

**THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA**

**ADVANCED COURSE**

**OPERATIONS OF THE FIRST BATTALION  
16<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY (U.S.) IN THE SEDAN OPERATIONS  
(Personal Experience)**

**CAPTAIN JAMES WHEELIN, INFANTRY**

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## B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- First Division U.S. Official History, John C. Winston Co., Philadelphia, Pa.
- Official report Colonel W. F. Harrell, Regimental Commander 16th Infantry, November 9th, 1918.
- Official Report Lieut. Col. C. W. Ryder, 16th Infantry, Commanding Officer First Battalion 16th Inf., November 11, 1918.
- Personal Experiences Capt. James Wheelin, 16th Infantry Machine Gun Company.

OPERATIONS OF THE FIRST BATTALION  
16th INFANTRY U.S. IN THE SEDAN OPERATIONS.

INTRODUCTION

In preparing this monograph the author believes that the title of this operation should be "The Race to Sedan" or "Sedan the Goal", as this operation was assigned to the 42nd Division of the First Corps and the Veteran First Division of the Fifth Corps. The French were also an entry in this event.

THE TERRAIN

That portion of the MEUSE VALLEY in which the action described in this monograph took place has been so frequently described that it would be merely repetition to dwell on its configurations again.

Briefly, the incidents described herein took place in what is called the SEDAN corridor, a sharp, natural trench running generally southeast and northwest and leading from Belgium into France through Southern Luxemburg. It is located just south of the Ardennes Forest.

The terrain has the same characteristics which predominate throughout the entire Meuse Valley, consisting of a series of high hills, which line both sides of the river itself and at various points extend for some distance on either side. The real soil is of the same chalky variety found almost everywhere in the Champagne except that in this particular region it is covered by a surface of marl several inches thick, which has not been entirely eroded by nature.

The route of the march described in this manuscript led over a series of hills and plateaux, which added considerably to the hardships of an already strenuous operation.

PLANS AND ORDERS

The general plan of this operation was to place in Allied hands the Sedan, Mezieres Railroad, which was the real objective of the Meuse-Argonne offensive. (1)

(1) Hist.  
First  
Div.  
p. 230

On November 6th the Commanding General Fifth Corps arrived at Division Headquarters at noon at an old prison camp situated at La Gros Faux, and handed the Division Commander the following order:

"1. General Pershing desires that the honor of entering Sedan should fall to the First American Army. He has every confidence that the troops of the First Corps assisted on the right by the Fifth Corps, will enable him to realize this desire.

2. In transmitting the foregoing message your attention is invited to the favorable opportunity now existing for pressing our advantage throughout the night. Boundaries will not be considered binding. " (2)

(2) Hist.  
First  
Div.  
page 229.

Upon receiving this order the Division Commander issued same under Secret and Personal Field Order No. 62 (3) The march was ordered

(3) Hist.  
First  
Div.  
page 231

in five columns as follows, from east to west:

Column 1 First Battalion 16th Infantry by road AUTRECOURT-REMILLY-WADELINCOURT.

Column 2, 16th Infantry (Less one Battalion) and Company H Engineers by road POURRON-AUTRECOURT-RAUCOURT-HARACOURT-THELONNE-NOYERS.

Column 3 18th Infantry (Less one Battalion) by road POURRON-AUTRECOURT-RAUCOURT-MAISONELLE-BULSON-CHAUMONT, thence north.

Column 4. 28th Infantry and Company D 1st Engineers by road STONNE-CHEMERY-CHEMERY-FRENOIS.

Column 5. 26th Infantry by road STONNE-CHEMERY-OMICOURT-HANNAGNE-ST. MARTIN.

The Division reserve, the 2nd Battalion 18th Infantry, the 1st Machine Gun Battalion and the 1st Engineers (less two companies) the road LA BESACE-RAUCOURT, thence along route of 2nd Column.

The 6th Field Artillery followed the 18th Infantry.

The 7th Field Artillery followed the 28th Infantry.

A Battalion of the 5th Field Artillery followed each of the Columns 2, 3 and 4.

### OPERATIONS

Official  
Report Col.  
C.W.Ryder  
Com. Officer  
1st Battal-  
ion, 16th  
Infantry.

Late in the afternoon of November 5th, movement orders were received by the 16th Infantry. The regiment was bivouacked in the Bois de Folie. It had been raining continually during the previous days and as the roads were unimproved it was very heavy marching. The route laid down took us North through the town of Vaux and Sommauthe, echeloned in depth in this order: First, Second and Third Battalion. The First Battalion went into position on the Beaumont-Stonne Road with its right resting at Warnifort and its left on the LaBesace road. The hour was at dawn. The attack laid down for that day was a turning movement to the right in the direction of Mouzon, with the 16th Infantry on the left of the Division. The 77th Division attacked on the left of the First Division. No direct resistance was offered by the enemy and the first Battalion reached the wood near Pourron about noon. From this point it was necessary to go down onto the open banks of the Meuse river. To do this would lay the battalion open to heavy artillery fire from the east side of the Meuse. Company A, which was the right assault company of the battalion moved forward by infiltration to the objective for that day, which was the edge of the Meuse River. Upon arriving on their objective this company received heavy artillery fire and it was decided to keep the remaining companies of the battalion under cover in the vicinity of Pourron. This position was consolidated. It had been pouring rain all day; the country was very rough and as a result the men were greatly fatigued. It had been absolutely impossible to gain contact with the 77th Division on our left. Numerous patrols were sent out but no results were obtained by them. The final position was consolidated and the companies and organizations of the battalion were arranged in preparation for any additional orders which might be received during the night.

Personal  
Experiences  
Capt. James  
Wheelin,  
16th Inf.  
Machine Gun  
Company.

OPERATIONS  
Second Phase.

In the evening of November 6th, a warning order was received from Colonel W. F. Harrell, Commanding Officer 16th Infantry, to roll packs, assemble the battalion and be ready to move at a moment's notice. At approximately 10:00 P.M., the regimental order to make a flank march in face of the enemy and to advance along the west bank of the Meuse river to a position one kilometer due west of Wadelincourt was received. The regiment was to assemble on the hills overlooking Sedan, echeloned in depth in the order: First and Second Battalions and Third Battalion was in Brigade reserve. The first battalion 16th Infantry was ordered to march on the river road along the Meuse river, through the towns of AUTRECOURT-VILLERS-devant MOUZON, PT. REMILLY-AUTRECOURT, ALLICOURT-Point MAUGIS to vicinity WADELINCOURT. The Second and Third Battalions were ordered to march on parallel roads to the west of the Meuse River to the same point as the First Battalion.

This march order was received at about 10:00 P.M. November 6th. The distance to be travelled in the route laid down for the First Battalion 16th Infantry was about seventeen kilometers. The march was a flank march in the face of the enemy on a road which was subject to artillery and machine gun fire from the north and from across the river. This road itself parallels and stays very close to the river. It was immediately evident that in order to reach the desired positions, a battalion which was greatly fatigued by a seven hour attack in a pouring rain, and which was burdened with heavy packs and machine guns, would have to march at a rate of not less than four kilometers an hour in order to reach its objectives. It was also evident that the Battalion would have to be stretched out in a thin column in order that any fire coming from the flank would give it but few casualties. Accordingly,

the Battalion moved out in a double column of files immediately after receiving the order. The formation taken was the usual advance guard formation. The main body followed the advance guard at a distance of 150 yards in order: Headquarters First Battalion, two platoons Company A, Companies B and D and three platoons of Company C. Machine Gun Company 16th Infantry, one 37 M/M gun and one platoon Company C as rear guard. The march had been made extremely difficult due to the fact that the Germans in their retreat had mined the roads at every place at which it was crossed by a culvert and destroyed all bridges crossing the small streams and the canal. Due to these factors the march was extremely slow. At every place in which the road was mined, it was necessary for the troops to leave the road and circle around the mine craters through the mud, and ford the small streams. This occurred at least twice in nearly every kilometer of the march. About five hundred meters from Pourron the Germans had placed some interdiction fire on the road and Mr. Gibson, a Y.M.C.A. man with the battalion, was killed. No other casualties resulted.

Before entering any town a patrol was sent forward to reconnoiter the town for signs of the enemy. The inhabitants of these towns had been for four long weary years in the hands of the German Army. They did not even know that America was in the war and greeted the First Battalion as their deliverers. At Autrecourt information from the inhabitants was that the Germans had left there at 8:00 P.M. Just beyond Rouffy the bridge crossing a small stream had been blown up. The Battalion crossed this stream on a board eight inches wide in the dark at a place 300 yards off the road.

At this time the Battalion Commander decided that if the Battalion was to reach the position near Wadelincourt by dawn, the men would have to be pushed to their very utmost. Accordingly he sent orders back along the column that a guide would be left at every turning of the road and that

all organizations were to be pushed to their utmost, and the column would be closed up and kept closed up on the leading element, irrespective of the pace. This order was given and then the forced march under extremely difficult conditions was begun. At Villers-devt. Mouzon, information received from the inhabitants was that the Germans had left there at about 11:00 P.M. At Pt. Remilly the patrol of the advance guard made its usual investigation but found nothing. When the 3rd platoon of Company D had marched outside of the town they were fired upon by machine guns from the right flank in the edge of the town. Report of this was <sup>not</sup> made to the Battalion Commander until after Remilly-Autrecourt had been reached. In the vicinity of this town two outposts, each consisting of one man of the 77th Division were found asleep in fox holes about ten yards off the road away from the river. The first one found was awakened and he stated that he was the farthest advance outpost of the 77th Division and he led the Battalion Commander to the other post and told him that these were the only two that he knew of. He stated that to the best of his knowledge there were none further north. No other men of this Division were found that night.

A runner with a report stated that the men were getting through by crawling along the ditch on the left hand side of the road, it being under machine gun fire from across the river. As all Company Commanders had been warned that in order to reach the objective before daylight, it was necessary to push through. The battalion continued leaving Company D to clean up machine guns and follow. This the Company did and captured nine prisoners.

At Remilly-Autrecourt the bridge crossing the canal had been blown up. After questioning the inhabitants a man was found who said he could get the troops across the canal. The Battalion was led through the winding alleys of the town, which was the largest that had been encountered, leaving guards at every corner, and finally did cross the

halted at the Junction of the roads. Some of these Germans offered resistance and it was necessary to shoot the guards and waggoners who offered resistance. The rest were made prisoners. Two German officers came out of a building at the corner and upon being ordered to hold up their hands, one obeyed and the other refused and put up his left hand, putting his right in his overcoat pocket. He was killed instantly and a small German automatic pistol was found in his right hand overcoat pocket. Things were happening at this time with such rapidity that it devolved upon Company A and Battalion Headquarters to clean up the town immediately. Street fighting ensued. German prisoners were taken from nearly every house and many were killed for refusing to surrender. About the time this started, a transportation train was heard advancing from the direction of Thelonne. Its head was allowed to proceed to the crossroads at which point the train was captured. In all, about forty or fifty prisoners, one 77 M/M gun, two anti-tank guns, four rolling kitchens, with the morning meal all cooked and ready to serve, and two ration carts were captured. It was impossible to keep some of the men away from this breakfast. Marmite cans found in the ration cart were filled with warm food, also bread and jam and this was carried along with the command. All prisoners were collected together and turned over to the second platoon Company D which was at the rear, Company C not having caught up yet. As the regiment was short of animals, the Battalion Commander ordered the horses unharnessed and taken back to Company D. While this was in progress, Company A continued to clean up the town.

The enemy at this point was in force on the left flank and as it was becoming daylight, the Battalion Commander decided to proceed toward Noyers, and, if possible, join the rest of the regiment and go with them to the assembly point near Wadelincourt. By that time it was seen that it would be absolutely impossible to march any further on the river, as it was under direct artillery and machine gun fire of the enemy. No one had any idea as to how far they had penetrated behind the

canal on the gates of a lock, on which at some points the water was six inches deep. Information received from the inhabitants was that the Germans had left there about an hour in advance of us. From this time on difficulties were encountered. There were a number of large factories along the road and on the other side of the river. These had been fired by the Germans and were completely ablaze. They lighted up the road and the surrounding country. It was necessary for the Battalion to leave the road and circle around these fires, as much as five hundred yards back into the hills. The field marched through were covered with large heads of cabbage and were very muddy, and as no rations had been received for thirty-six hours, everyone provided themselves with a head of cabbage. As the battalion was approaching the outskirts of Allicourt, the point of the advance guard was challenged in German. The point stepped to the side of the road under cover and continued to advance. The German sentinel then ran. Two automatic rifles were pushed up to the point and placed on either side of the road. The advance then continued. As the point came out of the town it was again challenged in German; the two automatic rifles opened up, wounding the German sentinel, who was then taken prisoner. The point continued to advance. When they reached the road junction at Point Maguis they were again challenged and again they opened up and wounded the sentinel. His cries warned the Germans who were in the adjoining houses. They had no idea the American troops were so close to them and as they came out of the houses in the dark, they were captured and disarmed. The Battalion Commander decided at this time that it was necessary to clean up this town before proceeding any further. He ordered the advance guard to move down the road beyond the crossroads and to clean up in that direction. Lieut. Born, commanding Company A was ordered to take his remaining two platoons, assign one to each side of the street and clean up the road leading in the direction of Noyers. This movement had barely begun when wagons were heard approaching from the direction of Wadelincourt. These were

German front line. The Battalion Commander had no information as to the other Battalions, and it seemed absolutely impracticable for him to remain in Pont Maguis after daylight, as it was under direct fire from the enemy. He had reasons to believe that the other battalions had probably advanced as far as his Battalion had, as there had been no firing heard in that direction during the night and he felt reasonably sure that he could get in touch with them at daylight. The Battalion now moved toward Noyers. The original advance guard was left in place on the Northern edge of Pont Maguis. At this time ~~were~~<sup>there</sup> was at the disposal of the Battalion Commander in Pont Maguis, Companies A, B and the leading two platoons of Company D. When the Battalion reached a point about one kilometer from Pont Maguis, it came under machine gun fire from the front and right flank. Orders were issued to move by the left flank down the hill, under cover to the Pont Maguis-Thelonne road. Battalion Headquarters, Companies A and B moved across country to comply with this order. Some time later it was found that the officer commanding the leading two platoons of Company D misinterpreted the order and returned to Pont Maguis where he met the two platoons of Company A which were the original advance guard and Company C, which was attempting to catch up with the column. Early in the morning the enemy put a heavy concentration of 150 M/M on Pont Maguis, and these organizations were forced to leave the town and take up a position in the small woods on the hills about 500 yards south of the town. About 100 men, it was later found, remained in the town and collected all the American wounded. The Germans returned to this town from the North and there was house to house fighting until the attack of the 16th Infantry a short time later, which relieved the situation. Battalion Headquarters, Companies A and B arrived on the Pont Maguis-Thelonne road, but as it was broad daylight, and the German artillery opened up, the Battalion took over in the wooded ravines due east of Thelonne and dug in. Elements of the second battalion

16th Infantry were found there. A combat patrol was sent in the direction of the river to locate the remainder of the Battalion, and gain liaison with them. This patrol found organizations near Pont Maguis, but a report was not received from it until after the last phase of the attack had started.

As soon as it was possible, the platoons of Companies A, D and part of Company C, which was present, joined in the new attack. At about the same time that liaison was obtained with the second battalion, Colonel Harrell, the Regimental Commander, arrived at the position of the First Battalion, and immediately ordered an attack to be made by the Companies present. Word had not been received at that time of the other two companies and Machine Gun Company of the First Battalion. The First Battalion was on the right and was ordered to attack due north, with its right resting on Pont Maguis. The Second Battalion was to conform to the First Battalion. Company A, 1st Engineers was designated as regimental reserve. The first objective, which was the Pont Maguis-Thelonne road, was reached at 11:00 A.M. As the troops advanced out into the open, they brought down a heavy artillery fire from across the river, which was direct enfilade fire, and also direct machine gun fire, from the machine guns around Noyers and between that town and the river. From Headquarters First Battalion, as it moved forward, it was easy to pick out eleven machine gun nests, all in action at the same time, firing upon the advancing troops. Immediately after the first objective was taken, orders were received to continue the attack due north to the second objective, which would be a line from the northern limits of Pont Maguis to the northern limits of Noyers, both towns inclusive. Company A, 1st Engineers was ordered to move directly on Pont Maguis. The second objective was taken and Company A, First Engineers completely cleaned up the situation at Pont Maguis, driving the Germans north and out of the town, and releasing the men of the First Battalion who were in the town. This movement enabled the Battalion Commander to get in touch with the remaining

have made the necessary forced march that night with any but disciplined soldiers who would obey without question any order which they received.

On the road during the march there was absolutely no smoking, talking or noise of any kind. Nothing could be heard but the steady tramping as the Battalion moved forward. Each man seemed to feel the sense of impending danger. Each man seemed to know that the Germans might at any time locate the marching column and bring to bear on them heavy artillery and machine gun fire. The spirit which prevailed among the disciplined soldiers of the Battalion is responsible for the success of the march.

This consolidation was made under extremely difficult conditions. The troops were under direct observation from the Germans on the hills on the far side of the Meuse River and they were subjected to a heavy artillery concentration during daylight. During this consolidation a Sargeant of the First Battalion reported that a trench mortar, which had caused so much trouble, had moved back and was preparing to go into action. He asked permission to take a patrol and capture it. Permission had been given, but due to the fact that it soon became dark and the Germans had retired he was unable to accomplish this mission. At dusk the Germans could no longer see any movement on Hill 252, the artillery bombardment ceased except for an occasional stray shell and the night was quiet.

At 1:35 A.M. November 8th, orders were received at the Battalion Headquarters to withdraw immediately and march to Maisoncelle. No relief was to be made. This order was passed on to the Commanding Officer Second Battalion by the Commanding Officer First Battalion, and the withdrawal immediately commenced. Maisoncelle was reached at about 8:00 A.M., by the First Battalion, which was the last to reach there. The Regiment marched the next day to Yoncq. The machine Gun Company and the remainder of the Battalion which had been unable to catch up during the forced march, rejoined the Battalion at Yoncq.

The Battalion in this operation marched seventy-one kilometers in seventy-two hours, the greater portion of this distance being in the face of the enemy. The men were burdened with heavy packs and their entire allowance of combat ammunition, and at no time, no matter how tired, was there any grumbling from the men. During the latter part of the forced march they would sit down and go to sleep instantly and it was necessary for the Battalion Commander and Company Officers to go along the line and wake the men up before proceeding. This was also true during the last days of the attack. The greatest of credit is due to the enlisted men of the Battalion for the way in which they promptly obeyed every order given them and in every way did what was necessary to make the operation a success. It would have been absolutely impossible to

elements of the first Battalion, who joined in the attack. Before the second objective was taken, orders were received from the Regimental Commander to continue the attack until Hill 252 was captured. This was done and the two Battalions, guiding on the First Battalion, which was on the right, and with Company A First Engineers was covering the territory of the river, moved forward and continued the attack until the top of Hill 252 was taken and the small woods on the far slope near the top had been cleared of Germans. There was a large trench mortar at this point which caused some damage to the troops digging in. The Second Battalion was in close liaison with the First Battalion throughout this advance. They captured the town of Noyers and all the machine guns in the vicinity and advanced up Hill 252 alongside of the First Battalion. The First Battalion consolidated the right portion from the top of the hill down to the river and the Second Battalion consolidated the left portion of the line. Battalion CP First Battalion was established near the top of the Hill on the south slope. The CP of the Second Battalion 16th Infantry was established about five hundred yards to the left of the same slope of Hill. The Battalion Commander of the First Battalion 16th Infantry, had occasion while the men were consolidated, during daylight, to walk along the front companies of the Second Battalion and locate their Battalion headquarters, so as to get in touch with the situation which confronted their Battalions. The Second Battalion Headquarters was found as described. The Battalion Commander of the First Battalion made this reconnaissance during daylight and had the occasion to ask which organizations most of the men belonged to (in searching for organizations), and remarked that he was positive that no soldiers, except those of the 16th Infantry, First Division were present on Hill 252 at that time. Captain C. L. Irwin, Commanding the Second Battalion, 16th Infantry, was found at that time, and both Battalion Commanders from their positions were able to explain and point out to each other the dispositions which had been made of their Battalions for the defense of the position.

Personal  
Experiences

Captain James  
Wheelin, Machine

Gun Co., 16th de Folie on the evening of November 5th, through the mud, rain and  
Infantry.

The Machine Gun Company, 16th Infantry, as part of the First Battalion 16th Infantry, marched with the Battalion from the Bois de Folie on the evening of November 5th, through the mud, rain and darkness to a point about one kilometer from the line of departure where it had taken the Machine Guns, Tripods and ammunition from the carts and sent the transport back to the rear echelon. The Company jumped off with the Battalion at H hour on November 6th, and arrived on the objective at the same time that the Battalion did. There was no direct resistance by the enemy. About 9:00 P.M. a runner brought me a message, directing that I report at Battalion Headquarters which was near Pourron. Upon arriving there, the Battalion Commander issued orders to the Company Commanders to assemble the Companies at once, as the Battalion would march on Sedan. I returned to the Company and assembled it. The Battalion moved out at about 10:00 P.M. November 6th. The Company kept closed up on the Battalion until I had reached Villers devant Mouzon, from which place the pace became so fast that the company was unable to keep closed up because of the heavy loads that the men had to carry and also because they were worn out from the long march of the night before, and the advance of the morning of November 6th. When the Company reached Remilly, it was fired on by machine guns from across the river, making it necessary to take cover and continue the advance in the ditches alongside of the road, and pushing forward by bounds, and part of the time crawling on our hands and knees. Before entering Remilly, a halt was made by the company in front of me, and I thought it was a regular hourly halt. I looked at my watch so that I would move out after ten minutes and waited. The ten minutes elapsed but the company in front of me did not move. I went forward and found the whole platoon fast asleep in the center of the road and along the ditches. I had considerable trouble in awakening this platoon and getting it started. When I went back to my own company, I found the same situation. I started in at the head of the company getting men awake and

and by the time I arrived at the end there were some at the head of the company that had dropped down again. This caused some delay. While this was going on, I sent forward my runner to locate the troops in front; he returned, stating he had gone up the road about one kilometer and that he could find no one. He also stated that he heard the sound of motors and thought the Battalion had gone on trucks, they were going so fast. I continued the march toward Sedan. From this time on the march was very severe for the men. They were almost exhausted from the heavy loads they were carrying. It became necessary to halt every twenty minutes to keep the men from falling from exhaustion. (Men would fall down in the road, they were so tired and worn out). At times it was necessary to get men up on their feet and urge them on. At Remilly-Allicourt a lock had been blown up and the water was rushing across the main highway. I had to circle around it to get in the town. At this place I found a Battalion guide who took me to a foot bridge, consisting of a board, which passed over the lock. It was very dark and it had taken a long time to get the company across. Beyond the town the road had been mined; there were large craters in the road, and alongside of the road, making it necessary to go out in the hills to get around. The last time I saw the 37 M/m gun was about an hour before I reached this town.

We could give no assistance as the men already had all the burden which they could carry.

Beyond Remilly-Allicourt there were houses afire along the road, making it necessary to again leave the road and circle around in order not to be seen. About two kilometers north of Remilly-Allicourt, I came upon several cross roads and hesitated, not knowing which one to take, as I had no map. I reconnoitered each of the roads for indications of troops. I had gone up one only a short ways, and had noticed white objects along the road. I picked one up and found it was a cabbage leaf, and, having gone through a field of cabbage myself, and knowing that there had been no food served that day, decided that the companies of the Battalion had done as my own did, and provided themselves with a head. I continued along this road with the men doing their utmost to

stay with me. (The same conditions prevailing - craters in the road from mines). About 5:00 A.M. I reached Pont Maguis and sent a patrol forward which returned and reported that the town was full of Germans. It was now daylight and there was quite a heavy fog. I am sure that the town my patrol had gone to was Wadlencourt. As I started to leave the road and take cover in a wood near a chateau, the Germans opened fire on us with machine guns and 150 M/M from across the river. This scattered the company, but I immediately re-formed it in a small orchard and went up on the hill above Pont Maguis and went into position, from which points Sergeants Dalton, Sandusky and Stoffers returned the fire on the Germans across the river. I had noticed at this time that there were troops behind me and seeing Lieut. Hansen going back, I called to him, saying "Where are you going?" but because of the artillery fire of the Germans, he did not hear me. He continued on and passed through the line of troops behind me, and thinking it was the First Battalion, I sent a runner back to find out who they were. The soldiers stated to him that they belonged to the 42nd Division and would not let him pass through. I sent runners out to the flanks and to the rear; the one I sent to the rear returned the next morning and informed me that he found Regimental and Battalion Headquarters and had orders for me to withdraw. I never saw again the runners I sent to the flanks until I rejoined the Battalion. I remained in this position until dusk on November 8th and fell back to Angecourt and billeted in a foundry. The next day, November 9th, we rejoined the Battalion. I stopped at Headquarters 77th Division on November 9th, asking for information of the 16th Infantry. They seemed greatly surprised and did not know we had been in the sector.

It is interesting to note that on this eventful night, the Company had marched from November 5th, a distance of seventy-one kilometers in seventy-two hours and had carried the heavy machine guns, tripods, ammunition and their full field equipment from a point one kilometer before reaching the line of departure and six kilometers during the attack and 14 kilometers on the march toward Sedan. The men had not had any food, except two days reserve ration that they had on their backs, and no hot

food from the evening of November 5th to the evening of November 8th.

The spirit that carried the First Battalion and the Machine Gun Company forward in this operation was the pride and spirit of the old First Division, and the high morale and excellent discipline of the enlisted men. Especial credit must be given to the old non-commissioned officers of this organization whose previous hardships with this company throughout the entire war had put them in the condition and class of thoroughly seasoned veterans.

#### GAINS AND LOSSES.

Official  
report  
Col. W. F.  
Harrell  
16th Inf.  
Nov. 9,  
1918.

In this operation the Battalion had advanced a distance of 17 kilometers and had captured two 77 M/M Guns, quantity of transport, four rolling kitchens, fifty prisoners and inflicted considerable casualties on the enemy. Casualties of the Battalion are not given. The total casualties of the regiment in the operation were approximately 200.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM.

I have no criticism to make of the Germans. They were hastily retreating and had caused the Battalion considerable delay by obstacles along the line of march, and also by machine gun and artillery fire.

It is rather difficult for a mere company officer to attempt any criticism of those in the higher command above him, as quite often there were sound reasons for actions which seemed to him to be unreasonable and faulty in their conception. However, there did occur during the course of this operation several incidents which can well be cited here as examples of things to be avoided in any future conflicts. Also, other things can be repeated in a commendatory way, as examples of correct troop leading and maneuver.

1. The practice of instructing lower units not to adhere

rigidly to the prescribed boundary lines can only result in confusion as of necessity boundaries will often be crossed without notice to the other units concerned. Not only will disorder but even casualties follow such an action.

✓ 2. Even in the pursuit of a rapidly retreating enemy it is wise to plan and execute all movements with the same care and precision as at any other stage of the combat.

3. Too much importance cannot be placed on the information which can be given by friendly inhabitants. The forward movement of the units spoken of in this monograph were greatly facilitated by both the information and assistance given by the French inhabitants behind the German lines.

4. A flank march in the face of the enemy which not only exposes you to his enfilade fire but also permits him to judge your strength is foolhardy. It is a violation of one of the principles of warfare which Napoleon placed the greatest stress upon and the one which won for him his great victory at Austerlitz, where the Austrians and Russians marched across his front, enabling him to penetrate them from the flank.

5. Maps should be supplied even to the most sub-ordinate unit commanders. Without them they are helpless and when they lose contact for a time with their neighboring units, as occurred in this action, they are not only without guidance, but their troops lose the support which they might be rendering.

✓ 6. When a higher headquarters orders one unit to move across the front of a neighboring one, it should take the precaution of notifying the unit whose front is to be crossed of such an intention. Failure to do so may have serious consequences. An example occurred in this action when the Headquarters 77th Division were unaware <sup>that</sup> the 16th Infantry had been instructed to cross the path of their advance.

✓ 7. On night marches guides should be stationed at crossroads and in towns to prevent the wrong route being taken.

There is no criticism of the Battalion Commander. He carried out

1<sup>ST</sup> BN 16<sup>TH</sup> INF

OPERATIONS.

NOV. 6-7.

1918



KILOMETERS

