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History of the 507th Frecht Inf's Participation in the  
NORMANDY Campaign  
5 Jun-15 Jul 44

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HISTORY OF THE 507TH PARACHUTE INFANTRY'S PARTICIPATION IN THE NORMANDY CAMPAIGN

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The 507th Parachute Infantry took off from Barkeston Heath and Fulbeck at 2350, 5 June 1944. The regiment flew out to the W coast of the Cotentin Peninsula, turned east between the Channel Islands and made a landfall at 0202 near Baubigny. Flak consisting mostly of 20mm. and MG greeted us at the coast and accompanied us all the way to the DZ. Several Officers and men were hit by flak in the planes and one plane was shot down, fortunately after most of the troops were out of it. The night was fair and clear, the wind about 12 miles per hour. With the exception of two elements, one of which jumped at Montebourg and one S of Carentan, the dispersion was excellent, although it's center was somewhat E of the DZ. Jumping commenced at 0232 and ended at 0312. Jump casualties were insignificant.

The Regiment was preceded by 1/2 hour by it's three Bn. radar teams. Unfortunately it turned out that the DZ was occupied and covered by fire by the Germans so that from the moment of landing they had to fight for their lives. On that account neither Lt. Joseph nor O'Brian of the 1st and 3rd Bns respectively were able to operate their radar machines. Furthermore, Lt. McGill of the 2nd Bn broke both legs on the jump and his second, Lt. Ames, was only able to assemble three men. Among them however was the radar set and it's operator, Sgt. Duff. In spite of the German fire whistling around them, they succeeded in setting this set up at 0220 and operated it until 0300. After that Ames folded up his set and successfully got his men back to Col. Ostberg's position which he reached about 0700. This brilliant feat was largely responsible for the comparatively good jump pattern.

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Although the jump pattern was fairly compact it centered on both sides of the Merderet River, the total area was large and adventures of small groups rejoining the regiment are much too numerous to tell here. However, Colonel Millett's story deserves some kind of recognition. Colonel Millett jumped on the DZ and assembled 40 men from "D" Company, led by Captain Tolle. With this force he attacked Amfreville about 1000. Captain Tolle was killed and at 1200 the regimental commander seeing that he was sustaining casualties and making no progress with-drew to a position southeast of Les Laudes, which he organized for defense. The Germans attempted to develop his position that night, but excellent fire discipline was maintained and the Germans remained in ignorance of his exact position. The next day he set up a road block and ambushed a convey of seven trucks. That night the Germans again attacked with a reconnaissance force but still without success. Meanwhile, Colonel Millett got in touch with the Division Command and also with Captain Tayler, who brought in 250 men. Captain Tayler had taken the town of Fresville on the way south, butchering many Germans. Colonel Millett also picked up Captains P. F. Smith, Frank, and Allyn, along with some men so that by the evening of D plus three he was at the head of a force of 425 men. That evening he received an order from Division to fall back to Colonel Timmes' position.

Meanwhile, Colonels Maloney and Ostberg had assembled a force of about 150 men at 305980 and joined General Gavin at Force "A" Headquarters at 0430. This force covered a glider landing and in doing so had a brush with the Germans while trying to secure equipment from the gliders. Some of the equipment was left in the hands of the enemy after the Force had suffered casualties. General Gavin ordered our regiment east to the railroad embankment and south along the railroad to the point where the road to La Fiere crosses the railroad. Here the group halted and reorganized. This march was made in good order and no losses were incurred. It arrived at the reorganization point at about 0600.



Scouts brought back news that the bridge over the Merderet was covered by enemy fire, so General Gavin ordered Colonel Maloney to make a wide encircling movement down the river. To cross near or at Chef du Pont in order to drive the enemy from the La Fiere bridge. Colonel Maloney set out on this mission with about 150 men. Shortly afterwards word was received that the Chef du Pont bridge was clear of the enemy, so the General, taking with him Colonel Ostberg and about 75 men, set out for it by the shortest possible route down the railroad. Captain Dickerson was left in command of the remainder of the high ground above La Fiere with the mission of holding this bridge with a battalion of 505, until such a time as the movement via Chef du Pont succeeded. Stragglers were coming in all the time; so that at 0900 when Colonel Ostberg left for Chef du Pont Captain Dickerson had with him about 300 men.

Colonel Ostberg reached Chef du Pont before Colonel Maloney, having taken a much shorter route. Finding the Germans in possession of the town he promptly drove them out and onto the bridge. Behind the bridge the enemy had some cover but behind that he was exposed to our fire on the causeway over the swamp, and being afraid to run the open causeway he turned to hold the bridge. The enemy force as estimated to be a reinforced platoon, Colonel Ostberg deployed his men, opened fire on the enemy, killed the ones in foxholes on the near side of the bridge, and then found that the enemy on the far side of the bridge was still able to cover the causeway the bridge with fire. Being unable to fire on these men directly, Colonel Ostberg gallantly stepped out on the bridge to rush it; but a burst of machine gun fire hit him in the chest, depriving the regiment of his services for the remainder of the campaign.

Colonel Maloney arrived about this time and he too tried to rush the bridge without success. Colonel Maloney then appointed Captain Creek to command the part of the 507th at the Chef du Pont bridge.

Captain Creek began by fishing Colonel Ostberg out of the swamp. He then occupied the near or east end of the bridge and settled down to a long, bitter, and dangerous combat across the length of the bridge where it was impossible to dispose of the enemy unless you raised your head out of your hole and it was very difficult to raise your head out of your hole without being disposed of yourself. This bloody fight lasted all day. At 1700 Colonel Maloney withdrew under orders, leaving Captain Creek with 34 men. Hardly had Colonel Maloney left when the enemy opened up with heavy and accurate artillery fire that killed or injured 14 of Captain Creek's men in a few minutes. Under cover of their artillery fire a party of 75 to 100 Germans approached to attack on the east bank of the river from Captain Creek's left rear. Captain Creek realized the delicate situation he was in, and prepared to meet the worst. Fortunately, a staff officer from Division arrived in the nick of time. Captain Creek explained the precarious situation to him, and this officer was able to get reinforcements up in time to frighten off the German flank attack which never materialized so that the situation was completely reversed in our favor. By cleverly disposing the reinforcements in his left flank, Captain Creek was able to get some enfilade fire on the German position, killing all except three, who ran away. At nightfall, Captain Creek rushed a platoon over the bridge and followed with the rest of his force. This force held the bridge all night until relieved by the 508 next morning.

While this action was taking place at Chef du Pont, Colonel Timmes had landed south of Colonel Ostberg's position. After he had assembled 30 men he heard the sounds of a fight in the direction of Amfreville which he imagined to be "F" Company's attack on that town. Thinking he could offer a useful diversion with the force he had assembled he proceeded to Amfreville and attacked it from the east. The Germans held the town in force, however, and Colonel Timmes' group made no progress, suffering some casualties. Believing he could do better with

and better organization, at daylight he withdrew to a point near the swamp, 1000 yards east of the town, reorganized, took up a defensive position and sent Lt. Levy with a reinforced squad to reconnoiter the La Fiere bridge. Lt. Levy found the east end of the bridge unoccupied, seized it, and reported the situation to Colonel Timmes. With his worries about his communications to the rear thus alleviated, and expected momentarily that the rest of the regiment would cross to join him, Colonel Timmes set about preparing another more careful and more thorough attack on Amfreville, which did not materialize due to the concentration of our own artillery falling there. When first Colonel Maloney and then Colonel Ostberg left La Fiere for Chef du Pont, Captain Dickerson had put the rest of the regiment in position at La Fiere to defend the crossing and act as reserve for the 505th. There they found a body of enemy in some houses and fortification at the east end of the bridge. These German positions were excellent for covering the approaches to the bridge. Furthermore, at the expense of a good many casualties, we discovered they were held by men determined to fight it out. Our attack lasted all morning and into the afternoon without gaining any ground. However, with all attrition on both sides by 1430 they had enough. The balance of them surrendered. Captain Schwartzwalder, at the head of "G" Company, crossed immediately, and formed a bridgehead to the west with Lt. Levy's patrol and 80 men of his own.

It seemed that everyone's confidence and unconcern throughout the morning had been justified. The field was ours, we had beaten the Germans wherever we had met, and had only to concentrate to deliver the attack on Amfreville and give them a yet more serious beating. The Germans had been unable to strike an effective blow anywhere against any of our positions after 12 hours after the jump. But just at this critical juncture occurred one of those upsets so common in war that deprived us of fruits of one days work, split the regiment in half, and covered Amfreville so effectively that instead of taking Amfreville with one company in three hours,



as we had planned, it required two divisions almost a week to take it. When Captain Schwartzwalder crossed he was supposed to be followed by an element from another regiment while the 507 covered that crossing and followed behind. There was some confusion and delay in the march order and nobody followed "G" Company. During this time interval, the Germans arrived on the west end of the bridge, drove Captain Schwartzwalder out of his bridgehead at Flaux, and occupied it, thereby denying us the use of the bridge. Lt. Levy with his patrol from "D" Company hung on to the bridgehead and covered Captain Schwartzwalder who withdrew to Col. Timmes' position 1000 yards up the road. Lt. Levy requested help in all directions, but none was forthcoming. He held on successfully, however, until the Germans began getting him and Colonel Timmes. Then, not having enough men in that direction as well as in the others and seeing no signs of help coming to him, he withdrew fighting. His exploit matches the stand made by the Germans on the west end of the bridge in the morning., but in Lt. Levy's action nothing was gained but honor, whereas the German defense of the bridge had gained time for them.

Thus the whole aspect of the situation changed and the Germans made us realize it immediately with newly brought up mortars and artillery. All idea of crossing the bridge after Captain Schwartzwalder was abandoned. Colonel Timmes, grasping the key importance of the bridge, forgot his attack on Amfreville and prepared to make a night attack on Flaux. With Captain Schwartzwalder's reinforcements, his group numbered approximately 175 men. The enemy fire on Captain Dickerson's position changed first from being insignificant to being harrassing then dangerous and finally extremely effective. With Colonel Maloney in command of the 507th, was ordered to relieve a battalion of the 505 south of the road. Marching via the railroad it arrived at the assigned position at 2000. The German fire which had been hot north of the road, when we left had grown hotter during our march and on our arrival we were welcomed by prolonged and repeated blasts of every weapon the

Germans had available. Under this fire we crawled into position on the heights overlooking the Merderet and dug in. With insufficient weapons to reply effectively we immediately replied with what machine guns we had, hoping for the best. Between 2100 and 2200 three pieces of our division artillery opened up on the enemy, silencing them somewhat. The effectiveness of our artillery seemed to encourage us more than it discouraged the Germans. The Germans managed to keep up their intense fire until well after dark. At perhaps midnight their mortar and small arms fire ceased, but their artillery continued to pound all night. The enemy troops proved to be elements of the 91st Infantry Division.

Next morning, D plus one, the regiment received an order to fall back on the Ste. Mere Eglise Road and take up a position in support of the 505th which was being attacked from the north from the direction of Gourbesville. After being relieved by another battalion of the 505 we moved out at 0830 under sniper and artillery fire. At 1000 we reached our new position, rested, reorganized. Col. Maloney organized the fragments of the regiment with him into three companies commanded by Captains Creek, Rae, and Brakenecke. These officers in turn appointed platoon leaders within their companies.

At 1600 we received another order from Division to return to the bridge at La Fiere in order to relieve the Battalion of the 505 that had been there all day. As we assembled to move up, the German artillery descended upon us, following our route of march up the road to the bridge.

Again in the same position we had occupied the night of D, and D plus 1, the Germans plastered us with mortar and machine gun fire. At first we thought we would be in for a hard time, but little by little the enemy fire died away and after dark it stopped altogether. Without doubt this was one of the most prolonged fires the Germans delivered against us during the course of the entire campaign. It had lasted uninterruptedly for thirty hours and reflected the



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favorable condition of the enemy supplies at the start of the campaign. Later on lack of transportation seemed insufficient to meet supply demands.

The next morning, D plus 2, the enemy started again with his mortars; he also introduced to us a new menace, the sniper. Germans had apparently crossed the Merderet River at night, and by daylight they were firing on us from all directions with rifles and Schmeizzers. Any of our men who were not actually in their fox holes were in danger of being fired upon. They were difficult to find as they never seemed to move. A burst of sniper activity was almost always followed by a lull and then another burst and so on. It provided us with a lesson in scouting technique. The effectiveness of the snipers' firing was not so great but it did afford the enemy a way of definitely locating our dispositions for mortar and artillery concentrations.

During the morning of D plus 2 we held our position above La Fiere, receiving considerable punishment from German mortars. We had nothing with which to reply to their fire but IMG's, which were relatively ineffective against the German defenses. About noon, however, we were sent a 60mm. mortar and an 81mm. mortar. The effect these weapons had on the Germans was so considerable that our crews fired with enthusiasm. Later we received some 50 caliber machine guns which we didn't use right away and after still some friendly artillery supported us. Poor communications and the fact that the fire was directed by inexperienced infantry officers notwithstanding the net result seemed to have impressed the Germans. Their reaction wasn't strong and we guessed that by this time their ammunition was running low.

On the side of the river, however, around Colonel Timmes' position, the Germans had continued their mortar, artillery and small arms fire without let-up since the afternoon of D-Day. From the night of D-Day our artillery which had done so much good for the morale of our group east of the river had fallen on

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the west end of the bridge just where Timmes expected to attack, and for fear of getting shelled by it, he had to call the attack off. Soon after the Germans hemmed him in against the swamp so that he couldn't move and punished him unmercifully. He was in fact in a dangerous situation because he had no line of retreat except to cross the exposed swamp and he couldn't hold out indefinitely without help against the superior number of Germans. As long as the Germans held the bridge it was not apparent where that help could come from. He solved that difficult problem by vigorous resistance and an undiscouraged determination which he imparted to his men by an example of patience and impetubability. To that he added a threat to shoot any weakling who might flinch before the enemy's fire. He had with him when he settled down to this hard fight 175 men, and thanks to his energy and the effectiveness of his heavy mortars he managed to bring out 120 of them unhurt. He had no radio with him, so he sent out patrols in an effort to contact Regiment. None of these succeeded in getting across the river until the morning of D plus 2 when Lts. Marr and Chambers both got across by different routes and reported Colonel Timmes' situation. Division sent him back word to cross the stream that night and rejoin the Regiment which he prepared to do; but circumstances changed before he executed the movement.

On the east bank we suspended firing at nightfall in a good frame of mind because we had that day clearly established fire superiority over the Germans. Furthermore, we heard that a battalion of the 325 was going to cross the river at night on a sunken road and take the bridge by a flank attack from Col. Timmes' position to the north of us. In the morning, D plus three, however, we heard that his attack had failed, and that at 1045, after an artillery preparation of 15 minutes another battalion of the 325 was to pass through the position above the bridge and assault it from the east. If the 325 hesitated or lost time we were to cross ourselves, Captain Rae's company leading and Captain Creek's and

Brakonecke's following if needed. We had an hour to prepare ourselves for this and then the 325 appeared and passed through to the accompaniment of the loudest and heaviest American fire we have yet heard. We fired off everything we had ourselves, and guided the 325 up to the bridge where we left them with the problem of crossing with our sincerest best wishes. The Germans, realizing what was happening, opened up too, with small arms fire that covered the causeway from end to end for 1500 yards with heavy fire. There was no cover whatsoever on the causeway, and if life wasn't absolutely impossible it seemed very difficult to maintain out there. Our artillery stopped, and the German artillery didn't begin. The 325 looked dubiously on this minatory scene that was soon to become appalling, and fluctuating. General Gavin stepped out onto the road and called on the 507 to show the way, and Captain Rae, bringing his company with him, started to cross. Seeing this, the 325 started to cross also. Colonel Maloney exposed himself without thought at the head of the bridge, his face covered with blood from a wound he had received, and led the men onto the bridge with exhortations and threats and saw to it that Captain Rae's company was followed. The attack was canalized by the causeway over which the attack proceeded in two files, and on account of the field of action (over 500 yards) our concentration in it, and our complete exposure to enemy fire, there ensued one of the most exciting and bloody scenes of the campaign. The hail of bullets had a certain delaying effect so that the column moved comparatively slow in spite of the efforts of the more courageous who ran up and down the middle of the road urging men on. Men were hit right and left and either fell over in the road or in the swamp. If they could move they moved back even more slowly and painfully towards the American east bank. By the time the head of the column reached Flaux two files of attack were doubled by two equally strong columns of bleeding men moving to therear which gave the movement a peculiar escalatory aspect. In spite of this fire and our losses, we maintained our forward



movement, parachutists and gliders together, broke into town and drove the Germans out. Their hearts were gladdened by the sight of the German corpses thicker than ours; and so encouraged our forces pushed on behind them without delay as far west as the town of Le Motey, just outside of Amfreville. Meanwhile, the German artillery along the Flaux-LeMotey and on the bridge. This artillery was violent and effective, and since we were following the Germans down the road the results were renumerative for the Germans, it was the thickest field of corpses of the campaign.

In Le Motey we were stopped by a volley of our own artillery fire. The 325 wanted to hold the town; the parachutists having had plenty of time during the last four days to meditate the folly of not covering the bridge, wanted to take up a defensive position on the crest west of the bridge and protect the bridgehead. So the parachutists under Lts. Wisner and Eskridge left the 325 personnel in the town and set up a line on the high ground covering the bridge. Capt. Rae then reported our position to General Gavin, who shortly relieved us, and assigned us as reserve for the 325 men who were made responsible for the defense of the bridgehead. Lt. Ardziejewski led a patrol which contacted Colonel Timmes without any trouble. Meanwhile Captain Creek's and Brakonecke's companies of our regiment were alerted to follow Rae's company over the bridge if they were needed. When it was found that they weren't they were left in their position to hold the bridge in case of a reverse, and to act as a reserve. They stayed there all day under a heavy German shelling from which they suffered.

Captain Rae's company rested from 1300 to 1500 when the Germans attacked the 325. The regiment had had such a clear lesson in value of our cooperation in the morning that they insisted that we cooperate similarly with them in the afternoon and do it without delay, This we cheerfully did, but when we got up on the heights west of the bridge we found that the 325 had been driven out of Le Motey, but was successfully hanging on to the heights. So, finding nothing to do, we wished them

CONFIDENTIAL

the best of luck, and got into some ditches where we spent an hour while the Germans pounded us with some more heavy mortar fire which inflicted casualties. About 1700 the 325 called for help again; and then again, General Gavin, standing on the road junction thanked the officers for what they had already done and told us what more we had to do. The Germans were still trying to reach the junction with mortar fire. We went out feeling pleased not to have been mortared while talking to the General and found the 325 on both sides of the hedgerows of the Le Motey road exchanging volleys of fire with the Germans in the hedgerows opposite while six tanks in the orchard behind thundered with artillery and machine gun fire. The bushes were so full of 325 men that we didn't know quite what to do with our own; and spent a minute foolishly receiving fire without doing anything about it. Although no doubt the 325 was just as pleased to see us as we had been pleased to see them in the morning.

Lt. Broadway then suggested that we take the town rather than do nothing so five officers drove forward and took the town and engaged the Germans in it. Some men from both regiments came up to join them after a while, and then in about half an hour the tanks came down the road shooting every German they could see or hear. It was difficult to communicate through the thick side of the tank to indicate just what we wanted shot but their intervention was decisive; and when they withdrew just before dark there were no active Germans in the town. Captain Rae's company in conjunction with the 325 held on a line west of town all night within hearing distance of the Germans and at daybreak the 90th Division passed through us pushing west. At 1100 D plus four, the Regiment was relieved and withdrawn to the west bank of the Merderet Rivert to defend the La Fiere brodge. The enemy during this engagement consisted of the 1058 Infantry and 191st Engineers of the 91st Division.

While all this was going on, Colonel Millett started to execute his order, to fall back on Col. Timmes' position. On D plus two the enemy had harrassed

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

his position all day; and in the evening he received heavy mortar fire in addition to small arms fire. At 0300 he moved out on a route that was to take him around Amfreville to the North but he ran into a German position north of Amfreville which broke up his column and dispersed a large part of it.

Untroubled by the fact that he was alone in the heart of the German division area Colonel Millett had determined to hold the ground he had been ordered to hold and to assist the division to take its objectives rather than fall back to the river and the protection of the rest of the division. With that end in view he sustained himself five days against everything the Germans had or could bring against him, always master of himself, his men and the Germans. He enjoyed fighting as a sport but he never forgot himself as Colonel and always set an example of energy and firmness.

Colonel Millett, Major Pearson, and Captain Taylor were captured, Captain Taylor being wounded. Captains Allyn and Frank were killed. That left Captain P. F. Smith who rallied the remnants of Colonel Millett's command. He proceeded east under such heavy pressure from the Germans that he had to think twice to remember that he was following a divisional order and not being driven by the enemy. He reached the river north of Colonel Timmes' position, turned south, and found his way blocked by the Germans in force at the Village at 3098. Captain Smith went into position and blasted the Germans who reacted immediately by fire. The fight swayed back and forth without result which was no good for the Captain's purposes because if he couldn't move he was as good as beaten. In the crux of the engagement the heroic soldier Gandara of "D" Company stepped erect into the German lines armed with a LMG which he fired from the carry and knocked out two German machine guns before he was killed. It was enough to settle the issue for Captain Smith stepped through over Gandara's glorious corpse and a lot of German Corpses. After that the Germans couldn't bring themselves to face the redoubtable Smith who watched in peace the fight at La Fiere. He rejoined the regiment the



next day with a force of 140 men. Major Pearson, Captain Taylor, and some men escaped subsequently and rejoined us. Major Pearson was in condition to fight.

The Regiment rested at La Fiere until D plus seven. During this time only action it saw was a bombing raid by the German Air Force which inflicted casualties. On D plus seven we moved to a field between Picuaville and Pont l'Abbe, Colonel Maloney commanding, Captain Creek commanding the 1st Battalion, Lt. Col. Timmes the 2nd, and Major Davis the 3rd. We were ordered to relieve the 90th Division which had just taken Pont l'Abbe, and to continue and attack to the West in the direction of St. Sauveur le Vicomte, the 325 on our left and the 9th on our right. At 0800 on D plus 8 we found ourselves in a column of battalions on the road marching up to the line of departure, 3rd Bn. leading, followed by the 2nd and the 1st. The 325 got on the same road we were using and some confusion and delay resulted. The Germans took advantage of that to shell us. But the 3rd Bn., in the lead, got to the line of departure in time to cross it at 0900. They took the hill mask in front of the line of departure in a brisk fight in which they lost the splendid Lt. Erwin, who had repeatedly shown his bravery to his fellow soldiers. The 3rd Bn., then turned north to block Renouf. Here they were subjected to a considerable mortar and artillery fire which lasted all day and inflicted casualties. The 9th Division which was supposed to take Renouf and cover the Regiment's right flank, spent the day trying to take the town, and finally did later in the afternoon with the help of the Air Force.

Meanwhile the 2nd Bn. followed by the 1st, continued to attack to the West. They made and kept contact with the 325 on the left and advanced 1000 yards with the vigor and speed characteristic of Col. Timmes' leadership, driving weak elements of Germans before them. Our artillery was very active, very powerful, and very encouraging, but not sufficiently flexible to adjust itself to the speed of Col. Timmes' Bn. At 1500 it came down on him. The Bn. was forced to take cover, and the officers thought that the barrage was heavier than any German

barrage they had been subjected to throughout the campaign. We had some casualties and withdrew, pending the lifting of the artillery, and discovered that the 9th Division by not coming up left our right flank exposed. Just then the Germans opened up with a machine gun and threw some confusion into the Bn which was already disconcerted by the impartially by which the Germans artillery dealt it's blows. The artillery lifted, we hustled the machine gun out of the house on the right flank, the 1st Bn moved up in the right and abreast of the 2nd; and the advance was continued until it ran into the Germans in position South and just east of Bonneville. By then the right flank of the 1st Bn was exposed also. The 325 on our left flank was stopped by the same enemy position. Col. Timmes and Captain Creek formed a plan together. Some tanks came up, and after an artillery preparation, Col. Timmes assaulted the enemy's position in front, using the tanks on the road to blast out the Germans positions, while Captain Creek enveloped them from the right. There was a hard fight on the German position but just as it was getting dark we were masters of the situation. The 325 attacked immediately and came up abreast of us. It was too late to do anything but bivouac on the battlefield which we did under one of the heaviest German shellings of the campaign.

Next morning, D plus 8 (June 15) at daybreak we resumed the attack and quickly pushed forward 1000 yards. There we were greeted with a shower of our own artillery which inflicted casualties, stopped the advance, and upset the men's feelings. The effects was very like knocking the wind out of a man, and it took some time to stop the artillery and more to get the men back in an aggressive frame of mind. That gave us time to notice that the 325 was not up on our left and the 9th Division on our right had not left their positions of the night before so that we were exposed on both flanks. Furthermore it gave the Germans time to set up a line of resistance so that when we finally did try to advance, we couldn't. That morning there was a heavy fight in which we mortared and machine-gunned each other vigorously. Casualties were high. The Germans brought up tanks which

added to our misery. Our own tanks came up too, but we lost one on the way up and since the 325 wasn't there to cover their left flank they were pretty ineffective all morning. About noon the 325 came up abreast of us and our tanks got into position to help. That seemed to be enough to convince the Germans and there was a short lull for lunch. The 3rd Battalion was trying to fill the gap between the right flank and Renouf where the 9th Division apparently was. After lunch the Germans resumed fighting and the fight went on as hard as ever all afternoon. They got a tank in the corner of one of our hedgerows and proceeded to enfilade us with armor piercing ammunition. Their mortars walked up and down our hedgerows in regular cadence. The gallant Lt. Keenan was killed in his mortar OP, while giving the Germans back what we were getting. Having no other unit to help, Col. Maloney sent Headquarters Company up to reinforce the 2nd Bn. They arrived at about noon and promptly lost Sgt. Pipolo, who caught a burst of shrapnel in the chest, wounding him severely. Pvt. Frank of Headquarters Co. was in the ditch when our tank was knocked out. A man popped out and said something about the rest of the crew being helpless from concussion. With a superb disregard of himself and enemy machine gun fire, Frank climbed up on the tank and pulled the rest of the crew out, losing his arm doing it. He won the admiration of the entire regiment.

At about 1800 this bitter and bloody fight ended indecisively. The 505 relieved us, and as we marched off we heard the regular kmp..kmp..kmp.. of the mortar salvos with which the Germans saluted their new guests. We lost 192 men in these two days of fighting. The enemy were principally elements of the 243rd Division.

We marched back to Pont l'Abbe and were trucked down to Francquetot that night to take over the positions of the 508 in the Buezeville bridgehead south of the Duove. Colonel Raff was now sent to command the regiment, all hope of rescuing Colonel Millett having been lost. It was a difficult thing to replace

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the discipline and authority that Col. Millett had succeeded in winning for himself, especially in a regiment whose composition was changing so fast as one key man after another was hurt and replaced by someone else. The new Col. appeared on the evening of 15 June and quietly started to work so smoothly that for some time we hardly knew that there had been a change in command. But as time went on every one ran into Colonel Raff in person or into his authority and by the end of the campaign all the regiment had been made to understand just that we were a regiment now with regimental functions and procedures and not just like a mob of warlike saboteurs. This regiment, once it submits itself to enemy fire, enjoys fighting for fighting's sake. The new Colonel harnessed this fine and valuable spirit, and directed it to gain assigned objectives.

That night Captain Brummitt rejoined us with 80 men. The pilots for the Hq Co., 3rd Bn., had failed to reach the DZ and most of the company had jumped at Graignes, eight miles south of Carentan. In the course of the next two days, 180 men collected here, and command passed to Major Johnston, executive officer of the 3rd Bn. This force was composed of the greater part of Headquarters 3rd Bn and various stragglers from the 101st Division plus some Frenchmen and a couple of Spaniards. Being so far away from where he was ordered to be, Major Johnston considered that the best thing to do was hold Graignes and interfere with communications to Carentan until they could make contact with friends. This he proceeded to do. German activity was slight but constant, and until D plus 5 they maintained themselves with the help of sympathetic Frenchmen. When the Germans didn't come to fight they sent out patrols to fight with them. The fight for Carentan was long and hard and there seemed to be no immediate prospects for relief. On the evening of D plus 4 they killed a German whose papers showed him to be one of the reconnaissance battalion of an armored Division. The next morning two men went out to bury the man, and were met by fire which drove them back and seemed unusually heavy. Captain Brummitt went to investigate it

and became clear to him that the Germans were in force and preparing to attack. Graignes is on top of a hill which offers commanding ground and good observation as observation goes in Normandy. Major Johnston has been maintaining an all-ground defense, but the Germans were approaching from the south. Captain Brummitt reinforced the southern front and prepared to receive them. The Germans reconnoitered his position in force at noon, and by 1600 had found out enough about disposition to launch an attack. At that time they laid down a heavy artillery preparation and a mortar barrage which destroyed communications and assaulted. After a lull at 2000 they laid down a heavy artillery preparation and assaulted again. The fight was ferocious and sanguinary. By nightfall they had pushed our lines back in certain spots. After dark they overran the position and mopped up the town. Between 0100 and 0200 Captain Brummitt withdrew into the swamp to the west, the German shooting into his rear as he went. He re-grouped his men at the foot of the hill in the swamp and moved off to a pre-designated assembly area where he spent the day. Then he picked up Lt. Naughton who had had a similar adventure. Next day they started toward Carentan and ran into our lines two days later (15 June) and Captain Brummitt had fought a Bn. of enemy all day, with 180 men. After being forced out of his position he maintained the integrity of his command over unfavorable swampy terrain, and succeeded in bringing back for useful service 100 men. This remarkable feat required a high degree of leadership and determination. He was materially assisted by the superior services of Lts. Wagner and Naughton, besides others who didn't get out. 80 of the Personnel he brought back belonged to our regiment, but Major Johnston was left in the hands of the enemy.

When we reached Francquetot we were told that it was a quiet sector where there were few Germans and less activity. We were in position before dawn 16 June and in fact we saw no Germans and were not troubled with them. The 2nd Bn on our left, stretched out in a series of strongpoints from Baupre to Coigny. The 3rd

Bn. picked up the line at Coigny and carried it to Francquetot. The 1st Bn. in reserve was at Francquetot, itself, except for "B" Company which was placed to watch the Vindefontaine bridge. We made contact with the rest of the 82nd Div. Although the Germans let us get in there without trouble they immediately set to work to make us miserable. They dropped mortars and artillery on the 2nd Bn's position along the swamp shortly after daylight; and kept it up intermittently all the time that we were there. At noon they ambushed a combat patrol between the 2nd and 3rd Bns position and killed the brave and able Sgt. Lamsen of "E" Company. That afternoon they dropped a considerable number of artillery shells exactly in the 2nd Bn C.P. wounding 5 men on the staff, including Col. Timmes, with one shell. Thereafter they shelled our OP's and mortared our front lines all the time we were there. The 2nd and 3rd Bns patrolled the enemy's position every night; and in a few days the strong points of the hostile OPL were clearly established from la Rue de Baux to the Dueve, but penetrating this line was another problem, but we were far from being as skillful as the Germans. Finally Lt Berman succeeded in getting through between Pont Auny and Les Sablons. His patrol work continued with increasing success until 3 July.

Meanwhile the 1st Battalion received the order to cross the swamp, and take Vindefontaine in conjunction with an attack by the rest of the Division south along the Dueve farther to the West. The Germans had blown up the bridge, but our engineers had put in a foot bridge 500 yards north of the main bridge the night of 18-19 June. At 2400 that night, Major Pearson commanding received an artillery preparation so good that everyone who saw it praised it; and, at 0015, they started to cross. "A" Company leading, got across the bridge, continued west through the town to it's northern edge to the crossroads at 264889 which it seized and prepared to attack. It met no resistance. "C" Company followed and drove some Germans before them who were trying to lay antipersennel mines. They lost some men from the mines, captured some Germans and then halted to re-organize



500 yards east of town. There ensued a short, hard fight during which "C" Company lost 21 men and drove the Germans out in twenty minutes. Major Pearson, who had brought "B" Company across the river after "C" Company, now sent "B" around "C"'s flank, took the town and moved south of it. By 0800 the Major was in position on his objectives and proceeded to hold them against the German mortar and small arms fire. Meanwhile the Germans attacked "A" Company, commanded by Lt. Carr, with mortars and tanks. Lt. Carr had a hard time of it; the only help he could get was from the artillery. But Lt. Hayden climbed a tree and directed the artillery so well on the tanks that he knocked out one and held off the others until Lt. Carr's position was saved. On the 20th the 508 passed through our lines leaving the 1st Battalion on the front line to take German rifle and mortar fire until 3 July. The First Bn. lost 35 men in this operation. The enemy were the elements of the 265 Division (894 and 895 Regiments).

On the 25th of June the Regiment was relieved on the Baupre Peninsula by the 90th Division, and 2100 the 2nd and 3rd Bns, being shelled on the march moved behind the First Battalion while the Regimental OP was being moved from Francquetot to Vindefontaine. There the regiment stayed until 3 July 1944, the 1st Bn catching mortar and small arms fire constantly while the other two battalions were shelled intermittently. This shell fire was more of a nuisance than a danger, but one night a shot killed Lt. Wagner and wounded Major Davis. The loss of these two excellent officers was a blow to the 3rd Battalion. The German OPL became easier to cross either because they had thinned it out or because we had learned how to penetrate it, or both; And every night we had patrols in enemy territory. They left from any place on the division front, and got deeper and deeper into enemy territory so that eventually we learned a lot about the line Forêt de Mont Caestre - la Poterie ridge, hill 131. It was during this time that Sgt Coleman of "E" Company was sent alone to reconnoiter behind the enemy lines from our lines at Hotot-Ceigny. He crept around the first enemy machine gun, hid in a cart full of hay to escape a German

patrol. Taking advantage of the fact that the Frenchman driving the cart was going his way he rode with him across the Pretot-San Jores road. There he left the cart and penetrated beyond Ste. Suzanne locating a German CP, and followed the German OPL from the rear he located several small arms and artillery emplacements. On his way back he was shot in the leg, but made it over the last mile to report this information.

On 3 July the First Army launched its attack to clear the Cotentin Peninsula. The 82nd Division was in front of the attack but our regiment was initially in Division reserve and followed in bounds behind the 325. The 2nd Battalion was detached and given a sector in the line with an objective at La Fauverie, The 2nd Battalion crossed the line of departure at 0800 after a heavy artillery preparation, and advanced rapidly West. The enemy presented a slight delaying action and the Battalion reached its objective with 10 casualties at the end of the afternoon. Next day they resumed their advance and reached Blanchelands, suffering from casualties enroute from mortar and artillery fire. They rested at Blanchelands, but they received the order to turn South and seize the portion of la Poterie ridge just east of hill 95. At 2200 4 July they set off for this attack. During the night they succeeded in getting "F" Company on the South slope of the ridge and the rest of the Battalion slightly behind them on the North slope on the woods. The Germans didn't trouble this movement and as far as they could tell the ridge was not occupied. The next morning at daylight, they found themselves within a German bivouac to the immense surprise of the Germans. Both sides seized their arms without delay and fell on each other in a confused and confusing fight. "F" Company was a little too far ahead of the rest of the Battalion to have immediate support and they suffered heavily. The rest of the Battalion coming up to support "F" Company found Germans in every tree and bush. Control was very difficult since both sides lay across each other's lines of communications. "F" Co.

CONFIDENTIAL

fell back slightly, and when the Battalion came up they went into Bn. reserve. "D" and "E" companies drove forward to sweep the woods. This hard fight lasted all day and our losses were considerable; but at the end of the day we were masters of the ridge. Colonel Timmes organized a defensive position and held it. Nevertheless, for the rest of their stay there the Germans threw mortar and artillery fire at them actively. On the 7th day of July they reverted to regiment.

While this was going on Colonel Raff led the rest of the regiment West by bounds behind the 325. The 325 carried the burden of the fight successfully on the 3rd of July. We had no contact with the enemy except that we were constantly harrassed by artillery in bivouac and on the march. On the 4th day of July the 325 reached the Germans MLR at the east end of la Poterie Ridge. They attacked it, but by the end of the afternoon it was clear that they couldn't take it, so the task was given to us. The Colonel designated the 3rd Battalion, now commanded by Colonel Maloney. Colonel Maloney reconnoitered the hill from the 325th's position and using their front as a line of departure he crossed to attack at 2015 after a 15-minute artillery preparation. The hill was wooded and Colonel Maloney progressed steadily keeping flank protection out to the edges of the woods until 2245. But then the woods broadened out so that he couldn't watch their edges and he was forced to advance with his flanks blinded. At 2255 he struck the German position. They succeeded in interrupting his communications and in the dark obscurity of the woods control became increasingly difficult. The Germans took advantage of their knowledge of the position to inflict severe casualties; and Col. Maloney's position was too indefinite to allow him to profit from the sacrifices he was making. So he determined to get out of the woods and re-establish control. He sent "G" Company, Capt. Schwartzwalder commanding, down to the south base of the hill with instructions to march around and meet the rest of the Bn in the saddle behind and to the West. With the rest of the Bn. he



came down the north base and circled the hill on that side. This double envelopement was successful. At 0830 6 July 1944, Col. Maloney met Captain Schwartzwalder in the ridge and the Germans withdrew, leaving us in possession. Colonel Maloney organized a defensive position and established contact by patrol with the second Bn. There was a considerable gap between the two Bns, which the Germans kept full of snipers and riflemen. The 3rd Bn. held their positions until we were relieved, suffering all the time from German mortars and artillery.

On 7 July Col. Raff sent the 1st Bn. up on the ridge between the 3rd and 2nd Bns to fill the gap and protect the flanks of the two Bns. already there. The 1st Bn started this attack at 1000 and passed through a line of the 325 which had spent the night behind and between our two Bns already there, and pushed up on the ridge flushing a force of Germans before them. Unfortunately, just as this fight started, Major Pearson went forward to reconnoiter a position for his Battalion together with Colonel Maloney. The Germans opened fire and wounded both Bn. commanders which added to our confusion, and the 1st Bn was forced into a stiff fight which lasted until noon before they could master their section of the ridge. They succeeded, however, and by early afternoon all three Bns were on line, with contact established, facing south along the ridge. From these heights we had good observation over the valley to the south as far as the heights of Mont Castre. We established a regimental C.P. in the tower of the stable of the Chateau of Brequebeuf; and from there Lt. Young concentrated the control of all the Regimental mortars. That night the three battalions sent out a company each to establish an OPL along the valley road to Le Haye du Puits. Lt. Young covered this movement with a heavy mortar concentration and the OPL was established during the night without enemy opposition. That morning, 8th July, the 8th Division passed through our lines.

But we weren't through with the Germans by any means. All through the day,

CONFIDENTIAL

on 8th of July the 90th Division advance along the heights of Mont Castro and along the valley bottom driving the Germans before them across and under the front of our positions. Taking advantage of our commanding ground, and our good observation, Lt Young gave them a terrific beating with his mortars all day long, firing 1800 rounds in a 6 hour period. The 2nd Bn mortars under Lt. Stevens which had a field of observation farther to the West joined in. The effect was very great and altogether was perhaps the most satisfactory killing of Germans of the campaign. After that day the Germans bothered us no more with their mortars, although we still received some artillery. We held this position and kept mortaring the Germans until 11 July. The enemy were elements of the 941st and 943rd Regiments of the 353 Division. On the 11th of July we were relieved and turned back to a position between Ste. Marie du Mont and the Beach to await transportation back to England. On the 13th of July we sailed and arrived in England without incident on the 14th of July.

CONCLUSION

This campaign was very interesting from the point of view of clearing up many obscure points of parachute operations. There is a considerable feeling throughout the Regiment that we jumped too heavily loaded. A great deal of equipment was carried at the risk of breaking legs and at the risk of increasing dispersion by delaying exits. Excess equipment was discarded soon after the jump because it was too difficult to carry through the swamp or because it was impractical to carry it while fighting. In spite of this our supply throughout the whole campaign was so good that the loss of this equipment was never seriously felt. There is some feeling that parachutists should be in fighting condition immediately upon hitting the ground and that S-4 can be trusted to keep him in that condition. The principal thing to carry on a jump, however, are weapons and ammunition; everything else is secondary and can more or less be left to supply. The S-4 was very good throughout the campaign and there was never a serious shortage of weapons, clothing, food,

er ammunition. The food was a problem only for detachments surrounded by the enemy for several days immediately succeeding the jump. Medical supply seems to have been as good as any other.

In spite of the fact that the enemy covered our DZ with fire and prevented two of our radar teams from functioning, Lt. Ames' radar set seems to have materially contributed to the success of our jump. It follows that in easier circumstances that the jump pattern could have been even smaller and the assembly hastened considerably. The question of profitably using a period of time immediately after the jump is of paramount importance because it is in that period that the characteristic advantages of parachute units as an arm are most evident. There are two things to notice about the use of that time. First, in this jump the surprise we had gave us 12 hours of liberty before the Germans were able to organize an effective block to our maneuver. This time interval, however, depends upon the size of the operation involved, but the proportion of time that surprise is attained and the scope of objectives sought probably remains the same regardless of the size of the operation. Second, it is well worth while sacrificing a proportion of the freedom gained by our surprise in order to assemble and organize rather than try and profit from the last bit of surprise gained. Thus Col. Times' first attack on Amfreville was repulsed because by attempting to exploit surprise with all the vigor possible, he attacked with 50 men two or three hours after the jump. Similarly Captain Creek's attack on the Chef du Pont bridge succeeded only after he had abandoned the vigorous attempt to cross the river and spent some time organizing his force. The importance of exploiting surprise was so stressed that many excellent men got on or near their objectives within a few hours after the jump and stayed there at great cost to themselves and with very little inconvenience to the enemy. Thus we lost Col. Millett and in the same way Col. Times got into a dangerous and difficult situation. This spirit of executing orders regardless of consequence is very valuable and must be encouraged but it should be made

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clear that the order to assemble takes priority, not only in time, but in importance. It seems probable that at least a quarter of time gained by surprise would not be wasted if nothing were done but assemble and organize.

The obstacles offered by the Merderet to our assembly was very serious. It could have been avoided with a little better flying, but a jump field should be chosen with an eye to geographical and geological unity, and an assembly area should be placed at intersections, of several lines of natural drift, such as a road center, very much like an aid station. The cover of darkness no doubt contributed to our surprise and saved the lives of many individuals, but it also interfered with our assembly. It is possible that the disadvantages of darkness could be eliminated and its advantages retained if we jumped in daylight at a greater distance from the enemy. An artillery position might prove an interesting and profitable and at the same time jump field.

By and large the training of soldiers was very good. It is agreed that from the first they did what was expected of them and more. The confusions and failures of the first few days were merely the result of officers who had difficulty understanding their jobs and not results of any failures on the part of the men. An officer, undetermined what to do, would often hide his confusion by going out to fight, bravely and well, but not following sound tactical principles. Thus the technique of attacking a hedgerow was considered such a difficult problem that a special study was made of it, which resulted in finding that the best method of attacking hedgerows is exactly according to the principles of tactics as laid out in FM 7-5 and taught in our Service Schools, that is to pin the enemy down with a base of fire and approach up a covered route ( a hedgerow perpendicular to the enemy's position) with a maneuver element to assault him from the flank. It is possible, then, that more attention to the military education of the officers even at the expense of the soldier might be useful. This situation corrected itself progressively as the fight went on but at an initial expense.

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After we had succeeded in assembling and reorganizing we found that the principal problem that we had was how to drive Germans out of hedgerows. This problem was so universal in Normandy that the disposition of ground forms. After a month of fighting the Regiment seems to have settled on the following principals. First, that volume of fire is of utmost importance and that the most effective fire is high trajectory fire. All calibres of this fire are useful and as the range decreases the calibres should also decrease. Thus as the assault party approached the enemy positions it passes from 81mm. mortars to 60mm. mortars, then to the rifle grenade and to the hand grenade as the last step. By coordinating these weapons it is impossible to maintain the superiority of you base of fire. In this regard our weakest link was the rifle grenade of which we didn't have enough. The light mortar should at least be one and probably two hedgerows behind the flat trajectory weapons of the base of fire. Heavy mortars should be behind the light; while the rifles and hand grenades accompany the assault force.

Movement is canalized along the hedgerows which offer a good deal of cover and 50% concealment. The critical points are the hedgerows which offer corners where the Germans have been accustomed to place their weapons. Once a hedgerow corner is taken it is always possible to lay a sufficiently dangerous enfilade fire to drive out the troops from the corner. The bazooka is the most useful weapon that the assault force has in neutralizing a hedgerow corner. It is a very useful offensive weapon in addition to its value in the defense against tanks. The assault should be delivered at the flank or preferably both flanks of the enemy if your strength permits. Some officers think that when the enemy's hedgerow is reached the assault force should move down the front of it, dropping hand grenades on the enemy on the other side. Usually, however, when the fighting gets that close the enemy leaves presenting an excellent target for small arms fire. To profit by it you have to be on the far side of the hedgerow, which seems to be

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the best plan. The IMG is a useful weapon to carry on an assault; but due to its weight the BAR and the TSMG are usually preferred and the IMG is relegated to the mass of fire. The M-1 rifle is useful to hunt snipers and for close combat. The limits of observation imposed by the hedgerows prevents the exploitation of its range.

Finally although some officers recommend that when a hedgerow is taken it should immediately be prepared for defense, most agree that the attacking force should immediately push on and drive the enemy out of the next one forward. That seems to be the best answer although strength and circumstances will dictate, and if it is possible to push on it is necessary to organize a newly captured hedgerow for defense. Officers are agreed that the tank is a powerful and potent support weapon. At La Motey they were the decisive factor in the capture of the town in spite of the heroism of the Infantry who were in there fighting long before they arrived. On the first day at La Benneville they were a powerful assistance in our success. On the second day at La Benneville, they proved they were helpless without Infantry. Tanks are a first-rate Infantry support weapon. The tanks are always anxious to help the infantry but it is difficult for an infantry officer who usually knows more about the situation than a tank man to explain to him what needs to be done. A method of talking through the tanks armor to the officer inside would bring a help.

The Germans taught us that snipers and patrols have a good deal more freedom of action than is generally believed in our Army.

The value of keeping up an offensive and progressive spirit is so great that on the whole it is better to expose your flank in the attack than wait on someone to cover it. In order not to interfere with the forward movement it might be a good idea to relieve the unit commander of the responsibility of flank protection, by placing it in the hands of the next higher commander, except when the unit commander had an important mission. The 507th suffered



at times, because it's flanks weren't covered by other units, not on the whole, however, our sister regiments could be dependent upon to come to our assistance just as fast as possible. A disregard of your flanks undoubtedly increases your casualties, but equally increases your chances of success.

Cooperation between the Infantry and the Artillery is inadequately taught in training and this Regiment suffered heavily from it and so did other units. Every Infantry Officer should be able to adjust artillery fire like any artillery forward observer.