

3-40

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

ADVANCED COURSE
1931-1932

OPERATIONS OF 106th INFANTRY (27th DIVISION)
IN THE ATTACK AFTER THE BREAKING OF THE
HINDENBURG LINE, OCTOBER 17-21, 1918.

(Personal experience of a regimental liaison officer)

Captain Grover C. Cleaver, Infantry

1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Title page.	(Unpaged)
Table of contents	i
Bibliography.	ii
Marginal abbreviations used	iii
Introduction.	1
Terrain	4
Disposition	5
Operations.	6
Criticism	17
Lessons	20
Conclusion.	21
Questions and answers	23

MAPS

Special Map No 1 - 27th Division at Selle River, October 17-20, 1918	25
--	----

BIBLIOGRAPHY

O'Ryan, J. F.
Major General

"Story of the 27th Division."
Published by Wynhoop--Hallenbeck
Crawford Company, 1921.

Accurate as to orders and reports. A
little natural bias but on the whole a
fairly accurate narrative.

Montgomery, Archibald,
Sir, Major General

"Story of the Fourth Army."
Publisher: Hodder and Stoughton,
undated.

Not sufficient research therein by me to
express opinion. Particular dates re-
ferring to this operation inaccurate in
part.

II Army

"Report on Operations II Army
Corps." Mimeographed, December 18,
1918.

Accurate in reports, orders, and narrative.

Ward, General

"Personal Memoirs." Major General
Ward, commanding officer 106th
Infantry during period of this
operation.

Of great assistance to me in refreshing
memory as to details and personalities.

The list of books issued with the monograph instructions was
read. However, none of them give the necessary details as
to small unit activities.

MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS USED

O'Ryan	"Story of the 27th Division"
Montgomery	"Story of the Fourth Army"
II Army	"Report on Operations II Army Corps"
Ward	"Personal Memoirs"

INTRODUCTION

This is an attempt at ^arevival of personal impressions gained on the occasions herein described. However, because these are dug from a memory dimmed by time, this **memory** finds itself at variance with thoughts expressed by authoritative sources. Every effort has been made to reconcile such situations, it is hoped, without distortion of fact. So that this will not be a most disconnected narrative, it appears necessary that we go back to a time just previous to the events around which this is written.

The 27th Division, of which the units mentioned herein were a part, along with the 30th Division formed the II American Corps attached to the British Fourth Army.

We make our introduction to the 27th Division in the middle of October, perhaps the most crucial period in the history of the division. About two weeks previous, September 27th to October 1st, they had taken a major role in the attack on the Hindenburg Line in the vicinity of Bony. An idea of the determination of the attack and desperateness of the defense can best be **understood** when it is noted that as the result of this operation, October 1st, saw the division strength at 14,500. (1)

(1) Operations ✓
Report 27th
Div. Oct. 1;
O'Ryan,
p 814,
Vol. II.

After a short period for reorganization and rest they went into position on October 6th, when the II American Corps relieved the Australians with the 30th American Division in advance and the 27th Division in support.

Since the relief of the 27th Division on October 1st, by the Australian Corps, this latter corps has advanced the line steadily eastward. The 30th Division took over and by a series of actions, had, by October 10th, advanced the line to the west bank of the Le Selle River, gaining the westerly outskirts of Vaux Andigny, La Haie Menneresse and St. Souplet. (2)

(2) O'Ryan,
p 345

On the night of October 11-12, a relief was effected, placing the 27th Division in the front lines between the towns of St. Benin (exclusive) to Vaux Andigny (inclusive), a front of about 11,000 yards. This included, in addition to the 30th Division sector, a part of the front formerly held by the British 6th Division.

The next three or four days presents a trying situation, embracing much hard work with little sleep and less glory.

A brief description of the routine of the 106th Infantry, in which the writer commanded the Headquarters Company at the time, will, it is believed, illustrate conditions and tribulations undergone by the other regiments associated on this front. This regiment was in support in front of Busigny occupying position on higher ground in a rolling and open country. Hastily dug trenches constitutes the only protection against constant strafing, the enemy air observation being quick to spot new works before they can be sufficiently comouflaged. This work, however, must go on for, with the possibility of an enemy

counterattack and the front-line units so weakened numerically, this ridge line is the logical main line of resistance. To add a little zest to the occasion, some Aussie (Australian) artillery from positions on the reverse slopes were making the world safe for democracy, all of which was most laudable except when the reciprocity came from the Boche, the infantry were included. (3)

(3) Personal
Experience
General
Ward
Memoirs

The town of Busigny, in which regimental headquarters was located, also received its daily share of shelling and gassing. This is many cases brought tragedy to the most undeserving. Little children, old men, and women were often struck down while fleeing to cover when one of these occurred. (4)

(4) Personal
Experience

While all the above was taking place in this little world of the Regiment, happenings of greater importance were being planned. So it was that on October 15th, Field Orders No 63, 27th Division, were received which ordered an attack by the division on October 17th, in conjunction with the 30th American Division on its right, and the XIII British Corps on the left. For the purpose of this attack the division front, which had been reduced on the night of October 14th to about 4,200 yards, was further reduced to 2,000 yards. (5)

(5) O'Ryan,
p 350

At this point, we will bring to a close this generalizing on the activities that brought the regiments to this present situation. We leave the regimental commanders digesting the order on the eve of what was to be known as the Battle of the Selle River.

TERRAIN

A view of the territory over which this battle was to be fought presented a most pleasing panarama.

The Selle River really is just a flowing creek, as we understand the name. Its width on this front averaged from 20 to 30 feet and its depth about three to four feet, except for occasional holes. Lined by trees and bush, it furnished a placid contribution to a quaint old town. From the Selle River the country rose and fell fairly systematically like great billows, the crests of which formed ridges and between, gradual sloping valleys.

A railroad connecting^{ed} St. Souplet with points north and south^{and} to an extent parallel^{ed} the Selle about 250 yards east of it. Across this front, an embankment of about 25 feet high carried this railroad. From here, a gradual rise is developed which slopes off again to the north and in which was located Bandival Farm. Another gentle rise now places us on the La Cateau^R--Abre Guernon Road running directly across our front. Abre Guernon is on the extreme right of the sector and is located on higher ground than the surrounding country. On the edge of this narrow plateau and just north of the town are several farms, Advantage Farm among them. From the La Cateau^R--^RAbre Guernon Road, the rolling country much lined out with rows of hedge, leads gradually upward to Jone de Mer Farm with La Rouge Farm north of it at the head of a valley. This all culminates in a broad plateau

near the east edge of which is located La Jonquiere Farm. This plateau forms the water shed of the St. Maurice River and to the northeast is seen the Basuel--Catillon Road. These several farms generally consist of a few outbuildings, the property line being marked off with hedges. The country in general ^{was} most devoid of wooded land. It had been an agricultural district for centuries. (6)

(6) Personal
Experience

DISPOSITION

It had been felt by the higher command after the Battle of the Hindenburg Line that, because of the combination of both natural and artificial obstacles presenting themselves at this particular place, the next determined stand by the German army would be here. Events proved the soundness of this estimate in the tightening of enemy resistance and the organization of the machine-gun positions throughout the area east of the Selle and the establishment of strong points at farms commanding tactical locations. (7)

(7) General
Ward
Memoirs

Aside from outposts on the west banks of the Selle, the main line of German resistance was along the railroad embankment. However, it must be understood that the whole defense was organized very much in depth. Machine guns in isolated positions practically covering ^{ed} with fire the whole area. These were augmented by strong points at Advantage Farm, Abre Guernon, Bandival Farm, Jone de Mer Farm, La Rouge Farm, La Jonquiere Farm. The hedge groups offered many alternate positions for machine guns and small groups.

Sdmc
R

OPERATIONS

From here on, apologies are offered freely if personal reference comes too strongly to the fore. However, every effort will be made to prevent giving impression of "I" trouble.

Later in the afternoon of October 16th, I received orders to report to regimental headquarters. I had been billeted in Busigny near regimental headquarters for several days. During these days which now seem rather vague, I seem to have been mostly listening to complaints from a pink faced 2d lieutenant who had lately joined me and who took over the 37-mm Platoon and from an old cavalry sergeant hard as nails, who was now a 2d lieutenant and commanded the 3-inch trench mortar platoon. Both platoons had positions just in front of the Aussie artillery previously spoken of. The signal platoon was functioning under a Signal Corps lieutenant and was scattered throughout the regiment at the various command posts.

Upon arrival at regimental headquarters, about 7:00 PM, as I recall, all of the company commanders had gathered. Colonel Ward soon called us together in the collar of the house and there issued the battle order. Upon taking stock of personnel, it was found that there were two captains of line companies left. Each was placed in command of a battalion. Each company had one lieutenant with it. The companies averaged about 30 men each. A lieutenant commanded the 1st Battalion.

The battle order brought out the fact that the 105th, immediately in our front and the 108th on their left would constitute the assault, the 107th to support the 108th and the 106th to support the 105th. The attack was to follow an artillery and machine-gun barrage, which was to fall at zero hour, 5:20 AM, and after three minutes to lift so as to travel 100 yards every three minutes until the first halt was reached. This was just east of the La Cateau-Abre Guernon Road. From here, after one-half hour time for reorganization and mopping up, it was to continue to a point near the Basuel--Catillon Road, which was really the first objective. From here on, after a period of three hours for reorganization and preparation, the support elements were to leap-frog through and continue the advance in open warfare formation, i.e., the men as skirmishers and the artillery, as mobile support, to fire successive concentrations. Ten tanks from the 301st Tank Battalion were assigned to the division front. (8)

Abre not known

(8) O'Ryan, ✓
p 350

In the allotment of duties to the officers, mine proved to be that of liaison officer to the 107th Infantry, the left supporting regiment. ✓ At the headquarters of the 3-inch Trench Mortar, which was on the ridge just east of town, the commanding officers of the 37-mm, 3-inch trench mortar and pioneer platoons and I met at which time we went into a huddle regarding disposition, supply and mission of the units. Just at this time a disconcerting factor arrived in the nature of a sudden

concentration of gas shells on the artillery and ourselves. This knocked out 17 of the trench mortar platoon, thereby reducing that platoon's effectiveness to one mortar crew. ✓

~~Reporting~~ Reporting to the regimental headquarters 107th Infantry which was located just north of Busigny, at about 12:00 midnight, I met the regimental commander and several friends among the staff. Maps were compared and the various details discussed after which everybody settled down to wait until 5:20, the hour of jump-off. During this wait, which was well punctuated by H.E. and gas, a direct hit was made on a house nearby, which about wiped out half of a company.

However, there seemed to develop an uncanny quiet on both sides from about 4:00 AM on. As the hour of dawn approached, except for intermittent firing, artillery fire was not heavy. This was commented on as everybody sat watching the minute hand crawl closer.

All is quiet and two minutes to go. Suddenly everybody is brought upright. From the south, to the right of us is heard the terrific roar of a machine-gun barrage. As we sit in amazement wondering, nothing happens to break the noise of the machine guns for perhaps a minute. Then comes the shriek of the enemy counterbarrage just before our artillery opens on schedule. In the words of one staff officer sitting around the table: "Somebody's screwed the works."

The usual feeling of helplessness that sets in between the beginning of an action and the time when reports start to filter in, settled on us so we just sat around trying to talk normal. Efforts at telephonic communication to the front or flanks had proved fruitless since the counterbarrage. At about 6:30 AM, about an hour after zero, a message arrived saying that the units had gotten off with the barrage without incident. This I passed on, through runner, to the 106th while I prepared to go forward, with a machine gun battalion officer, to the river at St. Souplet to verify positions.

The dawn had broken with a very heavy mist which, coupled with smoke made the progress along the front most difficult. Passing through the 106th jump-off area, several groups of men were found completely lost and huddled together in the mist. After some loss of time these were gathered up and joining our party came into St. Souplet to rejoin their units.

In the crossing of the Selle, a most excellent piece of work was done by the 102th Engineers. They had been charged with the stringing of ropes across the stream for the first lines of assault as well as the preparation and installation of light, portable sections of foot bridges to be brought up immediately behind the assault. Both duties were carried out successfully in the face of the most heavy fire. The number of dead engineers along the river bank testified as to their determination. Many a wounded infantryman was saved from drowning as the result of this.

In this part of the sector the assault met its first determined resistance from the railroad embankment. Here ~~every~~ ^{heavy} machine gun and small rifle group^s delayed the advance so that by the time the embankment had been climbed and this position reduced, the barrage was well in advance. This allowed several machine guns from positions in hedges and ground folds to inflict a number of casualties.

Bandival Farm, though a strong point, did not offer much resistance. Intense artillery concentration had played on it until just before the arrival of our troops. The enemy therein surrendered with little persuasion. (9)

(9) Personal
Experience

not down in report
In fact, the 108th made fairly good progress till it reached the La Cateau--Abre Guernon Road shortly after 9:00 AM. There it came under cross fire from Jone de Mer Farm and the sunken road leading out of the draw, as well as from the heights north. Reports differ at this point as regards just what took place. I know that right elements of the 108th were across the road and in touch with the 105th on the right. The left lost contact with the British 50th Division in the middle of the morning due to a counterattack launched against the British right. I feel quite sure that this hit out of our reach and to the north. British accounts say that it hit both them and us and that both gave way before it. However, I do not recall any very serious threat on that flank except that it was in the air. An

sh

adjustant was made for this by the refusing of that flank which later was further adjusted when, after several hours under the heavy fire near the road, the left front pulled back to take advantage of the sloping ground about 300 yards west of the road. (10)

Too
Complex

(10) Personal Experience; Fourth Army, p 217

Headquarters 107th Infantry, which earlier in the morning had moved to Escanfond, advanced to St. Souplet getting there about 10:30 AM. This with all the retinue attached appeared, I feel sure, quite a formidable array as it weaved over the landscape, through and between all kinds of artillery, wagons, ambulances, walking wounded, etc. I sometimes think that had the war happened in the United States, perhaps a few barbecue stands might have been found doing business and adding to things in general.

ff
Kuntai

Sdmc.

This imposing delegation emerged out of the mist and onto the streets of St. Souplet and headed forthwith to the C.P. of the 108th. And here, to our chagrin, we are greeted by an equally, if not more formidable delegation. Not only that but they go us one better in that they have three prisoners. These are being interrogated by anybody who wants to try out his German, and the prisoners answered in perfect Oxford English. All these: the two delegations, plus the prisoners, plus the orderlies, plus the cooks, plus ad infinitum--I never did get them all arranged in a definite category--were in one little cellar dugout. Such crowding is hard to imagine, unless one has by chance paid a visit to a modern speakeasy.

This was, after all, orderly confusion and in a short space of time all were in their respective niches and carrying forward the business at hand.

Later in the morning I visited the C.P. of the 105th, which was on the outskirts of St. Souplet. Entering the dugout, could be seen maps here and there and a group of officers working over a table. Looking further over, I saw a lone figure seated at a table. He was the regimental commander and as I approached him, I noticed that he was playing solitaire. Such a display of coolness and confidence certainly acted as a tonic to those about him.

It was at this C.P. that I learned of the morning's happenings in this sector.

Just as the 105th started out at zero hour, the counterbarrage caught them fairly in it, with the result that the leading elements simply crumpled up as well as the machine-gun company, which was right behind the leading battalion. Added to this was the mist and smoke in which they had to make their way through the eastern edge of St. Souplet. All these so disorganized the 1st Battalion that the 2d Battalion leap-frogged, taking along with them detachments of the 1st Battalion. After this first setback, the regiment pushed forward to Abre Guernon which it reached about 9:00 AM. The town was mopped up and by 12:30, the line was established just east of the town. Here heavy fire from the east and south preclude further advance. Because of the fact that the left of the 30th Division was not yet up, the line extended around and south of the town. Later in the day this situation cleared with the arrival of the

30th Division on line with the 105th.

During the advance to ^RAbre Guernon, an interesting action was staged by the 2d Battalion 106th Infantry, which was in support of the 105th. This battalion jumped off at zero hour, following the 105th in the extreme right of the sector. In so doing, the battalion came under fire from St. Maurice River, a town in the sector of the 30th Division. Being confronted with being pinned down in his own sector or striking out of his sector, he shifted his line and attacked southeast at the town. In the development of this attack, four tanks arrived and came to his assistance. After mopping up the machine guns, he advanced in his own sector to ^RAbre Guernon where he went in to support the 105th.

On the way back to the 107th Infantry's headquarters, I came across the lieutenant of the 37-mm (106) with a detachment of his men. They were clumped against a cemetery wall, the lieutenant looking most discouraged. From him I learned that while his gun was in good shape, his mule with cart and most of the ammunition had been caught in the counterbarrage. His station was with the two battalions, then waiting at the river. I instructed him to get what he could from the 105th and to move on out. I then sent a message to our munitions officer, giving him the information and asking assistance.

ST. MARTIN RIVIERE
HR

Upon my arrival at 107th Headquarters, the Colonels of the 107th and 108th were in conversation regarding the small strength of the units and the need for reserves or relief. Shortly after this the commanding officer 107th went to the 54th Brigade regarding it. The reply which came back from the division was not encouraging. It said that not only was there to be no reserves nor relief, but that the division would attack again that next morning.

This action on the part of these two colonels should not be construed as an attempt to evade responsibility. They both had proven on previous battlefields **their** abilities as leaders. But the combined strength of these two regiments was about 550 men attacking on a 1000-yard front. Of course, a similar condition existed in the other **brigade**.sector too. However, after about three weeks of steady going, the forward movement was certainly losing its momentum and I hate to think of the possibilities had a determined counterattack been launched on any part of the line.

The late afternoon and night were spent in consolidating all along the division front, which on the evening of October 17th, ran from around the south and east sides of ^RAbre Guernon generally parallel to La Cateau--^RAbre Guernon Road crossing that road just north of Advantage Farm and again parallel to it on the west side. (11)

(11) O'Ryan
Battle Map

Orders for renewal of attack at 5:20 next morning (October 18th) came through that evening.

For this attack the 107th was to leap-frog the 108th and become the assault. The 2d Battalion 106th was merged with the 2d Battalion 105th to form one command.

At 5:20, October 18th, under cover of our barrage, the line started out, the 107th passing through the 108th. Stubborn resistance was met from both La Roux Farm and Jone de Mer Farm. La Roux Farm gave the left considerable trouble. However, after several attempts, it was taken by the 1st Battalion with the aid of patrols enveloping the left. On the right of the brigade section, Jone de Mer Farm offered stubborn resistance. However, attacks from both 105th and 107th forced its surrender. (12)

(12) General
Ward
Memoirs

On the 53d Brigade sector, the 105th encountered fairly heavy resistance from isolated machine guns east of Abre Guernon and also from points in the sector to its right.

The 30th Division, due to a delay by the division on its right, lost contact with the 27th Division. So that the 105th, now on Jone de Mer Ridge, refused its right by extending its line along the Abre Guernon Road facing southeast. To relieve this situation, a company of engineers from division reserve was sent forward and took position near Advantage Farm.

During the day, it became evident that the enemy was fighting a rear guard action and that his defense was weakening. So the rest of the day consisted mostly of local combats with isolated machine

guns and snipers. Numbers of prisoners were taken throughout the day. Among these were many German marines, their officers wearing snappy cream colored uniforms and overcoats. The line halted for the night in position generally along the (Baznel) *sk* Mazingheim Road.

During the night orders came in that all units would push forward at an early hour next morning in extended-order formation.

On the left, the 107th started out patrols at 3:00 AM of the 19th, followed by the rest of the regiment and advanced with little opposition to the heights overlooking the St. Maurice River. The 108th came up shortly afterwards.

On the 105th--106th sector more ground had to be covered and the resistance ^{was} more determined. They moved out about 5:00 AM, engaging as they went, isolated enemy groups. In extended-order formation these groups were one by one cleaned out.

It was expected that stout resistance would be met in the vicinity of North Chimney Farm. So *sk* the advance (of) it was made most cautiously. All this proved unnecessary as the place was taken without opposition. The enemy had evacuated two hours before. Two wounded American prisoners had been left on stretchers. (13)

(13) General
Ward
Memoirs

On resuming the advance, machine-gun fire from the St. Maurice area held the line for a while. Combat patrols pushed forward and located these.

(14) General Ward
Memoirs

A platoon of our machine guns was now up and from positions in the cupola of the barn was able to give much assistance. So by 2:00 PM, the right was on its objective in prolongation of the 10th line. (14)

On the night of October 19-20th, the 107th went back into support.

During the day of the 20th, no further general advance was made although active patrolling was ordered carried out across the St. Maurice River and to the Basuel-Catillon Road.

We had been notified the night before that we were to be relieved the night of 20-21st by the 71st British Brigade. The advanced party from that outfit reported at 107th Headquarters that afternoon and until dark most of our time was given to them for assistance in reconnaissance.

I was relieved about 8:00 PM, and proceeded to Abre Guernon, there to gather together the various detachments of my company and move back to Busigny.

There were captured 48 officers and 1,463 other ranks.

Our losses totalled 194 killed and 1,289 wounded. (15)

(15) O'Ryan, ✓
pp 383-384

CRITICISM

In considering the enormity of these operations, I must confess my inability at criticism beyond seemingly small details. I was associated with a very small cog in a very large wheel.

9
1

(1) From early October until going into positions near Busigny, the 106th Infantry was road marching in reserve of some nature. Nevertheless, there never was a day or night when it was free from artillery fire. This at times was most intense and took a continuous toll of lives. ✓ In some cases it was possible to feed men only by their dashing in small groups from cover of houses or other cover to the kitchen and back to cover between bursts. The rolling kitchen in some cases was located in some central farm yard or similar location. The kitchen personnel on these occasions did their duty most admirably.

Along with the other discomforts incident thereto, this has certainly a shaking effect on troops.

(2) Units from the size of battalion down became lost in taking positions the night before and at the jump-off. Two battalions of the right supporting regiment were almost hopelessly broken up in going into position. The other lost the direction of attack in the early stages. A dark night, mist and smoke contributed largely to this. Companies of the left assault regiment had like difficulty in the crossing of the river.

(3) All units in this attack showed a thorough appreciation of the need for flank protection, mopping up and contact with adjacent troops. This knowledge had been paid for most dearly at the Hindenburg line, a few weeks before.

(4) Electrical means of communication was most unreliable. In the right sector, one line from the regiment forward was kept open a fair part of the time. On the left, this seemed impossible.

(5) Due to the great amount of enfilade machine-gun fire and the open terrain, accompanying weapons could not operate to their best possibilities. The trench mortar proved totally inadequate in open warfare due to the excessive weight of both the mortar and ammunition. After the first day, it was abandoned and the crew given rifles.

(6) The saying that "the infantryman can always take one more step and fire one more shot" was demonstrated to a most admirable degree. To see a group of men after taking hard punishment finally neutralize a position, only to be confronted with a similar problem from another point is discouraging beyond belief. It seems no human could stand it. In fact, they don't stand it. No group will long remain inactive under such punishment. They will go either forward or back; a word or gesture from one man might decide which way. There is usually, however, some born leader probably unconscious of that quality, in any group. He may be a private, often this is the case. But he thinks clear and though probably never having heard of the technique of the "Estimate of the Situation" or "Decision" he unknowingly does just exactly these things. With desperation born of despair he starts doggedly forward. Instinct of the pack and the soldier's willingness to go, with some one else, anywhere, decides for the rest and over they go.

The above scene was enacted many times in this operation.

LESSONS

1. It is believed that modern war, with accurate long range artillery fire makes necessary longer bounds for troops in deep reserve. Motor transportation between areas of cover more ~~distinctly~~^{an} spaced seems possible.

2. Knowledge of night operation including guiding of groups is most essential. A thorough study of the map as to route and terrain features that will be unquestionably identified in the dark, exact knowledge as to where and when definite objects should appear, certainty as to the next move after each of these is reached and compass bearing accurately read and checked, are all worth consideration. The writer was not without this latter sin in a previous operation.

(3. ✓ Signal communication for small units-- below the regiment--by mechanical means appears to be still of doubtful value. So as not to become involved in a technical discussion, I simply state as my opinion the following:

?
Until a field wire is made strong enough to withstand impact of shell and rifle fire, yet light enough for two men to lay, I believe it is a waste of lives, time and effort to attempt installation and maintenance.

When a device is invented to neutralize enemy radio interference and something is done to absolutely eliminate all sets from hearing, except the one intended to receive it, I believe radio has possibilities.

Visual lamps when improved have excellent possibilities.

Radio telephony is probably the coming thing but its problems closely parallel those of radio telegraphy.

4. The 3-inch trench mortar and the 37-mm gun are purely auxiliary weapons and require conditions peculiar to them for results.

CONCLUSION

This operation was the final effort on the part of a worn out, depleted organization to drive home a victory over a more tired, worn out adversary; like two boxers in the final round.

That no replacements had been sent since the division reached France thereby reducing its effective strength might, with justice, call for criticism in some direction. Yet this was purposely left out of that column. Admitted, it would seem that regiments of 400 men, battalions of 100 men, companies of 25-30 men appear below the point of effectiveness.

However, one psychological fact played an important part. These same men had lived, eaten, slept, trained and marched together for two years. They, side by side, had for four months been facing death daily. This resulted in a comradeship baptized by fire, than which there is nothing closer. The subconscious teamwork was that of the veteran.

There was no outside blood, the strain was pure, which was conducive to a strong pride in outfit as well as the willingness to carry the torch dropped by the hands of their fallen comrades.

At the meeting at 106th Headquarters, described at the beginning of the narrative, when the battle order was issued, the Colonel asked: "Are there any questions?" "Yes, sir", said Captain Ireland, "Shall we take any prisoners?"

Perhaps a bit crude, but when best friends are killed by these same people, well, we are apt to have distorted, our code of ethics.

They had pride of outfit, they believed in themselves, they believed in each other.

I think it was Kipling who said:

"For the strength of the pack is the wolf,
And the strength of the wolf is the pack."

QUESTIONS

1. Regarding the attack out of its sector by the 2d Battalion 106th Infantry, was this decision a proper one?

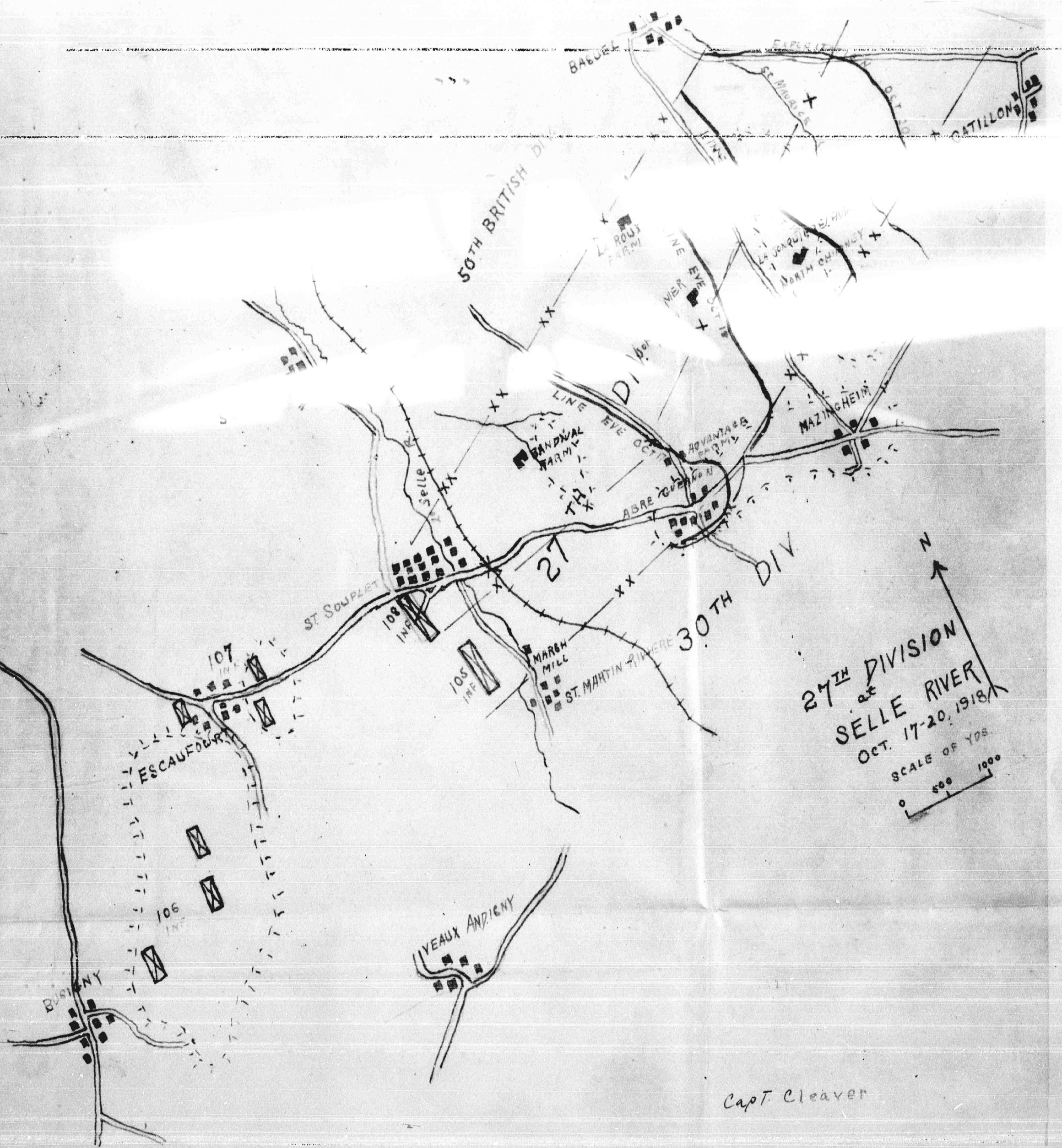
Answer: His duty as a supporting unit was to be in position at all times, render timely aid to the assault units. The situation that confronted him was one that called for a quick decision. If he was to ignore this fire and attempt to pass through it, he would probably ^{have} suffered heavy casualties. Had he resorted to covered routes and infiltration through, it would have meant much loss of time and control.

If he attacked this position and won it his position then was such that, in case of counterattack on the front of the assault he could lend aid with fire power. If a counterattack was launched on the exposed flank of the assault, he was in position from which he in turn could flank attack that.

Believe decision was a correct one.

2. Was the abandonment of the 3-inch trench mortar for rifles a correct move?

Answer: The weapon is one of opportunity, requiring high angle fire at obscure targets. Equipped with rifles it would seem that assistance from this small group would be negligible. However, the units were much depleted and every working rifle was a help. Furthermore, there was small likelihood of trench mortar targets. When targets were located, mostly machine guns, they were definite and five or six bullets could get there more accurately than trench mortar



27TH DIVISION
 SELLE RIVER
 OCT. 17-20, 1918

Capt. Cleaver