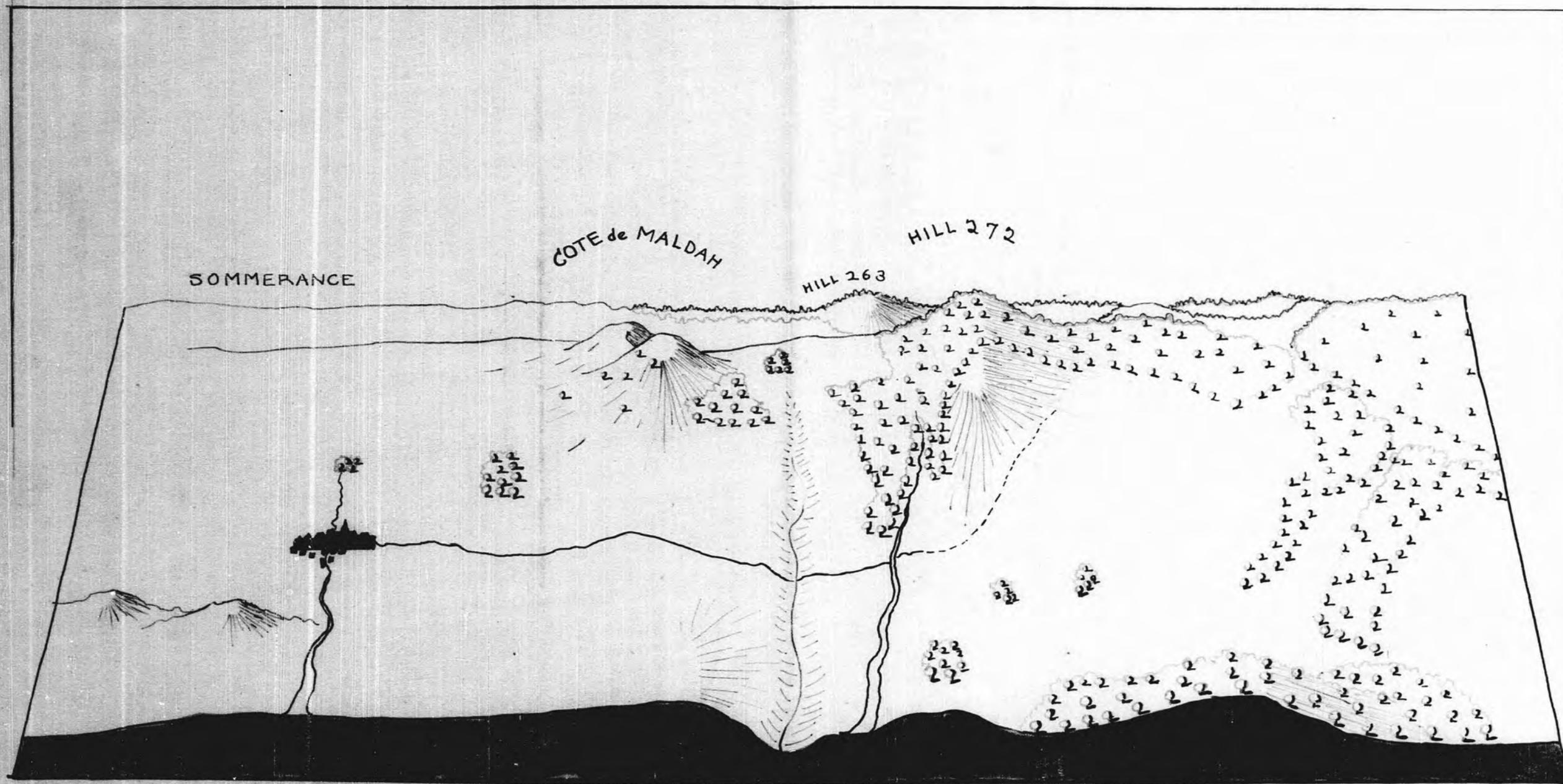
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OPERATIONS

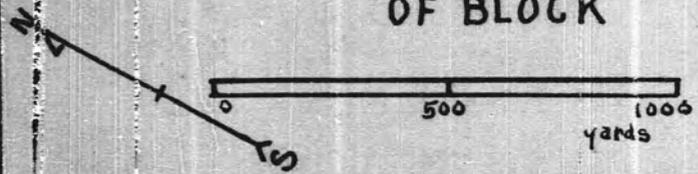
First Division

Second Phase of the
Meuse-Argonne, Oct. 9-11, 1918





SCALE OF FRONT EDGE
OF BLOCK



BLOCK DIAGRAM OF SECTOR

First Battalion Sixteenth Infantry

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 First Battalion Sixteenth Infantry
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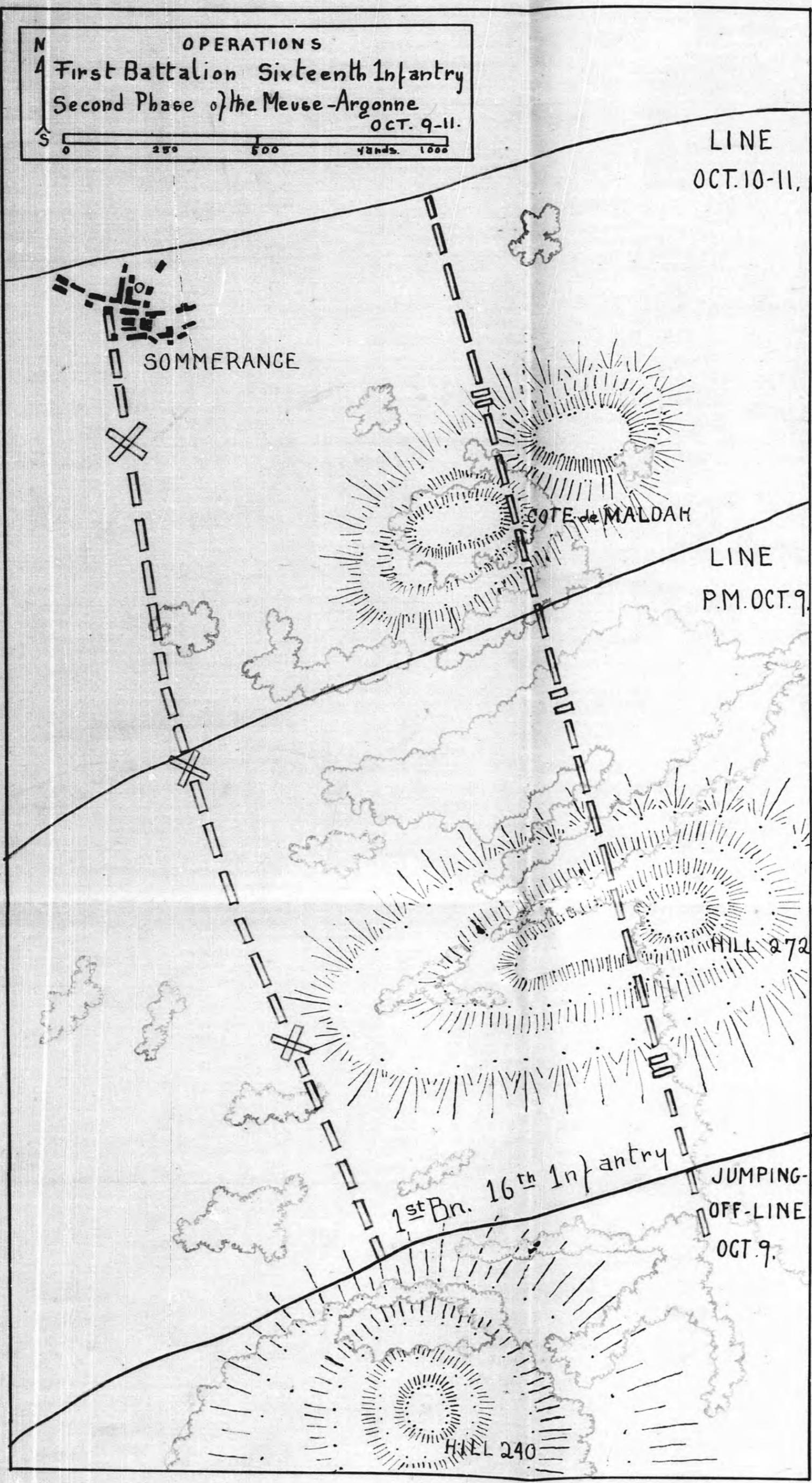
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HILL 272

1st Bn. 16th Infantry

JUMPING-
 OFF-LINE
 OCT. 9.

HILL 240



1-8

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
FOURTH SECTION
COMMITTEE "H"
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

ADVANCED COURSE
1929 - 1930

OPERATIONS
of
COMPANY "D", 16th INFANTRY (1st DIVISION)
in the
AISNE-MARNE OFFENSIVE *July 18-22, 1918*
(Personal Experience)

17

MAJOR LEONARD R. BOYD, INFANTRY

3-98

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First Division Historical Section "World War Records, First Division, A.E.F., Regular, 1918."

Accurate as to dates and facts, in general. It has a very limited account of battalion and company actions.

Society of the First Division "History of the 1st Division during the World War, 1917-1919." The John C. Winston Co., Philadelphia, 1922.

Written by one or more authors who were closely connected with the First Division during the indicated period. Sentiment and the desire to accord the Division all possible honor due it has colored many statements so that while they are not totally incorrect, yet that incorrect impression is given the reader. This history, published shortly after the end of the war, is probably as accurate as similar Divisional Histories, but it might have been named, more appropriately "The STORY of the First Division".

Anonymous "The Story of the 16th Infantry in France." Printed at Montabaur, Germany, by Martin Flock, 1919.

A fairly accurate account of the general phases of the operations of this regiment. Regimental glory is often stressed at the expense of historical accuracy.

Boyd, L.R., Major, Inf. Personal Diary.

This diary was compiled shortly after the conclusion of the World War, from notes made by the author in and immediately after each operation. Various parts have been verified by written and verbal accounts of the operations from former officers, noncommissioned officers, and privates of Co "D" 16th Infantry. Statements of German officers and soldiers, who served in this front during the operation, were secured to substantiate several combat incidents. The diary is an account of combat as seen by one officer and probably contains many inaccuracies due to the conditions under which the author took notes, or made mental record of incidents.

Statements and correspondence of the following officers and non-commissioned officers and privates who either served with Co "D" 16th Infantry during the period July 18-23, 1918, or who were observers of the incidents mentioned herein:

Major W. F. Harrell, Major C. W. Ryder, Lieut. J. T. Lester,
1st Sergeant A. J. McFaden, Sergeant J. B. Ruane, Sergeant
Arthur Scott, Corporal Gilbert Padgett, Private J. R. Fauset,
and Private I. Norden.

A questionnaire was sent to five of the above mentioned members of Company "D", requesting that they answer certain questions relative to the outstanding incidents of this operation. The replies contained many variable statements of time and place, as might be expected after a lapse of eleven years. No uncorroborated statements were included in the operations as set forth hereinafter.

MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS USED

Hist. 1st Div.	"History of the First Division during the World War, 1917-1919"
Story 16th Inf.	"The Story of the Sixteenth Infantry in France"
Diary	Quotation from "Personal Diary", Author. NOTE: All statements of fact, not bearing a reference notation, are based on the personal recollection of the author, aided by his "Personal Diary".
Lester	Correspondence and statements of James T. Lester, formerly Lieutenant, Co "D", 16th Infantry.
McFaden	Correspondence of Andrew J. McFaden, formerly 1st Sergeant, Co "D" 16th Inf.
Ruane	Correspondence of James B. Ruane, formerly corporal, sergeant, and 1st sergeant, Co "D" 16th Infantry.
Scott	Correspondence and statements of Staff Sergeant Arthur Scott, formerly corporal and sergeant, Co "D" 16th Infantry.
Padgett	Correspondence and statements of Corporal Gilbert Padgett, 29th Infantry, formerly corporal Co "D" 16th Infantry.

INTRODUCTION

The operations of one rifle company in a divisional engagement, lasting five full days, might appear to have but little influence on the final outcome of the battle. When it is considered that in most cases but eight rifle companies were in direct contact with the enemy on the entire division front, at the same time, it is apparent that one company does play an important part. Such a company may assist or hinder the advance of the battalion, and in turn, affect the success of the regiment, brigade and the entire division.

Company "D" 16th Infantry, which unit will play the major role in this account, was distinctive in many respects, but particularly so in regard to its composition. The fourth rifle company of the First Battalion 16th Infantry was formed by transferring groups from the three existing companies, and, in addition, was augmented by about 100 men from a replacement battalion formed at Syracuse, New York. This group of "spare-parts" was banded together and christened Company "D". The thirty-odd noncommissioned officers and men transferred from each of the three rifle companies ^{formed} were a varied group in respect to age, race, stature, temperament, physical fitness, and conduct. Many of this set of men were of the highest type of professional soldier - mature men who had elected the profession of arms prior to the entry of the United States into the World War. The leaven of these professional soldiers tended to change the heterogeneous assemblage of individuals into a closely-knit unit which gloried in professional disdain of danger and sentiment. Over one-fourth of the company were of foreign birth and many had

difficulty in speaking and understanding English. Others were of small stature, several had fallen arches and many were afflicted with periods of excess - usually soon after pay day. It should not be imagined that all of the men of Company "D" were below average in size or mentality, for replacements had reached the unit before July, 1918. One such group was composed of tall, strong youths from Montana and another similar group from Wisconsin had joined.

Early in its regimental life Company "D" was given the disparaging title of "The Foreign Legion". Strangely enough, this title was accepted by the men of the company and the realization that they were considered as "black sheep" in the regiment seemed to give birth to an esprit de corps which remained throughout the combat service of "The Foreign Legion".

The majority of the men of Company "D" had been trained in France since June 1917 and had served in the Bathlemont and Toul sectors and later in the Montdidier area. Here, they had been subjected to daily shell fire, had become familiar with combat discipline and had experienced the depressing effects of seeing friends killed and wounded. The training of the company officers had been largely that of participating in battalion, regimental and brigade maneuvers. Hence, after a year's training, they were thoroughly familiar with trench-warfare routine and the formations of the company and its parts for defense and movement forward under the cover of a barrage. Little or no training had been allowed to fit squad, section and platoon leaders to utilize their men in attacks against individual machine guns. So we find Company "D", after a year of training, only

partially ready to start on its first offensive mission.

The six months of intermittent trench warfare had thoroughly disillusioned the officers and men as to the glory of war. An abstract idea, such as insuring the safety of democracy, was no particular comfort to an individual who was undergoing the discomforts of active campaign. If the spirit of patriotism was present it was a weak, voiceless shadow, completely cowed by the idea that any show of sentiment was out of place in "The Foreign Legion".

Most of the men of Company "D" were young - excepting a few volunteers and some of the Regular Army personnel - and had become accustomed to hard work, broken periods of rest and irregular meals. They were probably in as fine physical condition for the work before them as could have been hoped for. Mentally, too, they were ready for combat. Their trench warfare experiences made each man feel that he was somewhat of a veteran, and as such, was anxious to appear disdainful of danger in the eyes of his comrades. For many tedious weeks these men had ducked on the approach of a German shell and had cursed the senders of these missiles. Few Germans had been seen and but very few shots had been fired by the company. So we find the company with an accumulation of hatred for the German soldier which was to be given an outlet in this, their first "jump-off".

It is not difficult to criticize the actions of the company as a whole, and the errors of the company and higher commanders will be shown in painful detail throughout this engagement. However, should this account have been written in the style of many divisional histories, these facts would be glossed over, or omitted,

*Never noticed
any hatred among
other troops*

and the exploits of the company and its officers eulogized. To those who experienced the physical and mental fatigue of extended combat, these errors are easily understood, and no apology is necessary. From the less fortunate reader, who did not see this service, the same indulgence is expected.

PRELIMINARY MOVEMENTS

The 16th Infantry, after serving with the First Division in the Montdidier sector for ten weeks, entrucked for a "rest" area in the vicinity of Dammartin-en-Goele, northeast of Paris. (1) Company "D", 16th Infantry, with the three other rifle companies of the First Battalion was billeted in the regimental area on July 13. The entire company had been placed in the barns and furnished rooms of a chateau which belonged to the estate of a deceased captain of French Chasseurs. The following three days were spent in washing clothes and in trying to de-louse personnel. Physical training, close order drill, inspections of equipment and games filled the days. During the night, July 14-15, heavy firing was heard in the direction of the front and rumors soon spread throughout the company that a break-through had taken place and that the Germans were again advancing on Paris. The normal routine was followed, in spite of these rumors, and at noon, all who desired passes left the billets with orders to report in by "Taps" that night.

About 3:00 PM (July 15) orders were received from battalion headquarters to be prepared to entruck by 5:00 PM, that date. The next two hours were spent in assembling equipment and clothing - much of which was

(1) Hist. 1st
Div.,
p. 100

*Not shown.
No general
map.*

being dried - and in making the packs of those who were absent on pass. The bedding rolls of the officers and the spare kits of the men were still en route by the animal drawn sections of the trains, hence there had been no opportunity to reequip any elements of the company.

By 5:00 PM all but a few of those on pass had returned and the company had been formed after a hot meal was served. In addition, each man was given two sandwiches and cautioned not to eat them before dark that night. The company entrucked and the column started off - towards the front again.

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The truck column stopped about 2:00 AM and shortly thereafter a French officer, after talking in his native language for a considerable period of time, made known that we were to detruck. This was done and Company "D" was formed up on the side of the road and allowed to "fall out" while the officers stumbled through the darkness in search of someone who knew where we were to go. A runner finally arrived with orders for the company to move "into those woods", pointing to a black mass extending across the horizon. A gap was dimly visible in the skyline and this proved to be a road, along which was found a mixed collection of companies of the 16th Infantry. Company "D" was pushed into this scene of confusion and halted while the officers tried to find battalion headquarters. After about an hour of shouting and stumbling the First Battalion, 16th Infantry, was formed and our march towards the front started. From that time until daylight the procedure consisted of a march of a few

hundred yards - a halt, sometimes for a minute and frequently long enough to allow most of the company to fall asleep - then moving forward and halting again. The road led to a wooded hill-top, which we reached shortly after daylight, and went into bivouac.

During the early afternoon "officers call" was sounded and the plans for the coming attack were discussed. The regimental Machine Gun Company, 16th Infantry was attached to the battalion and the officers of that company, with the First Battalion personnel, made detailed plans for the advance over several miles of the enemy lines.

Not shown

We found out, for the first time, that we were a part of a concentration of the entire First Division, and that we were situated near Pierrefonds, in the Villers-Cotterets forest. The First Division, in conjunction with the French Foreign Legion and the Second American Division, was to participate in a surprise attack south of Soissons. The French troops were to be on our right and the Second Division on the right of the Legion. We were informed that the four regiments of the First Division were to attack abreast, in order, from right to left: 18th Infantry; 16th Infantry; 26th Infantry; and 28th Infantry. The general direction of attack was to be slightly south of east and the zones of action were neatly drawn across the Paris-Soissons road, over the Paris-Soissons railroad, and past the Chateau-Thierry-Soissons road. It looked to be a very simple maneuver - on the map.

All company commanders left by truck to go on reconnaissance at 5:30 PM. The companies, led by the second in command, were ordered to march under cover of darkness to a new assembly position near Mortfontain.

Not shown

The truck stopped about two miles west of Coeuvres-et-Valsery and the officers walked to French Division Headquarters which was located in the quarry west of Coeuvres. Here we waited until 11:00 PM when French guides appeared and were assigned to each officer. The guides could not speak English, and as I could speak but a few words of French, considerable difficulty was found in exchanging ideas. The guides had made one trip to Division Headquarters before being detailed as such, and that trip had been made during the hours of daylight. They knew of no route to the front except by the main road through the town - and this road had been denied us for our march to the front. Off we went, down the steep hill into the darkened town - losing our way, retracing our steps, trying again and finally arriving in the battalion sector where we were to start our attack. So far the reconnaissance had confused rather than helped me in visualizing the terrain over which the company must be led during the following night. When daylight came all of the officers had arrived and we proceeded to the front line and tried to pick out some point on the terrain which might help us during the early stages of the attack. The front was a broad, gently rolling wheat field and beyond our immediate front we could see nothing on account of a morning mist. We were required to remain in the trenches as the French officers were apprehensive lest the presence of a large group of inquisitive officers might alarm the German outposts and result in artillery fire on their positions. When I left the front line I was quite dissatisfied with the opportunity afforded to actually see the positions we were to occupy - in fact I had only a general idea of where we were supposed to go. The other

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Milant*

officers, I found out, were no better off.

I went back to the company bivouac in the ravine west of Mortfontain, walking the entire distance in a drizzling rain, and found the company asleep and nothing done to prepare for the movement that afternoon. Fortunately, the weather cleared shortly after my arrival and tents were struck and equipment laid out to dry. All men were urged to leave their valuables in tagged packages in care of the company clerk and most of them did this. The blanket-roll portion of the packs, which were to be left behind, were marked with the individual's name and number. In the midst of this preparation, orders were received from regimental headquarters to make a complete check of combat equipment. A similar check had been made while we were resting in the chateau and I had been unable to obtain any replacement for the missing articles. As far as I could see, this order was of no help to us as we certainly could get no replacements in the few hours left before we started our march. I tried to obtain a Very pistol (mine was still with the rest of the company equipment on the wagons) but found no one with any, much less with any extra pistols. Canteens were filled and extra ammunition issued. A hot meal was served and one meat and one jam sandwich issued to each man. Again they were cautioned to try and restrain their appetites until after we were out of sight of the kitchen.

✓ The company was formed and the 1st Sergeant called the roll and checked each man as he answered. There was a marked tenseness in the attitude of the men as they stood "at ease" after answering the roll. Early

Very good

in the roll-call there was an answer of "here" which quavered a bit and most of the company smiled. Thereafter the answers were somewhat louder than necessary and called out with studied indifference. The last of the 218 rifles came to "order arms" and Company "D" 16th Infantry, "The Foreign Legion", was ready to start on its first offensive fight. ✓

✓ The roads leading towards the front were jammed, so that Company "D", in the battalion column, marched in column of two's and most of the time we were lucky to be on the road at all. Darkness came soon after the start and thunder clouds forming overhead soon blotted out even the helpful light of the stars. Then the thunder crashed and rain fell in torrents. The road was soon a sticky, yet slippery, quagmire; packs became wet and heavy; men stumbled and fell and arose covered with mud. Flashes of lightning showed a road filled from gutter to gutter with animal-drawn vehicles, motors, tanks and numerous columns of foot-troops. There was loud shouting - drivers urging their teams onward - lost columns trying to find their organizations - men cursing when wagons or trucks lost their direction and edged into them - it was a scene of the wildest confusion. The rate of march was slow - perhaps a half a mile an hour - for each man had to hold to the equipment of the man ahead to keep from becoming separated in the inky night.

I was surprised when we halted at the quarry (French Division Headquarters) for the march had seemed endless. The men threw themselves on the rain-soaked ground, utterly exhausted. ✓ The combined French and American Headquarters was also a scene of confusion - excited French officers trying to find American Commanders

and assign guides to them. The guides for Company "D" were finally found, and, as I had feared, two new guides had been sent. These guides, too, had never been through Coëuvres at night, except by way of the main road, and had but one helpful idea - they knew when their own front line trenches were reached.

The route assigned Co "D" led through the fields and down the steep slope into the town of Coeuvres and thence along an unimproved road to the front line. About one hundred yards from the French P.C. the path became so steep and slippery that each of the 218 men had to be helped down this decline. Darkness and rain added to the difficulty of this procedure, and over one hour was spent in moving a hundred yards to the front. *Spelt* The company them formed in single file and holding to the man in front each individual tried to keep his place in the formation as it wound down into the ruined town. Most of the men were muddy and all were wet and tired and disgusted with War and everyone connected with it.

The troubles of the company were not over by any means. Our guides led us through yards, in ruined houses and over fences. One of the company buglers, Abie Goldberg, remarked: "What d'hell do they think I am, a _____ alley cat?" Everyone nearby laughed, partly because the company comedian had spoken and partly because of the aptness of the remark. Goldberg's remark spread along the column and soon there was a reference to "alley cat", accompanied by much laughter, whenever a man climbed over any obstruction. Jesting replaced grumbling and a few of the irrepressibles at the head of the column started a discordant song about the adventures of a young lady named "Lulu". The spirit of the company

rose perceptibly when a man fell into the deep canal in the center of the town and was pulled out amid the derisive shouts of the company. Everyone within yelling distance felt called upon to think up a "wise-crack" at the expense of the shivering man, and there was laughter all along the column as the march was resumed.

The two guides having arrived at a decision as to the correct route, the company resumed the march up the road leading to the front. As we arrived at a cross-road the guides indicated that we were to go to the right. I felt sure that I had taken the left road on the night before and could not be convinced that the front line lay to our right. The guides had been lost many times before on our march and I had no confidence in their sense of direction. So I halted the company and took an officer and my orderly with me to reconnoiter the left road. Lightning flashes illuminated the road at intervals and I was certain that the guides were again wrong. Then a mounted Military Policeman accosted me and asked what I was doing, skulking. The ensuing conversation was lively, with the mounted man getting more and more suspicious of my actions and attitude. Our conversation must have been quite audible for a Military Police officer rode up and the entire explanation was repeated. By this time I was convinced that a mental kink had caused my loss of direction and I ended the argument by leading the officer to the halted company.

We took the right-hand road, much to the satisfaction of the two guides, and soon joined in a stream of men pushing up a narrow trail leading over the crest of the rise. There were four columns on this trail, three going towards the front, and one French column moving

back. The stars were now aiding us in finding our way, and the eastern sky showed faint streaks of light. I could not understand the slow forward movement of the column until I reached the top and found a three-foot step-off, over which everyone was required to pass. The ground was slippery and the step too high for a man to get up (in the dark) without some help. I ordered the first two men of Company "D" to remove their packs and to help up the remaining men of the company - but not to help up any but Company "D" men. In a few minutes the entire company was assembled on the trail. It must be admitted that the maneuver, previously referred to, resulted in a rapid exchange of comments between myself and the officers of the blocked columns, but the principle of the objective overshadowed that of cooperation.

Once on the level plain, we moved to the left front and halted in a position which I estimated to be the one pointed out to me the previous morning. It was now light enough to see other columns moving into position and I realized that little time remained before the "jump-off". The company was formed in the "normal approach" formation, with two platoons in the forward wave and two in support. Each platoon, in turn, formed in two lines, so that the formation from front to rear was as follows: one section of each of the leading platoons - in line of squad columns - a distance of seventy-five yards - two sections of the leading units in line of squad columns - 150 yards distance - and the two support platoons formed similarly to the assault platoons.

The company had not fully completed getting into the above formation when it became so light that I feared further movement might attract enemy fire and

ordered everyone to remain in their present position and to correct their formations when we started the advance. Platoon leaders were assembled with me in a large shell-hole and final instructions were given for the attack.

One lieutenant was very obviously drunk. I had noted his good work during the advance and I was puzzled as to the source of his liquor. I found that his canteen had been filled with cognac and that most of it had been consumed within the last few minutes. The remainder of the liquor was wasted in the bottom of the shell-hole, but the problem of what to do with a gloriously drunk platoon leader was not solved. This officer was a good leader, and even on previous periods of intoxication had proven more efficient than some of the sober officers, yet I hesitated to entrust a platoon to him. On the other hand I did not feel that I should send him to the rear and thus spare him from the hard work and danger ahead of the rest of us. So I sent him back to his platoon and called his platoon sergeant to the shell-hole and gave him the complete instructions relative to the part his platoon was to play in the attack. One extenuating circumstance in the case of this officer was that he was convinced he would not survive the fight, and had given away all of his clothes and equipment, excepting that which he carried on him. My anxiety about him came to an end shortly after the "jump-off" when he was instantly killed. Up to that time his actions had been beyond criticism, and it was apparent to me that the nerve-racking incidents of the period just prior to our "jump-off" had served to sober him quickly.

A long column of tanks approaching from the west of Coeuvres set up a loud clatter and the lights

through the open doors could be seen from our position. I was constantly waiting for a German shell to pass overhead onto their position, but "zero" hour came nearer and nearer and all was quiet on the German side.

There was nothing left to do but wait for the hour of 4:35 to approach and as I slid down into the headquarters shell-hole I became conscious, for the first time, that I was more tired than I had ever been before. My body and brain became numb and a wave of depression settled over me.

A red and green flare rose from the German line and in an instant answering flares arose all along the line. We knew what to expect and within a few seconds the German barrage fell around us. Almost five minutes to wait! The air seemed to be filled with German shells - the ground rocked and the din of the continuous explosion surged over us as a heavy wave. All the occupants of the headquarters shell hole gravitated towards the deepest part and I believe it would have been physically impossible for any of us to have climbed out during those first few seconds.

One sergeant, with company headquarters, was so much more frightened than the rest of the group that someone laughed and the tenseness was broken.

A shell burst - clouds of dust rolled into the hole - the acrid powder fumes caused all of us to cough - someone near by called for help - and "zero" hour was still some minutes away. With nothing to do but wait and brace ourselves against the sides of the shell-hole, the outlook for the day was far from reassuring. The minute hand was nearly at 4:45, when a solitary American gun spoke, and was instantly followed by a thunder of noise which made the German barrage barely audible.

THE JUMP-OFF

This American barrage was the most inspiring incident in the five days' fighting. We, who had been depressed and were dreading the formation of the company under the German barrage, now jumped up and hurried into our places in the "approach march" formation. It was a great relief to have something to do; the officers to supervise the formation, and the men to get into their proper places. There was some delay in getting formed as many had been killed and wounded by the German barrage and several squads had to be reorganized while the German shells were still falling around us.

The first-aid men and stretcher bearers were busy and many cries for help came from the wheat where the men had lain throughout the bombardment.

During the first part of the advance from the "jump-off" line, I was surprised to see every man smoking a cigarette. Then I heard someone call out, "Over the Top with a Chesterfield", and remembered that the company had been issued a tobacco ration of five cigarettes the evening of the 17th and I had cautioned everyone to save one so that each man could start "Over the Top with a Chesterfield". This gave the men something to think about during the first few minutes, and the badinage which arose about the relative worth of several popular brands of cigarettes, all while we were under this barrage, proved that this idea was not without merit.

I could see that few German shells were falling beyond the French trenches which formed our line of departure, so I moved the company forward before the formation was perfect. It seemed incredible that so

many shells could fall in such a formation without hitting most of the squad-columns, but the only casualties in the passage of this barrage zone were from machine gun bullets. When I reached the French trench, I saw a gap in the line of exploding shells to our right. Whistle ~~signals~~ signals did not attract attention, so I jumped out in front of the line, pointed to the right oblique, and as the gap was fairly evident to all, the entire company changed direction 45 degrees to the right, passed through the gap, and changed direction back to the original line. My spirits rose - I had moved the company in a difficult maneuver, and had seen my first tactical maneuver in combat meet with success.

Not clear

The mist from the heavy night rain and the smoke from the two barrages formed a low curtain around us, and made it difficult to see Company "C", 16th Infantry, the left assault company, which had started out directly ahead of us. The companies to our flanks were also screened.

Just mention that Co P was not originally an assault Co.

The advance to our first objective - the road connecting la Glaux Farm and Tilleul de la Glaux - was a succession of short movements, losing direction, catching up with Company C, taking casualties from scattered artillery and machine gun fire, reforming units when a squad was cut up by a chance shell, capturing a few prisoners who had been missed by the front line company - and for my part, keeping constant vigil to see that all Germans in our sector were not bayoneted. One group of machine gunners fired a few shots as the company advanced, and then rushed from their gun positions, with hands aloft, and shouts of "Kamerad". They were all promptly bayoneted. This cold-blooded killing was a surprise to

me, as I was not expecting such a thing. Then I remembered some of the casualties we had suffered, and whenever a group offered any resistance, I found something to occupy my attention in the opposite direction as the capture was made. It was not long, however, before prisoners appeared, without escorts, running to the rear as fast as possible and shouting "Kamerad" at the top of their voices. When the first of these prisoners were coldly bayoneted, I called a halt and passed the word along the line that no German would be killed unless he was found shooting at us. I noticed one man in particular, a small slight boy, who had always been quiet and well-behaved, but who now was eager to kill. I asked him, in no uncertain manner what he meant by killing a defenceless German, and he replied that he did not know. The expression on his face, however, was that of an animal with blood-lust in its eyes, and I felt that the instinct to kill had blotted out all reasoning power in him - and in most of the other men of the company.

I noticed that after several shells had blown up men of the company that there was a spirit of uneasiness dominant - men stopped at the whine of an approaching shell - ranks began to sag and with little to do besides move forward, the threat of the shells was uppermost in their minds.

To divert their minds, I decided to try some drill-field disciplinary measures. I moved from front to rear, and with vigorous whistle-blowing, and considerable yelling, dressed up the lines from right to left and from front to rear. Whenever a man strayed out of formation, I called to the platoon or section leader to dress his

outfit, and it was not long before each man was paying more attention to keeping his place in the line than to the machine gun bullets, or the shell fire. I noticed considerable talk among the men, with puzzled glances in my direction and I overheard remarks, such as: "Must think we're on the drill field," and "What t'Hell's eating him?" However, the company moved forward without faltering even when a shell landed on a forward squad-column composed of a lieutenant and his platoon headquarters. I sent one man to look after any who had not been killed outright, and the rest of the company moved by this mangled group still keeping dressed to the right.

We reached the first objective about 5:30 AM and found that Company "C" was in front of us, as ordered, but that a platoon of the 26th Infantry was between us and Company "B", the right support company. During the halt, the company was reorganized and casualties checked. Two lieutenants had been killed, and the second in command, a captain who had reported for duty at the "jump-off" line wounded. The platoon leaders, old and new, were instructed to combine squads which had been shot up and to see that each squad had a designated leader and second in command.

The advance was resumed at about 5:30 AM with Companies "D" and "B" leapfrogging the two assault companies. The smoke and mist still hung low and within a few hundred yards from the second "jump-off" line both flank companies were invisible. I sent out flank patrols to right and left and these were promptly swallowed up in the mist. I knew that one of the two units on our flanks was leaving the correct line of attack and I had to decide what to do. The common sense solution seemed to be to

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the attack should
have been given
at the first place.*

cover the gap, so I kept on, hoping to see one of the units shortly. A solitary figure caught up with us, during this phase of the attack, and proved to be Lt. Colonel J. M. Craig, of the 16th Infantry, who explained that he was "just looking around". I informed him of the situation and told him that I was out of contact with the 26th and the remainder of the 16th, but that I would keep on in the gap if he thought that was all right. He said it was a good idea and marched along with us, watched the company come under fire from a concealed machine gun, saw the leader of the assault platoon send out two combat patrols which finished off the Germans, and continued along with us for a short way. Then he remarked that he would be "running along" and moved off toward our right flank.

The sun soon dissipated the fog and the smoke from occasional shells did not hinder observation. Within a space of one or two minutes we emerged from dense fog to clear sunshine, and found that we were alone on the battle field as far as we could see. A slight rise, about 500 yards to our rear, was barren of American troops. A similar rise, about 300 yards to our left was equally devoid of olive-drab figures. To our front rose the steep banks of the far side of the Missey-aux-Bois ravine, and the town of Missey was plainly visible to our right front.

Allied airplanes, which had dominated the air from "zero" hour, now began to meet opposition, and the next half hour saw the tri-colored planes disappear to the rear while the number of German planes in the air constantly increased. It was rather disappointing to us, as this brief Allied air-supremacy was the first

we had seen during our several months of trench warfare service. / Some wit remarked that it was breakfast time for the Allied aviators, and this remark, with innumerable variations, passed the rounds of the company, always meeting with gales of laughter. I was secretly pleased to see this manifestation of esprit de corps and never discouraged such remarks, even if vulgar or somewhat disrespectful to our allied services.

I sent out two contact patrols, equipped with wig-wag flags, to find adjoining units and report. They were instructed to go to the top of the rise and send a message back. The right flank patrol moved out about 500 yards and began to send a wig-wag message. Two officers, and I, who had passed a course in visual signalling, were unable to make any sense of the message and as we waved back "repeat" a machine gun opened up on the company and cut short all signalling. The patrol on the left disappeared over the top of the rise and was next heard from, five days later, at the company kitchen.

The march was resumed in ^{the} direction of the Missey ravine in face of long-range machine gun fire which soon became heavy enough to stop the advance. While searching the terrain with field glasses I noted a line of Germans crossing a slight rise 600 yards to our front. I called several of the sergeants to me and asked for their estimate of range in the exact manner prescribed in Bjornstad's "Small Problems for Infantry". This took so much time that many of the Germans were out of sight before a range was agreed upon and the fire order given. A heavy volume of fire was directed on them, but much to our surprise, no Germans fell, their gait remained unhurried, and none of them even looked around. Firing

ceased when the last German leisurely walked out of sight. Either the firing was too accurate and the range estimation faulty or else the first rifle target the men had met found them too excited to apply the principles of Rifle Marksmanship.

Soon after the advance was started, we captured several 150-mm guns with their crews. They surrendered without resistance and again I was called upon to restrain the men of the company from killing all of them. I collected a group of twenty-five officers and men and sent them to the rear under the escort of two men who had minor wounds.

The forward line of the company reached a small rise on the west edge of the Missey ravine and immediately drew very heavy machine gun and 77-mm fire on them. This was the most concentrated fire the company had received so far. The line stopped and the platoon leaders looked to me for instructions. I did not care to move the entire company through this fire so I motioned the assault line to withdraw to a position behind the crest of the rise. The rear elements were now under fire, as they had closed up on the forward line. The men wounded during this fire were carried to shelter and first aid bandages were applied by men of the company. The medical men and litter bearers attached to Company "D" had never advanced beyond the "jump-off" line, and whatever first aid the men received was either from German Medical Corps men or their own comrades. Firing had now ceased. I went to the top of the hill, with two lieutenants, to try to locate the enemy guns. We lifted our heads to look over at the opposite side of the Missey ravine when several

77-mm shells landed close enough to us to indicate that we were plainly visible to them. This reconnaissance party withdrew immediately.

As we reached the company position, a lieutenant from the 26th Infantry reported that he had a mixed platoon of men from the 26th and 28th Infantry in the woods just north of us, and requested that this unit be allowed to join us. He was instructed to bring his platoon into the already crowded position and to act as the fifth platoon. Soldiers began drifting in from right and left and rear. Among these were men from each of the four regiments of the division, also two Morrocoans and one Marine. A section from the Regimental Machine Gun Company, 16th Infantry, caught up with us and was assigned a place in the company. All the others were assigned to the fifth platoon and seemed glad to rejoin some organization. I decided that another effort should be made to cross the rise and instructed the leading platoons to deploy at 10-pace interval and move forward. Again they were met by machine gun fire from Missey-aux-Bois and artillery fire from the east bank of the ravine. The entire hill shook under the impact of the shells and the leading line came back without command. I did not order them to repeat this movement inasmuch as I did not want to do it myself. I was convinced, by this time, that the machine guns around Missey must be put out before any further advance could be made. To this end I sent out a patrol of one squad under an experienced sergeant to find and clean out the machine guns near Missey-aux-Bois. A similar patrol was sent to our left with instructions to work across the ravine. These patrols

drew fire as soon as they left the shelter of the hill. Then the fire was lifted from the patrols and directed to rise in our rear. Here we discovered four French tanks approaching us. They pushed on, under a hail of artillery fire, and pulled up under the shelter of the rise where we were halted. A French lieutenant stepped out of one tank and informed me, in excellent English, that the four tanks were at my disposal. If he had presented me with four pink elephants I could not have been at a greater loss as to their proper use. I asked him if he could knock out the 77's across the ravine and he replied that although he had been shot out of two tanks during the morning he would try it if I said so.

We went to the crest of the hill and were cautiously scanning the ravine for routes the tanks might take when one of the tanks opened fire with a 3-pounder at a group of our men who were observing the tanks about 100 yards away. Several were hit and wounded men screamed. By this time the French lieutenant was running at top speed toward the tank and calling to the gunner to cease firing. But the tank fired again and more men fell. The lieutenant stopped, picked up a rock, and began to pound on the door. The rest of the company had taken cover by this time, not knowing what was happening. The gunner finally opened the door and orated and gesticulated to some length. Then both came over to the spot where the wounded men were lying. I instructed the lieutenant to notify the other tanks that we were not Germans and to waste no time in doing so. Meanwhile the five men who had been hit were given first aid and one machine gunner who had received a direct hit was covered with a raincoat. The lieutenant returned and with the tank

(2) Ruane

gunner explained that the man had become confused, due to fatigue and excitement, and seeing a machine gun being set up suddenly thought we were Germans and fired. The gunner himself was horrified at the results of his actions and the lieutenant was profuse in his apologies for the mistake. He wanted to start out at once across the ravine and requested a platoon to accompany his tanks. I sent the senior lieutenant and his platoon with the group and they passed through the woods to the left of the rise and disappeared in the valley. (2)

The tanks and accompanying platoon moved straight across the ravine until sheltered from the 77-mm guns on the crest, and then moved to the right toward the town of Missey. The tanks were heavily shelled during the advance, but none were hit. The platoon suffered casualties from this fire and from machine guns on the lower slope of the east side of the ravine. The actions of the tanks is indicated by a statement of one of the men of the right flank patrol: "The tank came close to where McFaden and I were holding out, and there was a French lieutenant on the ground walking beside the tank. McFaden and he were talking, as this French lieutenant could speak a little English. I overheard him tell McFaden the number of miles we had covered and the number of prisoners taken, and praising the work of the Americans. Then as we were walking along with this tank, to the right of the hill where the company was halted, we could see some men trying to pass through the Missey ravine and were being mowed down by machine gun fire, fired by two machine guns which were set up and concealed in a dug-out made in solid rock at the edge of this hill and in an opening for direct fire through part of the ravine.

Everyone was able to see how this gun was mowing down our troops. The French lieutenant commanded his tank to the place where this machine gun was and opened fire with at least a dozen shells directly into the dugout entrance. The company remained still at the top of the hill edge while the tank was firing. I remember that after the tank crew had put the machine gun out of action the accompanying platoon moved forward through the ravine and there were three tanks there in all. The tanks stopped and opened their doors and the crews came out to greet us. All the tanks were supplied with milk cans full of red wine. After having several good drinks of this wine and filling our canteens, the platoon again moved forward in high spirits."

(3) Scott

(3)

Observers on the crest of the rise at the company position reported that the tanks were leaving the ravine to the northeast of Missey. The company was formed and moved forward over the rise. No artillery fired on us and only one machine gun opened fire as the first line moved forward. The cessation of 77-mm fire was the result of patrol action from "D" Company and from the 26th Infantry, which had reached the east side of the ravine shortly after the tanks had moved forward past our position.

In connection with the reduction of the direct fire 77-mm guns, an incident was related to me which illustrates the methods used. Two men became separated from one of the flank patrols of the company, but continued on toward the east bank of the ravine. Hearing the sound of firing higher up on the slope, they worked their way to within a hundred yards of a well-camouflaged 77-mm gun. At this point they were discovered and the gun was trained on them. Both the men were wounded at the first

shot. One, Private Floyd Helm, was hit by a shell fragment which tore off his chin. Helm, disregarding this serious wound, rushed straight at the gun which continued to fire at him until he reached the position and killed the entire crew. The gun crew shot at Helm with their pistols, but apparently the sight of a bloody and chinless American soldier was more than their shooting nerves could stand. Helm died en route to the rear and his companion, after telling a comrade of the deed, also died. A painstaking investigation resulted in the conclusion that there was insufficient evidence to warrant applying for a posthumous decoration for Helm.

The action of the company in passing through the ravine is shown by an extract from the personal diary of the author: "McFaden's patrol, with the added assistance of the tanks was sufficient to draw most of the fire from the Bosche, and we advanced to the bottom of the ravine with but few casualties. The trees in the valley were torn and huge branches almost obstructed our passage and, in addition, the ground was soft from the sluggish stream which wandered aimlessly toward our left. Our counter-battery heavy artillery had combed the valley rather thoroughly and, while there had been no guns there, it showed what would have happened had they been there. The stream had been changed by the shells falling in it and the whole floor of the ravine was a mass of broken branches, fallen trees, and a churned up bog."

"After crossing the stream we lined up before starting out of the cover of the trees and beginning our advance up the hill. One machine gun opened up on us and halted our progress. The hill was so steep that it was impossible to walk straight up for the grass was

long and slippery; so I sent out patrols to the front and after they had gone on about 200 yards, brought the company up some small ravines in platoon column formation. At one of our halts I saw a group of men in a farmhouse close to the location of the machine gun fire of a few minutes before, and I had a few of the men open fire, I along with them. We fired about thirty shots - uphill and about 400 yards away - and strange to say did not see the men move, so I had firing stopped. I was rather disgusted with our poor marksmanship, but afterward felt better when I found that the men we were firing at were advanced elements of the 26th Infantry."

"I halted the company at the top of the hill and sent the following message:

FROM: C.O. Co "D" 16th Inf.
At : Pt. 600 yds N. of MISSEY-aux-BOIS
Date: July 18, '18 HOUR: 11:20 AM HOW SENT: Runner
TO: C.O. 1st Bn.

Was held up on the left of the objective by machine guns and 77-mm guns. Got four tanks and attacked. Got mixed up between 26th and 28th Infantry at start. Lt. Col. Craig decided we should not remain in sector. Am moving on to take original sector unless emergency occurs.

(4) Diary

Boyd
Captain." (4)

I moved off to the left to get in touch with a group of officers whom I found to be Major McCloud, 26th Infantry and other officers of his battalion. He stated that two companies of his battalion were lost and requested that I occupy the line from that point to the 16th Infantry zone of action. I did this by placing two platoons on the line 100 yards east of the unimproved

road, with combat groups of one squad groups spaced over the 700 yards of front. The third platoon was moved to the head of the draw 300 yards east of Missey-aux-Bois, as reserve. The officers and men from the 26th Infantry were turned over to the 26th Infantry and the remainder of the fifth platoon divided among the three platoons of Company "D". The Moroccans and the Marine had become separated from the company during the advance across the ravine. The location of the platoon which had accompanied the tanks was unknown, although we had seen the tanks moving east across the Paris-Soissons road. I inspected the line of outposts and then went to Missey-aux-Bois where I found the remnants of the First Battalion 16th Infantry taking shelter from artillery fire in the ditches west of the Paris-Soissons road. This was the first time we had gained contact with our battalion since leaving the First Objective. The battalion commander and staff had all been wounded shortly after the jump-off and Major M. A. Wells, who had been in command of the regimental trains, had been sent forward to take command.

I reported to him and related the actions of the company and its present location. About an hour later the two platoons on outpost duty were relieved and reported to me in the battalion area. Major Wells assigned Company "D" to the left half of the regimental zone of action. The platoon which had accompanied the tanks across the ravine reported in, minus several squads. I placed three platoons on a line across our sector and one in support, about 100 yards east of Missey. The platoons were lined up along the trace of the trench to be dug and each squad instructed to dig a simple trench about 30 feet long and then to connect up with adjoining squads. The entrenching

Support positions
should have
been shown
on the map

went rapidly, even with our small tools. We were hampered, however, by a sniper in the trees along the Paris-Soissons road, who shot at ~~any~~ man not carrying a rifle. This sniper would fire once every fifteen minutes so that it was difficult to determine the exact direction from which the shots came. I gave orders that all runners and officers should carry rifles with fixed bayonets and I complied with this order. I sent out a patrol commanded by a lieutenant and although they searched along several hundred yards of road the sniper could not be found.

German airplanes were circling around continuously, dropping bombs and firing at us with machine guns. Major Wells was fatally wounded by one of these bombs and the command of the battalion passed to the company commander of Company "B". One German aviator came down to within three hundred feet of us and was ~~so~~ bold that someone fired at him. Instantly the entire battalion stopped intrenching and began firing. We had had a very complicated system taught us by which we should lead the target by a certain number of yards when the plane was moving at a specified speed, altitude and direction. It was all hazy in my mind and I doubted if many of the firers even remembered to aim ahead of the target. The enthusiasm of firing was such that even the officers fired at the plane with their pistols. The pilot apparently paid no attention to the firing until suddenly his plane began to lose altitude and glided to the ground about a quarter of a mile to our rear. The plane was wrecked in the crash and the pilot was found dead with several bullet holes in him.

The trenches were completed about 6:00 PM and I began to get hungry as I had eaten my two sandwiches during the morning. So I ordered the men to open one can

of meat and two cans of hard bread (from the emergency rations) for each two men. It was barely dark when we settled down for a rest in our trenches - our first in over twenty-four hours. The battalion commander issued verbal orders for a night advance to start at 9:30 PM. The company left the trenches and marched across the Paris-Soissons road and formed up as left assault company of the battalion. None of us, including the battalion commander, had any details of the attack except the time of departure. It was a bright moonlight night and I could see that an advance could be made without coming under the heavy machine gun fire we had experienced during the morning. The battalion waited in readiness for about one hour, when an order was received cancelling the attack. The company moved back to its trenches and again preparations were made to get some much needed rest. The night air was cold and our raincoats were hardly enough to keep us warm.

The German bombing planes came over in relays all night long - dropping flares ~~that~~^{which} lighted up the entire area and then dropping their bombs. Fortunately none of these landed in the trenches, but no one slept during that night.

The mess sergeant brought up sandwiches and coffee in the ration cart shortly after midnight. Details brought in the food and the hungry men ate their two sandwiches each, not thinking to save one for the morning.

About the same time two ambulances came up and collected some of the seriously wounded men of the battalion. Many had been wounded twelve to fourteen hours previously but could not be moved due to shortage of litters.

JULY 19 - THE SECOND DAY

The battalion formed for attack at 4:30 AM with Company "D" the left assault company. Orders for the attack arrived only a few minutes before 4:30 so that each platoon leader was instructed by runner to lead his platoon to the assembly position which we had taken for the night attack (about 200 yards east of the Paris-Soissons road). One platoon was missing, as the battalion moved forward. The lieutenant in command had proven inefficient under fire on at least two previous occasions and I had urged the battalion and regimental commanders to relieve him and assign him to duty outside the combat zone. He was examined by the Regimental Surgeon when we were in a rest area, and, as might be expected, appeared perfectly normal. The battalion commander, who had been wounded early in the first day's advance, had never observed this lieutenant under fire, as he himself had made few if any inspection trips to the front line companies during our trench warfare operations. This lieutenant was conscientious and, I am certain, was not lacking in courage, yet the first few shells which exploded near him set him shaking; his face became ashen and the pupils of his eyes dilated. When orders were given to him, in this condition, he would stare blankly and make no move to obey. If asked why he was not obeying he would shake his head and ask for the instructions to be repeated. Under such circumstances I had usually relieved him from command, placed him in company headquarters and instructed the platoon sergeant to carry out the orders. I had watched him during the first day's operations and apparently he was getting along better than usual. At least his platoon, which was in the support wave, was well directed,

either by him or his platoon sergeant. I questioned the runner who had gone to this lieutenant with the order and found it had been delivered. However, some two hours later, when discovered by the commanding officer of the 3d Battalion 16th Infantry, he claimed that he had never received any move orders. I resolved to prefer charges against him should both of us survive the engagement. This decision was prompted by a desire to have a reliable platoon commander and also to place this mentally unfit individual in the non-combatant zone. This action was never taken as the lieutenant was killed on July 21 while leading his platoon against an enemy machine gun nest. At that time he was still irresponsible but always ready to risk his life when the advance was once started.

The second battalion 16th Infantry, having lost all its officers, was holding the advanced regimental line about 600 yards southeast of the Paris-Soissons road. Behind them, the company formed for the advance and was fired at by machine guns from two disabled French tanks a few hundred yards east of the Paris-Soissons road and to our left flank. There were remarks made to the effect that the "Frogs" were mixed up again, but this was found to be incorrect. A patrol, sent to silence the guns, found that two Germans had occupied the tanks during the night. As the patrols advanced they disappeared into the wheat fields. Long range machine gun fire and scattered artillery fire inflicted casualties but did not check the advance of the battalion. A halt was made on the line held by the outposts of the Second Battalion, as we were now apparently visible to several machine gunners as well as to artillery observers. Casualties were numerous; yet we had not seen a single German during the day.

We found several seriously wounded men in this position - men from the Second Battalion who had been wounded on the morning of the previous day and who had received no attention beyond first-aid bandages. I found out that no litters had been available and that if a man could not walk he remained there until the front line moved far enough ahead for the Medical Corps to reach him. In justice to the regimental medical personnel, it must be said that they had been busy every hour since the jump-off, and the breakdown in the evacuation system was the fault of the higher echelons.

The battalion resumed the advance after a 30-minute halt and immediately drew heavy machine gun fire from both flanks and the front. Artillery shells dropped in the formation with such accuracy that our advance was slow. A slight rise about 1200 yards northeast of Chaudun Farm offered some shelter from machine gun fire, and the entire battalion closed up in the depression 200 yards west of this rise.

The machine gun fire seemed to be coming from the wheat field crowⁿing the rise, so I passed the word along the first line that the leading platoons were to charge toward the top of the hill. This seemed to be in line with war fiction in which the brave captain led his company in a charge against the enemy and, while the enemy could not be seen, his machine gun bullets made his presence very real. These orders miscarried somewhat and, as I jumped up, the entire company advanced and not the leading platoons as ordered. The machine gun fire did not vary in its intensity and few men fell. The support platoons, advancing in squad columns, had the misfortune to have a shell land on a column in which the platoon leader was marching, and again the cries of

the wounded were heard above the noise of the exploding shells and the "crack" of the passing bullets. The charge started at a run but soon slowed down to a jog, due to the difficulty in climbing the incline over slippery grass. The line was walking as the crest of the hill was reached and still we heard the machine guns firing, still further to our front. We were now under observation of the gunners and a few bursts in our ranks convinced me that our comic-opera charge had been premature. One platoon was instructed to dig in along the top of the rise while I took the other two about 100 yards to the rear.

I found that it was a great relief to be busy so I, with my striker, dug a shelter in a new shell-hole. There was a great demand for new shell holes as there was a superstition in the company that two shells never landed on the same spot. I worked until I was wet with perspiration, then felt a passing of the extreme nervousness which had seized me after our "capture" of the hill top.

A sergeant, with a platoon of Company "G" 16th Infantry, reported to me and stated that the rest of his company was scattered or wounded. I assigned him a place in the rear of and to the right of the two support platoons, and instructed him to remain with the company until further orders. Shell fire continued on our position and casualties were numerous. There was a first aid man with the platoon from "G" Company - the first we had met since the jump-off on July 18th. The company was now dug in below the surface of the ground and I found, in my inspection trips, that the exercise had calmed the men to such an extent they they were joking about which platoon was due to have the next shell fall on it.

I made several reconnaissance trips to the top of the hill but could not locate the machine guns to our front. The 18th Infantry had moved up on line with us on our right, but the 28th Infantry, on our left, was not visible. I had returned to the support position of the company when the captain in command of the battalion came running back from the top of the hill to our front, shouting that German tanks were coming. He was extremely excited and, in answer to my question, stated that he was positive that they were German tanks and that we had to get to the rear at once. He then began running toward Company "B" on our left rear and in a short space of time all of Company "B" and part of Company "D" rose and ran to the rear. I considered what I should do. Should I stay with the remainder of my company and try to defend the position against the tanks? What could we do with rifles against them? Before I came to a decision the rear platoons got out of their shelters and joined the mass of men running to the rear. I shouted and blew on my inefficient company commander's whistle, but the men in flight either did not hear me, or hearing, paid no attention. A group of men near me began putting on their packs and climbing out of their pits. I noticed their frightened expressions and curtly ordered them back. Then I hurried toward the men who were starting to run, shouting to them to stop. As soon as the remaining men saw me run to the left rear everyone jumped up and fled. I stopped several men near me and as long as I remained within a few feet of them they stood fast, and I could feel the urge of flight pervading the atmosphere as definitely as though it were a cold wind. In a few minutes the area was clear except for my striker and

me and our wounded. The battalion was running over the rise 300 yards to our rear and no effort was being made to stop them. The sense of my impotence to do anything to check this movement, and my shame that my company should break and run while I was there trying to stop it, brought tears to my eyes. I realized that my striker and I could be of no use against two German tanks (and I did not doubt but that they were German tanks after the battalion commander's actions) so I decided to rejoin my company. We fixed a raincoat shelter over the faces of the wounded men to shield them from the hot sun, told them that we would be back as soon as the company could be found and walked back toward our jump-off position of that morning. My striker, an Austrian by birth, drafted from the coal fields of Pennsylvania, remarked, "Captain, what could we do? The devil himself couldn't have stopped them."

The two tanks appeared to the northeast and I wondered at their similarity to the French tanks. I was surprised that they did not follow the retreating battalion and ~~that~~ they did not fire on us. German machine guns opened fire on us as we reached the rise 300 yards in rear of our former position but the ground was too damp to indicate the strike of their bullets and we passed out of sight in safety.

I found that the company with the rest of the battalion had stopped in the trenches occupied by the Third Battalion 16th Infantry, which was in brigade reserve. The three platoon commanders were busy collecting their units from the jammed mass of soldiers in the trenches. The elements of Company "D" were moved to the left and grouped together. The battalion commander

of the Third Battalion 16th Infantry ordered me to place a line of men armed with Chauchot rifles in advance of the main line of trenches and to try and stop the tanks. This done and with nothing left to do but wait for the tanks, I crawled into a shell-hole on line with the automatic riflemen and ate a cake of chocolate and some hardbread. I was tired and depressed and worried about how we were to stop the tank attack with automatic rifles. These worries were of brief duration, for sleep - the first in some sixty hours - overtook me.

I was awakened by a runner and led to Lt. Col. Craig, who was assembling the First Battalion for an advance over the ground we had just given up. I found that the missing platoon of the company was in the trenches with the Third Battalion and listened to the lieutenant's incoherent explanation of his failure to join the company early in the morning.

One of the tanks, which had proven to be French, had been disabled about 500 yards to our left front and, during our formation for the advance, shelled us with 37-mm shells. I presumed that the French crew had quit the tank and that Germans had been quick to use it as a pill-box. This fire was very inaccurate and did not seriously interfere with the formation or the advance. Lt. Col. Craig led the battalion and inspired all by his coolness under a variety of conditions.

The battalion moved to the south of the rise where we had halted during the morning and soon began to come under heavy close-range machine gun fire. The battalion was halted and Colonel Craig asked for volunteers to go with him to get the machine guns. I was somewhat surprised to see most of Company "D" volunteer

*Places
where tanks
accused ought to
be marked*

and found it hard to reconcile with their individual actions of a few hours before. The machine guns were captured or chased away and the battalion resumed the advance until other guns began to inflict casualties, when the same procedure was repeated.

The head of the Chazelle ravine was reached in this manner and the entire battalion moved into it and welcomed the shade of its trees. Company "D" was ordered to move along the ravine and clear the way for the advance of the battalion. An advance guard formation was taken and the company moved forward, hoping to find something tangible to fight against. The point reached the opening of the north branch of the ravine into the ravine proper and drew machine gun fire from a hedge about 300 yards to our front. Several men were killed and wounded by this fire and the company took shelter along the sides of the narrow depression while several observers assisted me in trying to find the location of the machine gun. I could not pick up any sign of it, even while it was firing, but saw several spots in the hedge where a gun might be concealed. One of the sergeants and I fired several shots at these points and were rewarded by an equal number of 37-mm shells landing in the crowded ravine and which hit several more men. Nor could any of us pick up the location of the 37-mm gun.

Colonel Craig came up during this firing and was informed of our difficulties. He immediately called for volunteers and led a patrol of one lieutenant and ten men from Company "D" out into the draw. All crawled the first few yards until cover was reached, where the patrol divided and converged toward the sound of the machine gun. The Germans, seeing two groups moving toward them, fled

Syn
from their gun. Fire from this gun had wounded the lieutenant and one man of the patrol and they were brought in when the patrol returned. An occasional shell in the ravine added to the casualties and the wounded from the fields in the rear were brought in. It gave the draw the appearance of a combined morgue and dressing station. Every wounded man asked for water, though most of the men had empty canteens. We had had no opportunity to refill canteens since leaving Missey the previous night. The hot July sun, the exertion of the attack, and the excitement of the day had made the men use all the water in their canteens before noon.

Spill
The battalion withdrew from the ravine and formed for attack at 4:30 PM. Company "D" was the left assault company and advanced along the north edge of the Chazelle ravine. The advance met no resistance until we had reached a point about 400 yards north of the town of Chazelle, when machine guns from our front halted the line. The 18th Infantry could now be seen advancing toward Chazelle, and Moroccan troops on their right were prolonging the line of advance. The 26th Infantry line was now abreast of us on our left and was receiving heavy machine gun fire from its front.

Machine gun fire from the Chazelle ravine attracted my attention and I discovered a stone emplacement with a gun crew in it, firing at the 18th Infantry. These gunners were below us and about 500 yards away and apparently had not noticed our approach. I borrowed a rifle and fired several shots at them. Some of the machine gun crew hastily withdrew leaving their gun in position. This incident is worthy of note as it was the only German machine gun I saw in operation throughout this engagement. We had

been fired by scores of them but in every case, excepting this one, their location was so well concealed that we could not fix their position even while they were firing.

Two squads of the 16th Infantry Machine Gun Company rejoined us here, as we started our second advance. They kept up with us throughout the remainder of the day in spite of their heavy loads and the excessive heat. Colonel Craig ordered the battalion to halt for the night on its present line and to place outposts to the front. The machine guns were sited to fire along the road which was cut into the side of the Chazelle ravine. One platoon placed sentry squads across the front and connected with the 26th Infantry, which was about 400 yards north of this road. The remainder of the company was withdrawn along the side of the ravine, near two large caves, 200 yards from the outpost line.

Volunteer details were sent into Chazelle to fill canteens and the entire company wanted to go. The town was being shelled heavily but the thought of plenty of water appealed to every man. The danger element did not bother most of the men, as it was common belief that a shell must have a man's number on it before it could hit him; also, many had expressed themselves to the effect that one might as well be wounded or killed early in the fight as later.

Just before dark several companies of French Moroccans passed through our position, moving along the road paralleling the ravine. Attempts to find out their destination were fruitless, as neither unit possessed interpreters. The whole picture of war was rather jumbled and the fact that the French were wandering about in our sector was a minor detail in the day's mistakes.

Should have been shown on map
Held down in map
Disposition should be shown on map.

I authorized one can of meat and two boxes of ~~hard~~^d bread, from the emergency ration, to be divided between each two men. This should have left each man with two boxes of bread but no canned meat. All had been cautioned to re-supply themselves from the packs of men who had been killed or wounded. It was interesting to note the alacrity with which a wounded man's pack was rifled, while those of dead men were left strictly alone - except by the most "hard-boiled" of the company.

JULY 20 - THE THIRD DAY

Orders to attack were received during the otherwise uneventful night. The company formed with the rest of the battalion at daybreak, and, led by Colonel Craig, we moved along the high ground overlooking the Chazelle ravine. Company "D" was now the right assault company and had little to do except to keep its formation under well observed artillery fire. German airplanes were overhead most of the time and their interest in us was usually followed by a flock of shells in our midst. We had not seen Allied airplanes since the opening hours of the attack and many bitter remarks were passed relative to our Air Service enjoying itself in Paris.

The battalion was halted just west of the Bois de Mauree which shielded us from direct observation across the valley to the east. We found a company of Algerian negroes in the western edge of the woods. I tried to find out where the officers intended to go but as far as I could ascertain they were not particularly interested in going anywhere and knew nothing about the Germans or their own troops. Two German planes flew by during this conversation, circled a few times and disappeared to the east. I was

not surprised to hear the vanguard of approaching shells follow the airplane visit. Three or four batteries seemed to know the exact position we were in and were wasting little time between shots. I moved the company at "double-time" down through the woods with the barrage at our heels. We reached the bottom of the slope and halted, under cover of the railroad fill, where we waited for further orders. The artillery now switched back to the top of the woods and began a prolonged bombardment. I expected the negro troops would move forward and join us soon after the shelling started, but they did not. A few hours later an officer arriving at the position told of seeing a company of negro soldiers, most of them dead and scattered around the ground, and even hanging on the low branches of the trees. I could not understand why the officers had not moved when their location was so definitely known to the Germans.

We had rested at the railroad cut but a few minutes when Colonel Craig arrived with companies "B" and "C". Officers stated that Company "A" was still in the woods and was badly cut up by shell fire. Colonel Craig ordered Companies "C" and "D" to move to the front and take up a defensive position east and southeast of Visigneux. The two companies started from the fill with Company "D" on the right. Scattered machine gun fire greeted us but no casualties occurred. I found in forming for this movement that a great many more men were missing than had been killed or wounded. Most of this trouble was found in platoons and squads which had lost their leaders. It happened this way: the company, halted under fire, sought the protection of any shell-holes or depression, and individuals, either through design or accident were left behind. I was worried over this matter until I found that all the company commanders were having the same losses.

In our advance to the town of Visigneux we passed a spring of cold water bubbling out of the ground. Men turned to see if I had noticed it and I knew from my own feeling that a halt would be most welcome. I signalled to Company "C" that we were going to halt and stopped about fifty yards beyond the spring. Then I sent back a squad at a time with the platoon canteens.

~~We~~ We passed to the right of Visigneux, which was filled with units from the French Foreign Legion. As we reached a sunken road, leading south from the town, American shells began to fall in the field directly to our front. We did not expect any artillery assistance to be furnished us and were forced to halt. One gun was shooting quite short, the shells frequently falling in rear of us, while the rest fell within a few score yards of our front. Machine gun bullets were "zipping" overhead, apparently sweeping the open field north and west of the Bois Gerard. German shells searched on both sides of the sunken road.

A battalion of the Foreign Legion moved north on the road and stopped near our position. I found that the Commandant spoke English and told him of my plan to take the company through the woods to our right and work back to a point in front of our present position. He stated that he had tried it a few minutes before and that there were so many machine guns there that he had withdrawn and asked for artillery fire on the woods. He advised me to wait for the artillery fire to do its job, then, if I desired, the two units could advance through the woods. This was agreed upon and a message sent to Colonel Craig informing him of my plans. ~~The~~ The American barrage began to put most of its shells close to the road and the Commandant asked if I could have the range increased. I was nonplussed as our

Not marked

difficult to
tell what
woods are
meant

artillery apparently had few observers out and no liaison details, and as we had no Very pistols, we had to depend on their observation to keep the fire off the front line. I explained our shortage of equipment and the Commandant had several six-star rockets sent up. The "shorts" continued. More rockets were sent up and still the shells fell short. The Commandant smiled, shrugged his shoulders and remarked, "C'est la Guerre!"

I returned to the company and waited for the American barrage to cease and the French to start. In a few minutes the French batteries opened a heavy fire on the woods where I had planned to lead the company. It would have fallen either on us or to our rear had the movement been started. A French machine gun cart, passing by our position, drew machine gun fire from the ridge to our left rear, where the 26th Infantry had been reported. It was hard to understand why the 26th Infantry, from their commanding position, had not seen the two companies advance, but we were more concerned with danger from our rear than the front. The Commandant passed by and told me he was taking his unit to the rear until the American Artillery and machine guns lifted their fire. He then hastened to assure me, with true French politeness, that he had observed the work of the 16th Infantry that day and that it was worthy of veterans. The French column drew more fire from the 26th Infantry, but their range was short and we were endangered only by ricochet bullets. The French having passed from view, left us as the next target and bullets began to "smack" into the side of the road where the company was sheltered. An officer of the company stood on a stump and waved a handkerchief toward the machine gunners in hope that they would cease firing. This figure

gave the gunners a good aiming point and their fire concentrated on him. Further attempts to signal were abandoned. I decided it was unnecessary to subject our troops to this firing and ordered the company to move to the rear - and, at a walk. I emphasized this last part of the order and all knew what was meant.

I halted the company in a grove of willows 300 yards southwest of Visigneux and hoped that the 26th Infantry had not observed our movements. The trees were small and I cautioned the men not to expose themselves to view from the 26th Infantry position. All was quiet while the company was being formed in two lines among the trees and I was congratulating myself on our good fortune when the observant machine gunners to our left rear opened fire. A stray German shell dropped in our midst. I felt that we might get artillery fire anywhere, but the continual machine gun fire from American positions was quite demoralizing, even though we had received no casualties from it. I decided that the machine guns would soon find human targets and gave the order to move to the woods east of the railroad near the fill and to our rear. Machine gun fire followed us to the woods but fortunately was scattered and no casualties resulted. I placed two platoons around the edge of the woods and kept two in support near the railroad tracks. I then reported to Colonel Craig and was instructed to remain in the present position until further orders. Shells had been concentrated on the railroad but none had fallen in the woods in which Company "D" was situated, and I felt that fortune had smiled on us again. This satisfaction in getting into our position without being observed was shattered when the German artillery concentration lifted from the railroad fill to the woods where we were

rather closely assembled. Shells of light and medium caliber ranged back and forth over the area and I again heard the calls of the wounded. Many shells detonated by the branches of the trees burst overhead and sprayed steel missiles over the entire area. The company commander of Company "D" was knocked out by one shell and was carried to a dugout west of the railroad. The company drifted back to the railroad cut and dugouts, bringing the wounded with them. During the night the company commander was evacuated to the battalion aid station in the town of Chazelle and the command of the company fell to the lieutenant who had failed to join with his platoon on the morning of July 19th. The company was badly cut up and less than 100 men remained for duty.

The entire battalion, dug in on the railroad fill, was startled during the late afternoon to hear the American barrage fall to its rear and to watch it move forward, straight toward the fill. The barrage was perfect, all guns with the same range, and shells evenly spaced over a 200 yard front - only it was going to pass directly over us. All crouched low in their fox-holes and the shells whined and burst around us - then after a sickening, long halt on us moved past to the east. Strange to say, not a man was wounded, as no shells fell directly on the fill, and those falling short exploded in the soft earth and threw their fragments high into the air. We wondered what had happened to the artillery liaison officer who had visited us at the railroad fill some hours previously.

JULY 21 - FOURTH DAY

The operations of Company "D" 16th Infantry, on July 21 and 22, were primarily those of a composite company formed of four platoons of which Company "D" acted as one, with Companies "A", "B", and "C" as the remaining units. The heavy casualties of the ensuing days resulted in a consolidation of the remaining officers and men into platoons in which the company identity was lost. The following account will deal with the 1st Battalion 16th Infantry, which as explained above will include the operations of Co "D" 16th Infantry.

after ^(?)
The attack started at 6:00 AM. The battalion formed in two waves and moved across the open fields south of Visigneux. Lt. Col. Craig was killed by machine gun fire shortly [^]passing this town. This was a serious loss to the battalion, for this officer radiated confidence, and, by his actions, inspired the entire command to deeds of valor. He was sadly missed during the next few minutes for the battalion encountered heavy machine gun resistance in the Bois Gerard and the support wave merged with the assault line. After emerging from the woods a machine gun nest divided the line and the left half of it lost contact with the remainder of the battalion. Later in the day the two forces joined again, after the left half had been surrounded several times and had fought its way back toward the right portion of the division sector. During this movement heavy casualties were inflicted on it and eight men, some of whom were wounded, were captured by the Germans.

The right half of the battalion reduced one machine gun nest after another and, in conjunction with elements of the 18th Infantry on its right, passed through

the grounds of the Chateau Buzancy, and stopped in the wheat fields near the unimproved road 400 yards north of the town of Buzancy. The point reached by this force marked the deepest advance of the division in the operation. The line had now been reduced to a small portion of its strength when leaving the railroad. The excitement of continued combat with German riflemen and machine gunners now died down and the halt in the wheat field found the few survivors nervous and depressed. The line withdrew to within the walls of the chateau and were fired upon from the chateau. The next few minutes were busy ones - the chateau was surrounded - and the combined 16th and 18th Infantry forces captured over 200 prisoners, including a German major, and sent them to the rear under escort of several men with minor wounds. French troops were present on the right of the combined American forces, and assisted in the fighting around the chateau.

Small groups of Germans were observed moving to the left and toward the rear of this composite force. The officers conferred and decided to withdraw from the chateau grounds and deploy on a line further to the rear, from which counterattacks could be more efficiently resisted. One of the officers taking part in this action describes the operation as follows: "The troops of both regiments moved to the rear with a view of deployment. No element of our withdrawing troops made any effort immediately to withhold the counterattack. The Germans were rapidly filtering through the wheat toward us in groups of two and three men each. In order to delay their progress and give the remainder of our troops an opportunity to reorganize and deploy I took some twenty men and deployed to the left from the chateau. Our line extended with the right resting

*withheld "apparently
rest as meaning
hold up"*

near the chateau, and joined a small group of French soldiers who were stubbornly resisting the advance. The Germans were coming through the wheat on the forward slope of the rising ground under the cover of machine gun fire which caused me heavy casualties. However, my men kneeling, had excellent targets, at 300 to 500 yards as the Germans emerged from the wheat fields and attempted to cross the road. We withheld the counterattack until I was forced to withdraw with only three men remaining, two of whom were lost before we met other American troops." (5)

(5) Lester

"withheld" apparently used in meaning "held up"

The composite battalion of the First Brigade reorganized in the sunken road 500 yards west of the chateau. Here it was joined in the afternoon by the Third Battalion 16th Infantry, which had received heavy casualties in reaching this position. Elements of the First Engineers also joined this force in the sunken road during the afternoon. The remainder of the day was spent in repulsing several counterattacks and in keeping under cover from artillery and trench mortar shells. (6)

(6) Padgett

Word was received from the arriving units that relief by English troops would be made that night and all were happy. Later a runner arrived from regimental headquarters with the depressing news that the relief would be made during the following night and not the night of July 21-22. No reasons were given for this change and the confidence of the officers and men in the higher command was again shaken.

An officer going back to regimental headquarters found a salvage detail engaged in saving equipment while scores of wounded were untended. This officer states: "I walked over several miles of the area we had just fought over and I shall never forget the wails of both Germans

and Americans as they lay wounded and the fear of darkness was added to the pain of wounds. I helped some of them as best I could and then ran across an Engineer officer in charge of a salvage crew. I personally had a word battle with this salvage captain who was picking up material on the field when there were wounded not five hundred yards ahead of him. I had the pleasure of telling him that his detail was out of order and getting him and his men to go forward to start the much needed work." (7)

(7) Lester

Water was scarce and no food reached the men until morning. The mess sergeant could not find out the location of the battalion from regimental headquarters but determined to find them if he could. He loaded a ration cart full of beef and jam sandwiches and drove on the heavily shelled roads during total darkness - crossed the Soissons-Paris railroad - kept on and always directed further to the front finally reached an open field. He stopped, but could hear nothing and see nothing in the darkness. A machine gun crackled to the front and bullets whistled overhead. The mess sergeant knew that he was near the front line so unhitched his mules and left the ration cart in the middle of the field. Daylight showed the cart midway between the German and American lines, and in plain view of both. Hunger overcame caution and foraging details crept through the wheat, then jumped up, grabbed as many sandwiches as they could with one movement and dived for the wheat. This procedure was repeated until the cart was empty, even though a German machine gun was trained on the spot and fired at each fleeting target.

(8) Story 16th (8)
Inf., p 36;
Padgett

JULY 22 - FIFTH DAY

No advance was made on July 22. The men were exhausted and there was little inclination for them to push forward while the gap on their left was filled with German gunners and riflemen. The knowledge that relief was due that night - that they had risked their lives for four days and nights and that they had penetrated the farthest into the German position - all contributed to their inertia.

Colonel F. E. Bamford, the regimental commander of the 16th Infantry, visited this composite unit during the late afternoon and gave directions for the relief that night. (9) Several officers left before dark to act as guides for the incoming units, and after leading the most advanced elements of the 15th Scottish Division to the vicinity of the sunken road joined the composite group for the rearward march. Then the march to the Cutry ravine! The few score men marched along the trails and heavily shelled roads calling out in the darkness, "16th Infantry this way," and the size of the column grew all the way back to the kitchen. Forty-eight men reported in to the kitchen of Company "D" where a hot meal was waiting for them. Twenty more men joined by daylight, some of whom were probably malingerers, while many had been fighting with other organizations.

The following statistical report gives the most accurate information as to the casualties suffered by

Company "D" 16th Infantry: (10)

(9) Lester

(10) McFaden

	<u>Enlisted</u>	<u>Officers</u>
No. on Company Rolls	238	6
No. at Jump-off	218	6
Non-casualties	68	1
Casualties	150 - 69%	5 - 83%
Killed	28 - 13%	3 - 50%
Wounded	97 - 44%	2 - 33%
Missing (including 9 captured)	25 - 12%	0

CONCLUSION

And thus ends the account of the operations of Company "D" 16th Infantry in the Aisne-Marne Offensive. The author feels that the recital of the mistakes of the officers and men has been much more complete than that of their deeds of heroism and valor. The author feels that their actions will always stand as a monument to the loyalty and fortitude of the American Soldier.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISMS

The individual conduct of the officers and men of Company "D" 16th Infantry, when analyzed in the cold light of technique, leaves much to be desired. It is believed that the training and experience of this rifle company was far superior to that of most such units which entered offensive combat for the first time during 1918. It is most likely, too, that should the United States Army engage in future war, no unit will enter its first offensive engagement as well qualified to carry out combat missions as was this company.

A great deal of the essential combat training of the company was learned on the battlefield. The manner

in which machine gun nests might be reduced had formed a very minor part of their previous training. Battalion, regimental and higher unit maneuvers occupied much of the training period, and, while these could not have been neglected, the training of the squad, platoon and company in tactical exercises had been sadly neglected. The officers and noncommissioned officers had had little opportunity to make decisions for their respective units under assumed combat conditions. It was exceptional for such a unit commander to exercise command of the next higher unit, even under drill conditions. Then came combat - a large percentage of officers and noncommissioned officers were wounded in the early stages. Privates first-class assumed command of squads (and frequently platoons) which they had never commanded even in close order drill. All along the upward scale of units new and untrained leaders stepped into command and for the first time were required to develop leadership under the most trying conditions.

It is well known that the last stages of combat are by far the most exacting, yet here we find the physical and mental state of the unit at its lowest ebb and most of the leaders are new except for their battlefield training. When we consider the above conditions it is hard to explain why even more mistakes were not made. Too much credit cannot be given to the noncommissioned officers and privates who, by their initiative, bravery, and loyalty, assumed command and led their men onward for five exhausting days. It is true that many grumbled at the hardships and it was hard for them to realize the necessity for the continuous forward push when the numbers in their ranks were so few.

Many men became separated from the company, either through accident or design, yet in no case did I see any hesitation when the commander was willing to lead them forward - even though they knew it meant probable death.

The decision of the high command to withhold the artillery barrage and its reprisal fire from the enemy until "H" hour, met with the hearty approval of the officers of Company "D". The advance to the jump-off line was beset with enough difficulties, natural and human, so that little time elapsed between our arrival and the jump-off time. Most of the assault units probably would not have reached the jump-off line by 4:35 on July 18 had their advance been further hindered by artillery fire.

The decision of the company commander of Company "D" to continue in the sector of the 26th Infantry and partially fill the 800 yard gap between the 16th and 26th Infantry was basically sound. A gap of this size between brigades might have proven disastrous had the front been normally garrisoned; and, as far as the commander of this unit was concerned, enemy reserves might have been encountered at any moment.

The actions of the company commander of this company in requiring perfect lines to be kept during those portions of the advance when the enemy was not in contact, except by long range machine gun and artillery fire, followed ^{sound} troop leading methods. The psychological effect was as follows: the mental effort of the men to keep in alignment, while they were under heavy fire, and the secret amusement of the individuals at his leader's idiosyncrasies made the element of personal danger of secondary importance.

The actions of the individuals of the companies, and the officers, in taking no prisoners in the initial

stages of combat is difficult to explain. Such occurrences might be attributed to the dominance of animal instinct under these conditions, yet this battle action was characterized by movement against machine guns rather than against personnel. The appearance of the individuals serving these guns was anything but savage. There was a scattering of middle-aged men and pink cheeked boys among them; yet the men of the company killed without the excitement of hand-to-hand combat - killed, apparently, for the pleasure of killing.

The rifle fire of this company, especially during the first few hours of assault was very ineffective. A variety of causes may be advanced to explain this; the ranges estimated may have been greatly in error, due to inability to calculate space under combat conditions, with the accuracy of peace-time practice. Many men failed to set their sights properly and this may be laid directly to combat excitement. Finally, many men were observed firing without using their sights - jerking the trigger - or shutting both eyes before pulling the trigger. The rifle fire during the fourth and fifth day's advance was in direct contrast to that of the first day's. Ranges were shorter and the high-strung nerves had relaxed under fatigue from several days of excitement. In addition, the combat was essentially personal during the last phases of the advance, and the men knew that their lives depended on who got in the first well-aimed shot.

The breakdown of the Medical Service, both in respect to first aid assistance and evacuation, placed additional responsibility on the company commander. The medical training of the company commander of this unit, although above average, was inadequate in many cases where

men had lost limbs and bandages had to be improvised from undershirts and the like. The construction of emergency litters and splints and the application of the latter fell to this company commander during the numerous halts in the advance.

The unfamiliarity of this company commander with tanks and combined Infantry - Tank tactics resulted in these valuable aids being used only to a partial extent of their capabilities. The ignorance of the captain commanding the battalion on July 19th of the appearance of friendly tanks resulted in a disgraceful route and the shaking of the morale of the entire battalion.

The German defense of the first three days was characterized by echeloned machine guns. The method of the company commander, and later Colonel Craig, in reducing these defense groups by patrols was correct in that the patrols accomplished as much as the entire company could have done, and with much smaller number of casualties.

Lt. Col. Craig was justified, as battalion commander, in personally leading patrols because it raised the morale of a shaken unit. During the first day's advance, when Company "D" was acting alone, combat patrols were commanded by non-commissioned officers, rather than by the company officers. This is believed to have been the correct action as the company was well under control and all officers were needed in the conduct of the attack of the company as a whole.

It is interesting to study the panic and route of the company and battalion on July 19th, when the French tanks were mistaken for enemy tanks. Company "D" held its position until units in the rear began running away from the front. The movement, starting in the center of the battalion position, swept all in the rear into a fleeing mob.

The sight of hundreds of men running, and the awesome words "German Tanks" passing along the line, besides shells exploding and bullets cracking overhead, pulled everyone into the current of this stream and made them insensible to reason and deaf to commands. The knowledge that the battalion was powerless against tanks probably played a major part in the quick change of high-spirited veterans into frightened mob-members. Officers who are in advanced positions when a unit breaks into panic are powerless to check it. If they remain in one position their sphere of influence is very limited; if they attempt to run to either flank or to the rear - such running seems to indicate to the men, who have held fast so far, that the officer is joining in the route and they too are engulfed in the movement. A group in rear of such a retreat are usually not actuated by the mob feeling of the fleeing band, and can readily check such a movement by forming a line upon which the unit can be rallied.

A diet of hardbread, cold canned beef, and water is far superior to nothing at all, yet a steady diet of this type, over a period of five days, will not keep men in proper physical shape. The tension of days of combat interferes with digestion and the same unpalatable food, eaten meal after meal, soon loses all appeal - but is chewed up and swallowed to allay the empty feeling around one's waist line.

The liaison between the artillery and front line troops was uniformly poor throughout the five day's fighting. One artillery observer spent about three hours with the battalion and then left. Several hours after his departure the American barrage fell several hundred yards to our rear and passed directly over our position. Apparently the forward observation posts were not close enough to the

front to see the targets which were being fired at, as repeated "shorts" were not corrected. There was a general lack of confidence among the front line troops in our own artillery. This feeling had developed during our trench-warfare operations because of several unfortunate incidents, and no effort had been made to let the man in the assault wave know that the artillery was primarily interested in assisting him in his advance. Most of the men, and many of the officers, viewed the artillery as an allied arm, such as the Air Service, which had an independent mission. True, all knew that our artillery had a mission of helping the advance of the Division, as a whole, but there was no feeling that the gun crews were trying to help the individual doughboy in the front line. (Note: This lack of cooperation and mutual appreciation was entirely remedied by the splendid support given by our artillery in later engagements.)

The moral effect of having a bayonet fixed on the rifle and ready to use, and the confidence of the individual in his ability to use it against any German, played a big part in the willingness of the assault line to close with German troops. The bayonet was used at various times throughout the operation, yet the writer has yet to unearth a single combat incident of bayonet use in which an aimed shot would not have been surer of results and of less danger to the individual.

The activity of salvage details in collecting arms and equipment before the wounded were removed from the battlefield is not creditable, either to the agency initiating such work, or to the details which used so little judgment when such conditions were apparent. The story of the activities of these salvage details was repeated and the facts enlarged upon with the result that

many individuals came to believe that the higher headquarters valued equipment more than human lives. The effect of such tales on morale is not hard to imagine.

The tales which drifted to the front lines, of men lying where they fell - remaining there through the hot days and cold nights without food, water, or medical attention, and perhaps, worst of all, being alone and helpless through pain-filled hours - certainly did not inspire men to expose themselves to similar fates. The individual soldier cannot be expected to disregard these stark, ugly facts, because some link in the higher headquarters is not functioning properly. As soon as the individual soldier arrives at the belief that his officers - all the way up to and including the division commander - are no longer interested in whether he, personally, is hungry or not, whether his wounded comrades are worth caring for, then does his sense of loyalty to his higher command die and his fighting spirit take wings. //

The surviving members of Company "D" were a silent lot. Any glamour of war, which might have been present, had been dispelled by their experiences. They were distrustful of all those who were in echelons of command in rear of actual combat areas. And the reasonableness of such a feeling can only be understood by those who underwent similar physical exhaustion and the ensuing mental depression of mortal combat.

LESSONS

The lessons to be learned from this company operation are mainly those dealing with troop leading. It is true that most, if not all, of the "recognized principles of war" were illustrated, either by their

observance or violation, yet the successes and failures of this company were influenced more by the element of troop leading than by any other. Company, platoon and squad commanders, in the great majority of cases, had their missions assigned, or these missions were so apparent that no necessity for resolving them into their tactical possibilities was required. The principles of war may be used as a basis for discussion of certain tactical, troop-leading and psychological incidents, and several will be discussed under these classifications.

MOVEMENT

Tactically, there were no outstanding examples of the violation or observance of this principle.

In the troop-leading aspect, movement, as applied to a unit, means a certain loss of control by the company commander. The company commander must control his four platoons through their leaders and cannot hope to exercise direct control over a deployed company while it is under fire. Direction is difficult to maintain on terrain such as the Soissons area, where much of the advance was over broad fields of wheat. The company commander must physically lead the advance to be reasonably sure that major errors are not being made and, too often, he finds that direction is still not maintained.

Movement, applied to individuals, will quite frequently afford a tense and apprehensive man a physical means to "let off steam". Personal danger is readily forgotten if the man is required to perform heavy labor. When an individual is inactive and shells are exploding near him he cannot push back the recurring waves of fear; he crouches and waits, and battle is an unending series of "waits", while the soldier is unoccupied.

OBJECTIVE

The idea of reaching the company objective was firmly fixed in the minds of the entire company and this was often remembered at the expense of cooperating with neighboring units. The acceptance of the idea of the objective was due, primarily, to the desire of the men to get the allotted job done as quickly as possible, and they soon realized that by so doing they stood a better chance of living. Divisional, and other objectives, mean little to the soldier, for he seldom knows that the halting place of the company is an objective, unless he has been told that when a certain line is reached he will be through for the day, or for the engagement.

SIMPLICITY

Most enlisted men, and officers too, cannot remember and execute any but a very simple order when in actual contact with an enemy force, or with enemy fire. A complicated plan for capturing a machine gun nest will probably fail because someone is almost sure to forget part of the instructions when actually under fire. Plans which are models of simplicity and which give groups or individuals a concise and definite mission frequently fail for various reasons, but the liability of failure is greatly decreased when simplicity of plan and orders is observed.

LOYALTY

The commanders of regiments and higher units cannot be expected to think of death and pain when committing troops to action. They realize that combat will result in the partial or total wrecking of a complex human machine, assembled through countless hours of drill and they must experience sadness at the necessity for this damage. The commanders, referred to above, know the

external appearance of the fighting machine, but do not always realize that its component parts are individuals - all cast in different mental and physical moulds - each having an individual reaction to battle-field stimuli. These, as well as all commanders, should realize that morale and loyalty are not inexhaustible, and that the destruction of these forces seriously impairs the fighting power of the entire command. The officer who understands the fears of the newest private, who knows how he is affected by hunger, thirst and fatigue, who knows that the private soldier is not fighting for glory but is merely doing what he is told to do as best he can - that officer will know how much the soldier has to give. And the soldier, knowing he is understood, will gladly give all he has - even his life. Such is Loyalty.

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QUESTIONS ON THE OPERATIONS OF CO "D" 16th INFANTRY IN
THE AISNE-MARNE OFFENSIVE

1. Co. "D" 16th Infantry was a part of the:
- (1) Second U. S. Division
 - (2) First U. S. Division
 - (3) Fourth U. S. Division
 - (4) Third U. S. Division.
- Answer 2
2. The march of Co "D" 16th Infantry to the initial line of departure was characterized by:
- (1) Heavy enemy shelling
 - (2) Aerial bombardment
 - (3) Congested roads
 - (4) Enemy rifle fire.
- Answer 3
3. The initial stages of the advance on the first day were characterized by:
- (1) Loss of direction
 - (2) Enemy tank operations
 - (3) Enemy counterattacks.
- Answer 1
4. The characteristic form of German defense in this operation was:
- (1) Echeloned machine guns
 - (2) Highly organized trenches
 - (3) Tanks
 - (4) Massed Infantry counterattacks.
- Answer 1
5. The Missey-aux-Bois ravine:
- (1) Contained several large streams
 - (2) Was a shallow and wide depression
 - (3) Was passed through by Co "D" on the 5th day
 - (4) Had strong machine gun defenses.
- Answer 4

6. The general terrain features over which Co "D" operated were:
- (1) A succession of rivers
 - (2) Rolling wheat fields
 - (3) High mountains
 - (4) Dense woods.
- Answer 2
7. The entire advance of Co "D" 16th Infantry was characterized by:
- (1) No movement out of the regimental zone of action
 - (2) Movement through several regimental zones of action
 - (3) Taking of objectives under cover of darkness
 - (4) Frequent use of smoke as a screening agent.
- Answer 2
8. The operations of Co "D" 16th Infantry were hampered by:
- (1) Lack of ammunition
 - (2) Lack of food and water
 - (3) Lack of trench mortar shells
 - (4) Lack of 37-mm shells.
- Answer 2
9. The operations of Co "D" 16th Infantry were materially assisted by:
- (1) French cavalry
 - (2) American cavalry
 - (3) Armored cars
 - (4) French tanks.
- Answer 4
10. The outstanding lesson to be learned from this operation is:
- (1) Application of the Principle of Mass
 - (2) All men should be taught to read military maps
 - (3) Troop leadership is the major problem of the company commander
 - (4) Scouting and patrolling are essential features of offensive combat.
- Answer 3