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THE OPERATIONS OF THE REGIMENTAL MAINTENANCE SECTION
SERVICE COMPANY, 2D INFANTRY (5TH INFANTRY DIVISION)
NORMANDY AND NORTHERN FRANCE CAMPAIGN, 9 JULY-3 AUGUST 1944
(Personal experience of a Regimental Motor Officer)

Type of operation described: Regimental Maintenance
Section, 2d Infantry

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE MAINTENANCE SECTION,
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(Personal experience of a Regimental Motor Officer)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the Maintenance Section, Service Company, 2d Infantry, 5th Infantry Division, in the Normandy Campaign, 9 July-3 August 1944.

In order that the reader may become fairly familiar with this "grand old regiment", it would be unfair not to mention briefly its historical and enviable background.

The 2d Infantry was authorized as an organization by Act of Congress on 3 March 1791. Up to its departure from Ireland to the beaches of Normandy it had more than 153 years of active service, with 84 battle participations to its credit.
(1)

On 16 October 1939 the 2d Infantry was assigned to the 5th Infantry Division which was reorganizing at Fort Custer, Michigan. The 2d Infantry had completely assembled at its new post by 15 March 1941. (2)

When World War II was officially declared in December 1941, units of the 2d Infantry were rushed from Fort Custer for guard duty at vital strategic installations and war plants throughout the Middle West. (3)

On 19 February 1942 the regiment, less Company F and the 3d Battalion, sailed from New York, arriving at Reykhavik, Iceland, on 3 March 1942. Company F and the 3d Battalion arrived on 17 April 1942. (4)

(1) A-5, p. 42; (2, 3, 4) A-2, p. 21.

The 2d Infantry Regiment, as a unit of the 5th Division, defended Iceland where the regiment marked time from February 1942 to August of 1943, through the long daylight hours of summer and the continuous darkness of winter. (5)

This island, with a population of some 125,000 people, was of vital importance to the Allies who depended on American assistance across the Atlantic. Had the Germans occupied this island, the history of the war and the future of the world might have been different. (6)

On 6 August 1943, the 2d Infantry embarked from Iceland and arrived at Liverpool, England, on 9 August 1943. The regiment trained at Tidworth Barracks, Wiltshire, England, for a period of about two and one half months. It then moved to County Down, Northern Ireland, where it remained in training until it embarked for the Normandy beaches of France on 6 July 1944. (7)

LANDING IN NORMANDY - 9 JULY 1944

The ships arrived in the transport area due east of St. Mere Eglise on the east coast of the Cherbourg Peninsula. At 2205 hours the first 2d Infantry troops landed on Utah Beach. (8)

Upon debarkation, the troops marched about one and one half miles west of Montebourg, which was the Division concentration area, thence to the vicinity of Huberville, which was the regimental assembly area. (9)

The vehicles of the regiment were unloaded in piecemeal fashion and were de-waterproofed progressively as they moved from the beach through Transit Area "B" near St. Germain De

(5) A-2, p. 21; (6, 7, 8, 9) A-2, p. 26.

Varreville, and on to the assembly area. It took two days to collect all of the vehicles. (10)

The regiment was alerted to move to the front on 13 July. The 2d Infantry was to relieve the 16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division. Advance parties were sent out, and the movement began late that morning. Relief of the 16th Infantry was made unit for unit, with no changes in dispositions, and continued throughout the night until 0600 hours, 14 July. By midnight the regiment had suffered its first battle casualty, S/Sgt Robert S. Bass of Service Company, who was killed by shell fire. The 5th Division was at this time assigned to V Corps. (11)

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

The terrain in the Caumont Sector was rolling and characterized by high hedges and trees bordering the many small fields. Most of the roads were secondary, narrow, dusty passageways winding their way through the sector. Only the main roads were paved, and fit for two-way traffic, and there were few of these. The important road junctions and crossings were under harassing enemy artillery fire. Most of the roads were sunken between the hedgerows, which furnished covered routes of approach. The area to our front sloped down into a small valley. Vidowville was in this valley and high ground lay beyond this. The hedgerows, though good cover, afforded the enemy excellent defensive positions. (12)

THE 2D INFANTRY, NORTHWEST OF CAUMONT 14 JULY-26 JULY 1944

Before we go into events of the Regimental Maintenance Section, let us look at the picture of the regiment as a whole.

(10, 11) A-2, p. 26; (12) A-2, p. 40.

The 1st and 2d Battalions were in battle position. The 3d Battalion became the Division reserve. Regimental Headquarters and Headquarters Company were located near a small farm house, just north of Montrabot. (13)

On the regiment's left flank, initially, were the 10th and 11th Infantry Regiments. On the left of the 5th Division was the 41st Armored Infantry Regiment of the 2d Armored Division, which was relieved a few days later by the British Eighth Armored Brigade. (14)

The second night at the front was fairly quiet, since no enemy patrols were encountered and hostile fire was limited to intermittent artillery and mortar concentrations. (15)

In spite of extremely heavy mortar and machine gun fire during the morning of 15 July, and sharp encounters with German patrols at our O.P.L.R., all through the night we suffered no casualties. Action continued in much the same pattern for the next few days, with only light casualties suffered from intermittent fire. (16)

During the night of July 19-20, our morale was given a shot in the arm when a combat patrol composed of two platoons from Company G engaged the enemy at close quarters and delivered a thorough whipping before withdrawing. A short time later a similar combat patrol from Company E set out for Vidowville. It ran into a strong enemy outpost before it could reach its objective. The outcome was more than satisfactory since at least one enemy platoon was routed, with an estimated casualty list of 18 dead and wounded. It was as a result of this action that we identified our German opponents as the 9th Paratroop Regiment of the 3d Paratroop Division. Later information proved this unit to be regarded by the Germans as one of the best units they had employed on the Normandy front. (17)

(13) A-3, p. 3; (14) A-1, p. 40; (15, 16, 17) A-2, p. 26.

During this period, rain and its brother, "General Mud," added to the discomfort of our troops. Actions as those employed above were quite similar in nature along our sector until 24 July when the skies had cleared sufficiently to permit the enemy to employ some of his fighters. The Regimental Command Post underwent a strafing attack by a force of about 12 F.W.-190's and M.E.-109's. This raid, however, proved fruitless, as no damages or casualties were incurred. (18)

At this time the regiment was more or less marking time for something big to happen. When and how we shall find out later. Now let us go into the very actions of the section of the regiment about which this monograph is written, the actions of the Regimental Maintenance Section, during the above same period.

THE REGIMENTAL MAINTENANCE SECTION, SERVICE COMPANY,
2D INFANTRY, VICINITY OF CORMALAIN,
14 JULY-26 JULY 1944

Service Company, 2d Infantry, set up its bivouac in the vicinity of Cormalain. The company had moved into this area after it was shelled in the old Service Company area of the 16th Infantry. (19)

Service Company Commander was Captain Ansel B. Chryklund; the Regimental S-4 was Major Beryel J. Pace.

Our perimeter defense was set up with guards from each section interlocking the entire area. Fox holes were dug and reinforced. (20)

A word for the company as a whole: this unit had worked together as a team for about two years, and as such the sections worked closely together, knowing that cooperation was the key to success.

(18) A-2, p. 26; (19,20) Eye witness, self.

The regimental maintenance section consists of twelve mechanics, automotive; six technicians, fourth grade, and six technicians, fifth grade. Three of the mechanics drive light trucks - one truck, 1/4 ton, and two trucks, 2½ ton (one 2½ ton wrecker and one 2½ ton parts truck); one welder, general; a technician fourth grade; one clerk, record, a technician fifth grade; a regimental motor transport officer, a captain who also commands the transportation platoon; and a warrant officer who is responsible to the motor officer for maintenance. (21)

This section was located to the right of a small road entering the bivouac area. Small stalls were cut into the wooded area. These stalls had good overhead cover, and worked out to advantage in segregating vehicles that required work. Camouflage nets were not needed for the two large trucks in the section, as they were under cover. These nets were used to cover the vehicle tracks into the stalls. (22)

A small welding shop was set up to the rear of the wrecker. A paint shop, with what paints could be obtained, was set up in a stall adjacent to the wrecker. The Class III dump, or gas and oil, was located in a wooded area just across a small open field. The cans were well camouflaged with local shrubbery. A small road, which simplified things, existed in our area. This road proved satisfactory in providing one-way traffic in that it had an entrance and exit. (23)

The Service Company Maintenance Section, consisting of three mechanics - one technician fourth grade and two technicians fifth grade - was situated to the left of the road in the general area of the truck park. This park was used by the kitchen trains, and was arranged into battalion sections.

(21) Tables of Organization;(22) Eye witness, self; (23) Self, experience.

The regimental motor officer also supervised this section, as it was a part of the transportation platoon. To clarify this situation, the mechanics of the transportation platoon were responsible for company 1st echelon maintenance of all Service Company vehicles; i.e., the weekly and monthly preventative maintenance checks. (24)

The Regimental Maintenance Section is responsible for performing the semi-annual or 6000 mile preventative maintenance checks, replacing minor parts which are stocked in the parts truck, evacuating vehicles to the Division Ordnance Company, and such maintenance as the time available and capabilities of the mechanics permit. (25)

The 50 caliber machine guns, of which there were nine, were mounted on their respective vehicles operated by their individual gunners. These guns were placed around the bivouac area to provide all around anti aircraft protection with good fields of fire. Service Company vehicles, at this time, were under regimental control. (26)

Three regimental inspection teams, one assigned to each battalion to check and assist the battalion maintenance personnel in the preventative maintenance of their vehicles, were organized at this time. It was a practice until now to service and check the organic vehicles of each battalion in the regimental maintenance area, but now the problem was of a different nature. Too many vehicles could not be concentrated in one area. Maintenance had to be kept up, so it was decided that the best policy would be to keep maintenance check teams, composed of three mechanics, on the job. First, the water-proofing compound had to be removed thoroughly and wheel bearings, transmission and differentials had to be checked

(24) Self, experience; (25, 26) Eye witness, self.

for signs of salt water. The regular 1000 miles and 6000 miles checks also had to be made. The regimental motor officer and assistant Warrant Officer, Charles N. Kasse, generally spot checked each battalion area to assist the battalion motor officers in their problem. (27)

At this time there existed no problem in procuring parts, as all existing supply depots were close at hand. The supporting Ordnance Company, the 705th Ordnance Company, was a very short distance from the bivouac area.

On 16 July, while a check in the 2d Battalion area was in progress, the regimental motor officer and the 2d Battalion Motor Officer, 1st Lieutenant Homer H. Dewey, were questioning a few drivers when a number of shells landed in the area. Immediately after the whine of the first shell, the men had all vanished into various fox holes. Fox holes dug to accommodate one man in some cases had two. A few minutes after the shelling had ceased a general check up of the area revealed that one jeep and one 1½ ton truck were badly damaged. The 1½ ton truck's ignition wires were badly cut; two front tires were flat and the radiator needed replacement. The jeep was quite fortunate in this respect, as the only damages incurred were two flat tires. Because of this action it was decided to dig all motor vehicles in the ground to at least give protection to the tires and most of the lower part of the vehicle. This was done. As a result, very few of the vehicles' tires were damaged in this manner during the succeeding days in the regiment's defensive position. (28)

The Army had at this time adopted the use of WD AGO Form (6) (the old duty roster) as its standard form for scheduled maintenance checks. This system proved very satisfactory (27) Eye witness, self experience; (28) Experience, self.

in assisting maintenance personnel. Combat conditions placed a high premium on vehicle maintenance, both in the way of prevention and repair. Tire repair proved to be one of the new serious problems. Artillery fire left sharp pieces of shrapnel on the roads. These pieces of shrapnel punctured synthetic tires and tubes. (29)

Gas supply was adequate, though more gas cans and a gas truck were seriously needed. (30)

Vehicles needed cleaning - not for appearance, but to aid mechanics and drivers in detecting leaks and broken parts. This was accomplished thru maximum use of the small rivers in the sector. This too needed coordination, as countless other units were using the same rivers. (31)

About the 18th of July, a top secret project was in effect. The Division Ordnance Officer ordered three experienced welders to work eight hours a day on welding long steel teeth on the fronts of all tanks in the division. These dragonlike teeth proved excellent in cutting thru the hedgerows and aided in accelerating the advance. However, the loss of the three men in our section put a heavier burden on the other mechanics because the maintenance section was authorized only one welder. The other two were merely understudies who had been trained. The 2d Infantry Regiment was the only regiment that could send three welders to comply with the Division Ordnance Officer's order. (32)

The 20th of July found all of the section so busy that a covered shop between two $2\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks was improvised with a tarpaulin on a few poles over the top and sides so the men could work nights to complete the work that was coming in. The lighting system for the night shift consisted of flash-

(29, 30) Experience, self; (31) An order issued personally;
(32) An order received and complied with.

lights and battery lanterns. In the event of an air attack, it was the guard's responsibility to notify mechanics to turn off their lights. (33)

Next to the train bivouac, the first United States Army air field of Normandy was being constructed. The Germans evidently knew this, for that night they attempted to bomb this field. They dropped bombs in the vicinity of the wooded area of the truck park and on an adjacent field, badly damaging one of Service Company's 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks and two 1 ton trailers. The next day the men dug their fox holes deeper for more protection. (34)

The afternoon of 21 July three German fighter planes flew over the 2d Infantry section and strafed the road adjacent to the bivouac area. This road was fairly occupied by traffic, so the planes came back again. This time all of the antiaircraft guns in the sector fired, including Service Company's 50 caliber machine guns. Two of the three planes were shot down, and the "esprit de corps" of the men of Service Company rose as a result of this action. (35)

During 22 July there were several air raids in the 2d Infantry sector. Roads were heavy with traffic. New units were moving in, others changing positions. There was evidence that something big was in the making. The question was when and where!

On the morning of 25 July 1944 the officers of the 2d Infantry Regiment were informed that a general attack was to be made along the whole line at 0635 hours, 26 July 1944. Until now the regiment was preparing and marking time. Now the time had come - not to defend, but attack! (36)

(33,34) Eye witness, self; (35,36) A-2, p. 28.

Operation "Cobra" was planned by the First U.S. Army as a break-through effort, commencing with a carpet bombing attack on the German lines, followed by a general offensive along the entire Army front. The breakthrough was designed to be made in the area immediately west of St. Lo, the key city and road center of this area, and to continue to the southwest toward Granville, at the west base of the Cotentin Peninsula. It was in this area, west of St. Lo, that the heavy, medium and light bombardment aircraft saturated the defenses preparatory to the armored breakthrough. (37)

Since the Army's left boundary was being changed, only a single regiment, the 2d Infantry, was to be employed initially. Upon capture of Vidouville it was to be relieved by the Ninth Infantry Regiment of the Second Infantry Division. (38)

THE FIRST OBJECTIVE
VIDOUVILLE, 26 JULY

On 26 July, after a fifteen minute artillery concentration, the 2d Infantry Regiment jumped off at 0635 hours with two battalions abreast; the 1st Battalion on the right, the 3d Battalion on the left, and the 2d Infantry Division on its right. The regimental objectives were: to capture the town of Vidouville and to secure the high ground at Highway 3. Initially the 2d Battalion would remain in reserve, and Service Company would remain in its present bivouac area. (39)

The 1st Battalion encountered intense sniper fire as it crossed the Line of Departure. Company A met stiff resistance in La Miletiere Woods, from an enemy force estimated at company strength. Assisted by tanks and artillery fires, the company drove through the resistance, leaving mopping up operations to its rear elements. Enemy machine guns and

(37,38) A-1, p. 42; (39) A-2, p. 27.

automatic hand weapons opened up from close range and took a heavy toll of our personnel. Pre-registered 88's covered the open ground to their front. The company was finally stopped by sheer weight of fire power, when within one hundred yards of Vidouville. (40)

Company B ran into much the same sort of a fight on the right flank of the 1st Battalion. This company was stopped by an enemy strong point which included an 88mm gun concealed in a house on the edge of the clearing south of La Miletiere Woods. Both companies suffered heavy casualties of killed and wounded. Company C, initially in reserve, was committed in Company A's zone of action, to attack and reduce the garrison at Vidouville. After brief reorganization, Companies B and C resumed the attack at 1130 hours and drove to within 200 yards south and southwest of the village by 1600 hours. Two platoons of Company F, commanded by Lt. John Savage, were pushed into the town to mop up, only to suffer heavily at the hands of well-placed enemy artillery fire. Company G, sent to clear out the wooded area in rear of Company B, cleaned out the 88 in the house which was holding up the entire move. Before it was finally knocked out, the gun had badly damaged two of our tanks. (41)

Meanwhile, the 3d Battalion had met very little enemy resistance at first, and was able, by 0800 hours, to reach a line running due east of Vidouville. By 1030, Companies I and K had nearly reached their objective, but Company K was forced to halt and reorganize before a troublesome enemy strong point. The second platoon of Company I, commanded by Lt. Samuel Crews, crossed the highway into an open air field, where it came under heavy, observed enemy artillery and

(40, 41) A-2, p. 27.

machine gun fire directed at its flanks, so it was forced to drop back about 800 yards. It was in this action that S/Sgt Heinzleman aided his platoon by climbing on top of a tank to direct its fire, in full view of the enemy. Sgt. Heinzleman was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for this action. The remainder of the day the entire battalion was subjected to merciless fire from enemy crew served weapons. (42)

By 1500 hours, the 2d Battalion was committed to fill the gap which existed between the 1st and 3d Battalions. The 2d Battalion mopped up the area and organized the ground between the other two battalions. (43)

At 1800 hours, all units started organizing the ground they had held and dug in for the night. The usual defenses were set up and extensive artillery concentrations were planned. During the above action, the Germans had suffered heavy losses; the 2d Infantry had also taken 24 German Prisoners of War. (44)

A hot meal had been planned for that night but the release point was pending the advance of the regiment. At 1700 hours a release point was selected; a small road junction on the edge of Vidouville. The time of release was 2000 hours. In addition, two jeeps of the 1st Battalion were to be evacuated. The jeeps had been hit by enemy shell fragments and had burned. The battalion's 3/4 ton truck was used to pull the jeeps to a defiladed position - about 300 yards from where they had been hit. The 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ton truck wrecker^{would} then proceeded to pick them up and evacuated~~d~~ them. The oxygen and acetylen tanks and air compressor were^{to be} removed from the wrecker in the event it should be hit. The best men of Service Company's Maintenance Section were picked for this job. (45)

(42,43,44) A-2, p. 28; (45) Eye witness, self.

The company left the train bivouac area at approximately 1935 hours. It arrived at the battalion release point at 1955 hours. The battalion S-4s, except the 2d Battalion's S-4, were at hand. The regimental motor officer remained at the release point until 2035 when the 2d Battalion S-4 arrived after several shellings in the vicinity. The vehicles were to revert to regimental control again, at the release point, by 2300 hours. The regimental motor officer and crew then proceeded to the 1st Battalion area. There had been no reconnaissance made of the newly won area, so it was difficult to find the area where the battalion motor sergeant and battalion motor officer were at this time. (46)

At about 2115 hours the area was finally found. The battalion motor officer and sergeant were busy evacuating the jeeps to the prearranged area. The jeeps were badly damaged, so it was decided that the best method to evacuate these vehicles was to hoist one and place it into the bed of the wrecker, while the other was held by the hoist and lashed so it wouldn't sway to and fro. The more damaged one was placed in the bed of the truck, and while in the process of securing the second one, an air raid took place. (47)

The front line was about 1200 yards ahead. Enemy fighters flew down and strafed the Infantry positions. The members of the maintenance crew scurried for shelter - some crawled under the chassis of the wrecker, others hugged the ground. This continued for at least twenty minutes, whereupon the regimental maintenance crew worked anxiously to secure the second vehicle to the wrecker. They left the area at about 2145 hours. During this time, enemy raiders were overhead. The raiders dropped flares. These flares illuminated the entire sector, so one could have read a newspaper by its

(46,47) Eye witness, self.

light. Enemy planes paid frequent visits and were quite dominant during the first nights of our operations. (48)

The battalion trains arrived at the release point, some later than others; but, while waiting for the ones that had not yet arrived, the kitchen trucks were dispersed. These trucks were dispersed amongst the hedgerows and along the main road. By 2315 the train was in tact and the trucks left the area in convoy and arrived back in the train bivouac in time for a bombing attempt by the enemy on the adjacent air field, which proved unsuccessful. In the meantime arrangements had been made to feed the battalion a hot breakfast at 0400 hours 27 July. The kitchen trucks left the bivouac en-route to the release point at 0330 hours. The battalion S-4's were on time. The kitchen trucks were to revert back to regimental control at 0600 hours. The regimental motor officer remained in the vicinity of the release point, in the vehicle dispersal area. At about 0500 hours the enemy shelled the lines, and generally the roads and road junctions. The regimental motor officer and driver, as a result of this shelling, remained under the jeep for about 45 minutes. The kitchen trucks were about 30 minutes late because of the shelling, but no damages or casualties were incurred. The enemy contemplated an attack that morning, therefore, the shelling. The kitchen train was organized and returned to the bivouac area. (49)

No attack took place that morning. The troops consumed a K-ration for the noon meal, as it was not feasible to move large trucks and feed during daylight hours. (50)

(48,49) Eye witness, self; (50) A fact known by myself.

The coordinated attack of the battalion crossed the Line of Departure at 1402 hours with Companies B and E in the assault, directly behind Division Artillery, and the 2d Infantry Cannon Company fired a heavy preparation. Both companies advanced towards Highway 3 until they were pinned down by hostile machine gun and mortar fire from two orchards across the road. Cannon Company did an excellent job placing neutralizing fires on these enemy positions. (51)

Company E reached its objective 150 yards south of Highway 3 by 1500 hours, while Company B was close behind, arriving at its phase line 30 minutes later. Another 15 minutes saw the arrival of the remainder of the assault forces, with the exception of the 3d Battalion, which didn't reach its objective until 1700 hours. All units then pushed forward to reach their final objective at 1830 hours. These moves were not without opposition, however, for at 1745 an enemy counterattack was reported forming southwest of Vidouville, between Companies B and C. Artillery laid on the area failed to stop the enemy, a company of which pushed through the lines and advanced to the town, pocketing about one platoon of Company B.

Promptly Company G, commanded by Captain P.C. Staples in Regimental Reserve, was ordered to move out with one platoon of tanks to stem the breakthrough. When they had accomplished this mission, pushing the enemy back across Highway 3, the lines were reorganized and order was restored, until several planes, both friendly and hostile, bombed and strafed the front lines, causing many casualties. (52)

The kitchen trucks, again that night, were released to the battalions at the same release point at 2000 hours, and

were to revert to regimental control at 2400 hours. As the trucks were taken over by the battalion S-4's the enemy sent over a tremendous artillery concentration on the entire regimental sector, causing great delay. At the same time, though it was not realized, the enemy was counterattacking. (53)

The enemy's main effort, mounted in strength, was directed toward Haut Vidouville. Extremely heavy fire on the center of Company C's line forced it to fall back to positions from which they had just recently jumped off. A fire fight continued, with the regiment holding a steady line, although reorganization was made difficult by virtue of units having been widely scattered by counterattacks. Losses, too, had been heavy on both sides. Many of the dead, of both sides, had to be picked up. Several parties, to evacuate the dead, were organized. The regimental motor officer was in charge of one of these groups. The regimental motor sergeant was instructed to organize and take the kitchen trucks back to the train bivouac at 2400 hours. (54)

The group to evacuate the dead set out with an empty ammunition truck and a guide to the town and vicinity of Vidouville. When all the dead that could be evacuated were picked up the truck and group returned to unload the deceased at the Regimental Graves Registration point. (55)

A hot breakfast was fed to the troops at 0500 hours 28 July, with the same procedure as described above. A K-ration was issued for the noon meal. (56)

At 1200 hours, 28 July, the 1st Battalion and elements of Companies E and G, in conjunction with the 10th Infantry on the right, launched an attack, the purpose of which was to regain positions along Highway 3. Light resistance was

(53) Eye witness, self; (54) Partly A-2, p. 29, part eye witness, self; (55,56) Eye witness, self.

quickly overcome and the troops were able to straighten the fractured lines. (57)

That night the usual procedure was carried out by the regimental motor officer. This consisted of the release of the battalion kitchen trucks. One exception was made - the release point was changed so that a routine point would not be established. One 1½ ton truck from the Antitank Company, damaged by enemy shell fragments, was evacuated with the wrecker. (58)

Enemy air activity took place as usual. The kitchen trucks reverted to regimental control at 2330 hours. (59)

A hot breakfast was served the following morning at 0500 hours, while our salvage crews hustled throughout the area collecting abandoned weapons and equipment. (60)

Our patrols operated some distance south of the highway but encountered no enemy. Reports from Bieville showed that no enemy was located there, contrary to the belief that this was a strongpoint containing artillery O.P.'s. Here a new and novel Tank Infantry technique was used for the first time as a means of reducing the troublesome hedgerow defenses. Each assault rifle squad was preceded in action by a medium M-4 tank which blasted out machine gun nests and other stubborn hedgerow installations. Some of the larger hedgerows required the services of the Engineers who placed charges to blast holes large enough for tanks to operate through. The Engineers also cleared the roads of mines and repaired the extensive road damages the Germans had left to impede our advance. (61)

Artillery had proved particularly helpful and effective in breaking up the enemy counterattacks, in dispersing his

(57) A-2, p. 30; (58,59,60) Eye witness, self; (61) A-2, p. 30.

reserve forces in their assembly areas and in counter-battery work. Casualties thus far totaled about 400 officers and men. (62)

That night the usual procedure was carried out in feeding a hot meal to the troops in position. The regimental motor officer, with four mechanics and the wrecker, proceeded to the 1st Battalion to evacuate a vehicle that had hit a mine while backing up into a small road. A squad from the Antitank Company Mine Platoon was used to clear out a few of the remaining mines around the vehicle. After the mines were cleared, the vehicle was evacuated to the field train bivouac from where it would be evacuated to the 705th Ordnance Company. The same crew was used again that night to assist in evacuating the dead from the fields in our regimental area. (63)

THE ADVANCE TO BIEVILLE, 29 JULY

A hot breakfast was fed to the troop at 0500 hours, 29 July, and a K-ration issued for the noon meal. At 0745 hours, after the officers had been briefed by their respective unit commanders, a motorized advance element crossed the Line of Departure, followed by foot elements in the following formation: Battalions abreast, 2d Battalion on the right, 3d Battalion on the left. Since no immediate resistance was encountered, the advance was rapid. The vehicles, however, were considerably slowed by the presence of numerous mine fields and booby traps, for the removal of which the attached Engineers and the Antitank Company's mine platoon accomplished promptly. Companies E and G made rapid progress to the slopes outside of Lamberville, where some hold up was experienced due to heavy enemy automatic weapons fire. Company G got out from under by reducing the strongpoint and driving rapidly south to a point opposite the left flank of the 10th

(62) A-2, p. 30; (63) Eye witness, self.

Infantry, but E Company was unable to maintain its contact because of extremely heavy resistance in the vicinity of Le Viverot. The 3d Battalion advanced to a line 600 yards south of Bieville where they were halted by heavy enemy fire which resulted in many casualties. (64)

THE REGIMENTAL MAINTENANCE SECTION
SERVICE COMPANY, 2D INFANTRY
VICINITY OF BIEVILLE, 30 JULY

In the meantime Service Company was alerted to move. This was our first move forward. Morale rose high. No one in the company knew where or what hour we were to move. The Regimental S-4 arrived at the bivouac at approximately 1100 hours. The company officers were then oriented as to where we were moving. Our new bivouac was to be in an orchard just outside of Bieville. The officers in turn oriented their respective sections. The regimental motor officer spotted and dispersed the columns in their sequence to correspond with the movement out. Drivers were instructed as to intervehicular distance and speed; air guards per each truck were appointed; machine guns were ready and checked by the gunners. (65)

The column moved out at about 1200 hours. The regimental motor officer was at the head of the column with the S-4, so that the dispersal of vehicles would be accelerated, as no advance party was sent to the bivouac. The move was about $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles. Upon arrival at the new area the main job was to get the vehicles off the road as quickly as possible and disperse them. This job was accomplished as best it could be at the time. The area was smaller than the last one, so a rearrangement was made after all the vehicles cleared the road. Some fences were removed, signs put up, and within a

(64) A-2, p. 30; (65) Eye witness, self.

short while the bivouac began to shape up. Fox holes were dug after vehicles were camouflaged. Vehicles were sent back to draw rations, gas and oil. The section had hardly set up to operate when vehicles were already coming in for repair work. The regimental motor officer, with the wrecker, went forward into Bieville to evacuate three vehicles; one was a jeep that hit a mine, the other two were damaged by shell fragments. The mine platoon had to be contacted to obtain a squad to clear mines again from around the jeep. Warrant Officer Kasse remained with the section to supervise and expedite the work. The three jeeps were evacuated in two trips without incident, though the town was under shell fire. Tire repair again began to be our major problem, as all of the roads and fields contained shell fragments. Fortunately at this early date tire patches were not critical items, so the repairs could be kept up. (66)

A hot meal was to be served the troops that night, but since the bivouac was so close there was no need for a release point. The battalion S-4's came to the bivouac area and picked up their kitchen trucks which were dispersed by battalion sections. (67)

German fighter planes made their usual visits that night. Antiaircraft fire was active as far as one could see. This was indeed a display which no 4th of July celebration could parallel, to those who had no time to imagine it was a grim reminder of a determined enemy to destroy. Through this curtain of death several enemy planes succeeded in bombing and strafing our lines and a few large supply depots. A few of these planes operated directly over the regimental sector, strafing the main road into Bieville and vicinity.

(66, 67) Eye witness, self.

Everyone hugged their fox holes, wondering if a stray bullet might come their way. This raid lasted at least 45 minutes. The company was very happy that it had taken the pains to camouflage its installations and cover all windshields, as these reflect like mirrors in the sunlight or when flares are active at night. The remainder of the night was not too quiet as the enemy's artillery worked over time. (68)

THE ADVANCE TO LA FERRIERE
31 JULY TO 3 AUGUST 1944

During the night of July 30-31 the regiment held positions south of Bieville and patrolled vigorously to the front in the vicinity of Highway 4, which was outposted by the enemy. In the morning, i.e., the 31st of July, the regiment launched a coordinated attack south, with the advance progressing slowly initially, once again due to mines and booby traps found in the hedgerows and roads. Engineer troops advanced with the Infantry to clear the roads and trails. Formation at this time was a line of skirmishers which slowed the movement considerably. A directive from the Commanding General, V Corps, aimed at speeding things up, ordered that the troops march in advance guard^{with} on the roads. When this formation had been taken up the advance became rapid. (69)

The 1st Battalion forced the 2d Battalion out of formation when the zone narrowed down to 1100 yards. From then on the advance was accomplished in column of battalions. The head of the column was halted by small arms fire from Highway 2 which runs through St. Martin des Basaces. A rapid advance was made on this road, with tanks leading Infantry, causing local resistance to fold up without ever having contacted the regimental column. Continuing in its zone of action

(68) Eye witness, self; (69) A-2, p. 31.

during the hours of darkness, the 1st Battalion, in the lead, passed through the Foret L'Eveque, reaching the village of La Ferriere at about 0200 hours. The 1st Battalion bivouacked in this vicinity for the remainder of the night. The 2d and 3d Battalions moved in rear of the 1st Battalion to successive assembly areas and were prepared to support the advance. The 2d and 3d Battalions moved into bivouac areas in the vicinity of La Vente (2d Bn) and Loraille (3d Bn). (70)

THE REGIMENTAL MAINTENANCE SECTION
VICINITY OF ST. QUEN DES BESACES, 1 AUGUST

Service Company moved at 0730 hours, 1 August, to the vicinity of St. Quen des Besaces. Vehicles were sent back to draw rations, gas, and oil. No serious damages were incurred by any vehicles that date. The regiment had consumed more gasoline at this time than it had in any previous action, as our motorized patrols were active. Several trips had to be made to the Quartermaster depot so that all of the vehicle tanks and cans could be filled. Battalion motor sergeants were bringing in vehicles that needed repairs. The most common damages which were incurred at this time were bent fenders and bumpers, broken springs, damaged exhaust pipes and mufflers. Repairs of clutch assemblies, i.e., replacement of the clutch back plate, were quite prominent. The sudden flood of repairs of this nature related one thing - vehicles were overloaded and were being driven too fast over rough terrain. Corrective measures were taken in reminding the drivers to be more careful. (71)

The regiment resumed its attack with the 1st Battalion moving from La Ferriere at 0800 hours, 1 August, toward the

(70) A-2, p. 31; (71) Eye witness, self.

Soulevre River. The six barreled German Nebelwerfer was heard for the first time in the British sector, and the 21st German Panzer Division was reported moving about in front of the Division, but no enemy tanks were reported north of the Soulevre River. The 2d Infantry was the only unit that could be used to advance, owing to the presence of the British Eighth and Eleventh Armored Divisions within the Division area. (72)

The 1st Battalion met only light resistance in their advance to the bridge and the high ground beyond, within its zone. The bridge was held by about one German platoon with machine guns and mortars. As the battalion took the enemy under fire it withdrew, abandoning weapons and equipment, and suffered only about five casualties. (73)

The 2d and 3d Battalions closed up in the rear of the 1st Battalion and held their positions. The 1st Battalion sent reconnaissance elements across the river, but no contact with the enemy was made. These patrols withdrew due to the occupation of the area by British troops in their advance to capture the city of Vire. In the meantime the regiment was alerted that it was to withdraw to the Division concentration area in the vicinity of Dampierre. During the above operations the regiment advanced some 25 kilometers against the enemy. (74)

THE DIVISION CONCENTRATION AREA
VICINITY OF DAMPIERRE, 2 AUGUST TO 4 AUGUST

The regiment moved to the Division concentration area and closed in by 1700 hours, 2 August. A hot meal was fed to all the troops that night. There was much to do. The planning and coordination was made that night, to arrange transportation to evacuate equipment which was abandoned, both German

and American, and to accomplish a thorough check on the condition of all vehicles within the regiment. It was unknown at this time how long we would remain here, therefore, it behooved all to work until the job was complete. A meeting was held at about 2200 hours in an old barn, with the motor officers and sergeants. This meeting was designed to arrange a schedule so that all vehicles and tools would be checked thoroughly. It was agreed that the check be made the following day at 1300 hours. That gave the drivers sufficient time to clean and check their vehicles first, and also gave them time to take a shower. A list was made of items to be checked so that it would be uniform throughout the regiment. The check was to be made by the battalion and separate companies, motor officers and their maintenance sections. The regimental motor officer was to spot check all units. The results of this check were to be turned in to the regimental motor officer. This check was to determine the condition of all vehicles and shortages of tools and vehicle equipment. (75)

The following morning the regimental motor officer and Mr. Kasse checked the Service Company transportation that was available and all of the tool sets. At 1300 hours the regimental motor officer covered the entire regimental sector. Mr. Kasse remained with the section to supervise the work done to vehicles being brought in. Many vehicles were brought in for minor repairs as a result of this check. A complete list of items lost was compiled and a report on the general condition of the vehicles made and submitted to the Regimental S-4. The items that were missing were generally minor ones and could be made up in a short time. The Regimental Commander was pleased at the final results. Transportation means much

(75) Eye witness, self.

to the unit commander. The section worked most of the night to complete the work that was brought in. (76)

While this was going on, the battalions and separate companies were resting and taking showers. The regimental motor officer was alerted to coordinate with the battalions and separate companies a motor movement which was to take place on 4 August to a new concentration area some 51 miles away. At 2200 hours, 3 August, the regimental motor officer and the battalion motor officers met the vehicles of two Transportation Companies at a prearranged rendezvous. A Transportation Company has forty-eight $2\frac{1}{2}$ ton trucks, making a total of ninety-six. These trucks, upon arrival, were to be broken down into battalion groups of thirty trucks to each battalion. The battalion motor officer would then take these trucks to a battalion truck dispersal area where these trucks would then be assigned to companies. Because of much prior planning, the move went off as planned; each battalion received its vehicles on time, four trucks were sent to Service Company and two trucks to Regimental Headquarters Company. An air raid took place while this breakdown of vehicles was being made. Fortunately, the raid was a few miles away and did not delay our actions. (77)

This was the beginning of many such motor movements that were to take place in the following months. Yes, this was the beginning of the hundreds of miles covered by this regiment from the Normandy Beaches to the heart of Czechoslovakia, where the regiment was at the end of hostilities. Modern war moves swiftly; this depends on vehicles. Vehicles will not last long without proper maintenance, so the one thought that is desired to be left as a result of reading (76,77) Eye witness, self.

this monograph is the following: few know of the hardships and dangers encountered by the Infantry maintenance section and the requirement of unbelievable ingenuity used by mechanics to repair vehicles when parts are not available, when supply and evacuation lines are long. Remember, the army of yesterday moved and fought on its stomach; the army of today and tomorrow moves and fights on wheels! (78)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In making a study of this operation it can be seen that the 2d Infantry Regiment accomplished a mission which only a unit of its enviable past and its experience could have accomplished. It was this unit's first action in combat. It had accomplished its mission. This action gave the unit a feeling of pride, to know that its honor had been carried high, as it was in the past.

Let us now analyze the actions of the Regimental Maintenance Section. This section, a part of the Transportation Platoon, of which the regimental motor officer was the platoon leader, functioned with the smoothness that it had learned in its maneuvers and experiences since it arrived overseas. The part that each man was to play was stressed. The importance of a good and thorough job done was realized by all. Cooperation was the best that one could ask. Time was no problem; jobs were completed, even though men worked by flashlight. The men understood each other and their capabilities, so that good team work went without saying.

Those points upon which we can criticize are:

1st Inadequate time at the staging area was allotted to complete a good, thorough de-waterproofing of all vehicles.

2nd Vehicles came in piecemeal off of the transport ships and often were not guided to the proper assembly areas.

(78) Self, experience.

This resulted in vehicles being lost for several hours from the unit commanders who were very concerned as to their whereabouts.

3rd Vehicles initially were not dug into the ground, as one protects an artillery piece.

4th No provisions were ever made in providing a gas and oil truck; as a result, long hours were wasted accumulating gas cans, drawing gas, then issuing these same cans back to the units. Time could have been saved here and used more beneficially somewhere else.

5th Few maps were available to members of this section who had to travel over the whole regimental sector.

6th On our first move to the vicinity of Bieville, 30 July, no member of the unit was sent forward on an advance party to guide the vehicles in. This happened because not even Service Company Commander knew where or when we would move. The company was merely alerted, then told to move.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

1. Continuous supervision in the use and care of all transportation is essential even in combat. Most unit commanders overlook this fact, until a vehicle is deadlined, then they realize how important transportation really is.

2. Cooperation is essential at all times. Without the cooperation of the battalions in evacuation of disabled vehicles much time would have been lost.

3. Orders must get down to all personnel concerned. In several cases battalion S-4's were not informed as to the time or place of the release of their kitchen trucks.

4. Advance elements should always precede a movement if at all possible, to plan the organization of the bivouac area. Sending a representative from each section is the most practical way of solving this problem. Each representative can then guide his section into their area without confusion, or without blocking traffic.

5. Camouflage must be continuous. Old or misused camouflage is as bad as none at all.

6. Personnel involved in motor movements should be notified as early as possible. Planning and coordination make for successful movements. Little or no planning at all is done if personnel concerned are not warned.

7. All unit commanders must take an active interest in their transportation, otherwise when the time comes that their vehicles are needed most, either you will not have them, or you will have needless mechanical failures.

8. Too many hands in planning and executing a motor movement cause confusion and delay.

9. Scheduled maintenance must be continuous even in combat.

10. Maintenance records must be up-to-date and portray a true picture of the current maintenance. Paper maintenance will not preserve your transportation.

11. Mechanics must be resourceful and reliant, and take personal pride in their work. Proper selection of personnel will solve this problem.