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COMMITTEE "H"
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COMPANY OFFICERS' CLASS,
1924 - 1925.

OPERATIONS OF THE FORCE KNOWN AS " THE LOST BAT-
TALION", FROM OCTOBER 2ND TO OCTOBER 7TH,
1918, NORTHEAST OF BINARVILLE,
IN THE FOREST OF ARGONNE,
FRANCE.

By CAPTAIN NELSON M. HOLDERMAN, INFANTRY.

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TALION", FROM OCTOBER 2ND TO OCTOBER 7TH,
1918, NORTHEAST OF BINERVILLE,
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FRANCE.

INTRODUCTION

During the preparation of this monograph the writer ~~has~~ ^{has} read many accounts pertaining to the "Siege" of the so-called "Lost Battalion", and finds that nearly all of the historians differ as to the composition, personnel, and strength of the command. The circumstances surrounding the advance of the command to the designated position and objective, to which it advanced ⁽¹⁾ under orders. ⁽²⁾ Its subsequent defense of the position, which it successfully reached, occupied, and organized. The inclusive dates it was besieged; its gains and losses.

(1) History of the 77th Division; P. 152, Par. 43.

(2) History of the 77th Division; Page 73.

(2) The so-called "Lost Battalion" was composed of elements of the 77th Division, A.E.F., and was under the command of Major (later Lieut. Col.)

Charles W. Whittlesey, of the 308th Infantry. The command consisted of Battalion Headquarters' Runners and Scouts of the First and Second Battalions, 308th

Infantry, Companies "A", "B", "C", "E", "G" and "H", of the 308th Infantry; two platoons of Companies "C" and "D", of the 306th Machine Gun Battalion, and

(3) Personal Knowledge.

Company "K", of the 307th Infantry. ⁽³⁾ The strength of the combined force, when it ^{began} initiated its advance on October 2, 1918, was approximately seven hundred officers and men.

(4) From Upton to the Meuse with the 307th

(4) Just before the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne, East met West, as the 40th Division, from the western part of the United States, and composed of troops from California, Arizona, Utah, and Colorado, had

sent forward its replacements to the 77th Division. The 40th Division had, upon its arrival in France, been converted into a Depot Division for the purpose of furnishing replacements to the combat divisions at the front. These were splendid, well-trained troops, and such men, combined with the seasoned veterans of the 77th Division, from New York City, who had already passed through three major operations, rendered the Division equal to most any task, and the task assigned it was a most difficult one; that of clearing the Forest of Argonne. The so-called "Lost Battalion" was a cosmopolitan command, composed of men from all parts of New York City, and from cities, ranches, cattle ranches, and mining camps of the West and Southwest.

Footnote
(5) History of the 77th Division; Page 206.

(5) The writer was in command of Company "K", 307th Infantry, which company held and defended the right flank of the position occupied by the "Surrounded Force", and will endeavor to give a true and correct account of the advance to, and the subsequent defense of the position. To that phase ^{shall confine} a greater part of his efforts ~~be confined~~. ^{shall} To the combined circumstances leading up to and including the advance of the force, orders issued, and reasons involved, some ^{explanation should} enlightenment ~~need~~ be given, in order to impress upon the reader (6) something of the difficulties and obstacles which the 77th Division was obliged to surmount during the clearing of "The Forest of Argonne"; of the almost superhuman efforts it was obliged to exert in order to accomplish its mission, and all of which leads up to and includes the circumstances surrounding the advance and "Siege" of the so-called

(6) History of the 77th Div., Pp. 59-64, incl., & Our Greatest Battle, by Palmer; P. 54 & 55.

Lost Battalion, which force was at no time lost, but

History
of the 77th
Division;
P. 152, Par.
43.

advanced under competent, warranted and positive orders. It occupied the position designated for it, and defended that position for five days and five nights, completely surrounded by the enemy, many times outnumbered, wholly without food, and nearly a mile ahead of the American and French front line. It accomplished its mission and avoided capture by the enemy.

(8) History
of the 77th
Division;
Page 63.

(8) During the Meuse-Argonne Offensive the 77th Division was the left division of the First American Army from September 26th to October 16, 1918. Its zone of action included nearly all of the Argonne Forest, and the assault, as directed by Field Order No. 43, was to be delivered on a seven-and-one-half kilometer front.

(9) From Up-
ton to the
Meuse, 307th
Infantry,
Page 163.

(9) A word of explanation here may be appropriate and pointing to the meanings of the designations "Argonne" and "Forest of Argonne". The former refers to the entire region between the Aisne and the Meuse Rivers, and is largely open country, dotted with small patches of woods, while the latter refers to a very dense and continuous woodland about twelve kilometers in width, from east to west, and thirty kilometers in length, from north to south. The advance of the 77th Division lay squarely along the major axis of the "Forest of Argonne", from La Harazée to Grandpre. It occupied a seven-kilometer front and faced the heart of the largest expanse of woodland from the Mediterranean to the Rhine, and fought continuously and completely for eighteen days within its shadows.

During the first phases of the world war the French had made an attempt to clear the "Forest of Argonne" of the enemy, and had lost many men in the endeavor. Thereafter no further attempt was made until the Allied Offensive, which was launched September 26, 1918. (10) It had remained unmolested for nearly four years in the hands of the enemy, who had early in the war occupied it, and had skillfully developed its natural features into one vast impregnable fortress.

The "Forest of Argonne" was an area of densely wooded hills and slopes, with many ravines, gullies, and swamps, all of which were covered with tangled underbrush; consequently the Germans were able to place their machine guns to command all roads and paths traversing it, and had located them in positions which enabled the gunners to place a series of interlocking bands of fire between trees and along systems of barbed wire that they had cleverly constructed and concealed, during their unmolested occupation. All of this, combined with ^{their} cleverly concealed artillery positions, ^{their} hidden observation posts, and infantry with supporting weapons, rendered the "Forest of Argonne" most inaccessible to direct attack and hostile penetration.

(11) The ^{most} impossible task of clearing the "Forest of Argonne" by direct attack was recognized by the Allied Command, and during the discussion of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, plans were discussed as to how it could be taken without a heavy attack in that difficult region. It was decided that the right of the Fourth French Army, which was the 35th

(10) History
of the 77th
Division;
Page 60.

(11) Final Report
of General
Pershing;
P. 46, par 35.

~~French Corps, operating on the west of the Forest~~
~~and the American Divisions, operating on the east~~

(12) Our Greatest Battle, P. 309; and the History of the A.E.F., P. 237.

~~of the Forest, would advance simultaneously, (12)~~
launching a scalloping movement on the east and west outskirts of the Forest, thus creating and developing a pocket from which the enemy would be obliged to withdraw in order to avoid capture. ¹² As a result of this plan, a speedy withdrawal of the enemy from their Forest stronghold was anticipated, and very little resistance was expected. For the ~~above~~ ^{these} reasons was the 77th Division assigned such a wide zone of action, with the mission of mopping-up as the enemy withdrew. Information had also been obtained that the enemy troops occupying the "Forest of Argonne" were organizations of the "Landwehr Reserves" - "old fellows" they called them, and it was thought that they had lived lives of ease and comfort for nearly four years, while unmolested and secure in their Forest Fastness, consequently would not offer a great deal of resistance. Contrary to supposition, these troops were determined and stubborn in the conduct of their defense and resistance, and proved to be among Germany's best troops.

It is very true that they had remained in the Forest for a long period, but they had not remained idle, nor were they so elderly, for they had perfected and developed a system of defense that was most difficult to overcome. (13) The "Landwehr" Divisions were reinforced by the 76th German Reserve Division, which greatly strengthened the enemy position. ¹³ Both the "Landwehr" and the 76th Reserves were ~~(14) fresh troops,~~ ¹⁴ unworn by long service at

(13) History of the 77th Division; P. 72 & 149, Par. 32.

¹⁴ ~~(14) History of the 77th Div., P. 149, par. 33.~~

the front, and they fought courageously, contesting every foot of ground after falling back upon their main line of resistance. From the morning of September 27th, their resistance ^{began} commenced in earnest, and from then on, (15) new enemy divisions appeared on the front. ¹⁵

(15) History of the 77th Division; P. 72 & 149.

Returning to the plan of attack, the American Divisions operating on the east of the "Forest", advanced rapidly as planned, (16) but the right of the Fourth French Army, operating on the west of the "Forest", ¹⁶ was unable to advance, (17) owing to the organization and defense of the enemy territory to its front, which ^{Here were} consisted of well-constructed trench systems organized in depth, surrounded by solid masses of barbed wire and covered with second growth brush. ¹⁷

(16) The 92nd Div. Confidential Report No. 17; P. 32, par. 3.

(17) The 92nd Div. Confidential Report No. 17, P. 26, par. 1.

(18) The 92nd Div. Confidential Report No. 17, P. 26, par. 4; P. 3, par. 34. Also Military History of the World War; Page 381.

(18) The liaison mission between the right of the Fourth French Army and the left of the 77th Division, charged to a Franco-American liaison group composed of American colored troops and a like number of French troops, and operating under the 38th French Corps, was not accomplished, owing to the unforeseen and determined opposition by the enemy on the left of the Forest, and at all times during the operation the right of the Fourth French Army remained to the left rear of the left of the American line. ¹⁸ Consequently, the contemplated pocket was not formed and the enemy did not withdraw. Thus we find that the 77th Division faced the "Forest of Argonne" and its occupied defenses with ~~(19)~~ its left flank exposed to the enemy territory to the left and left front, and holding

(19) History of the 77th Division; P. 150; P. 151, par. 39, and

~~P. 68, 74, 75, a seven kilometer zone of action. Due to the snow and 147.~~

bination of circumstances, as stated above, the 77th Division became much involved in the Forest, and many times during those memorable days, regiments, battalions, and even companies were obliged to settle their own disputes with the enemy. Is it so astonishing, then, that the organizations of the 77th should have found themselves engaged on various occasions with both flanks open? It was the indomitable courage, optimism, and determination of the personnel of the Division, from its Commander, whose efficient leadership and will carried the Division forward, to its last Private, which enabled it to realize upon emerging from the Forest before Grand pré (20) eighteen days after it entered, ^{with the realization} that success had crowned its efforts.

(20) History of the 77th Division; Pages 60-61.

(21) History of the 77th Division; P. 199; P. 150, par. 38. Also Personal Knowledge

(21) Major Whittlesey could not have gotten his command lost, as would its name imply, for his designated line of advance led one flank of his force along a well-defined ravine. ~~This ravine runs north and south, perpendicular to, and into the head of the Ravine De Charlevaux, near which location is the Charlevaux Mill. It runs south past the Min. de l'Homme Mort, and on past the Depot de Machines. This ravine also divided the regimental sub-sector of the 308th Infantry, and it was only necessary for Major Whittlesey to conduct his command north along its slopes, in order to reach his position. He could read a map like a book, was intelligent, brave and exceptionally cool under fire. He bore the same hardships as did his officers and men, and they stood with him to the last.~~ (22) He conducted

(22) History of the 77th Division; P. 152, par. 43. (See Operations Map.)

(23) The U. S. in the World War; P. 132; History of the 77th Div., Page 151.

(24) History of the 77th Division; Page 199.

The summary
7

(25) History of the 77th Division; P. 150 & 63.

(26) History of the 77th Division; Page 199.

~~his command to the objective designated for him by~~

the Division Commander, occupied the position assigned him, organized and held that position until the remainder of the Division on the right, and the French on the left, were able to move up on his flanks (23) five days later.

GENERAL SITUATION

(24) The 77th Division, after seven days of continuous fighting, found it's advance on October 2, 1918, checked and at a standstill before strongly wired and entrenched enemy positions. His positions extended along the ridge of the Bois de la Naza, (which positions were very strongly defended), thence westerly across the Ravine de Charlevaux, and on along the ridge, crossing the ravine, along which the so-called "Lost Battalion" advanced, where they connected up with the enemy trenches extending south from La Palette Pavillion. This system of defense, and the entire region in which they were located, was covered with a tangle of trees, vines and under-

brush. In spite of the determined attacks made by the Division, the line could not advance. The American Divisions on the right of the Forest were making good progress. (25) The French to the left, in spite of their determined efforts, still remained to the left rear of the left flank of the 77th Division. The situation was critical, and the Division Commander considered it necessary to launch an attack along the entire Divisional Front, making the main effort on the left, (26) and to attack simultaneously with the French, which, if successful, would cover his left flank, and cause the enemy to

~~withdraw before the strong positions in the Bois~~

de la Naze (and positions extending west across the Ravine de Charlevaux), which positions were in front of the right elements of the Division. (27)

(27) History of the 77th Div.; P. 143 & 73, & P. 149, par. 36.

Major Whittlesey's command, a part of the 308th Infantry, which regiment occupied the extreme left of the American line, and on which flank the main effort was to be made, (28) had received special orders (See Appendix No. 3) to push forward to the vicinity of the Charlevaux Mill and to hold that position at all costs, until the other elements of the Division could come up on the new line.

(28) History of the 77th Div.; P. 73, & P. 150, par. 37, & P. 151; also P. 152, par. 43. Personally read the orders for his advance; personally read his orders.

Two other companies of the 308th Infantry were to remain on the west of the ravine referred to as a retaining force (See Appendix No. 3). Owing to the density of the Forest and the extremely wide zone of action assigned and held by the Division, all elements were ordered to advance regardless of flanks, ^{for it was impossible to maintain} liaison being impossible to maintain under such circumstances. ~~It was thought~~ that the enemy line could be penetrated at that point, in spite of the extremely difficult character of the terrain, and that the French would advance simultaneously on the left, their objective being the same as that designated for the 77th Division. (29) Major Whittlesey was also under orders to establish liaison with the French upon reaching the objective and organizing his position. (See Appendix No. 3)

(29) Personal conversation with Major Whittlesey; Read orders personally.

(29) Major Whittlesey was also under orders to establish liaison with the French upon reaching the objective and organizing his position. (See Appendix No. 3)

(30) History of the 77th Division; Page 150.

~~(30)~~ The attack was launched at 12:30 p.m., October 2, 1918, as planned. ³⁰ It was preceded by an artillery barrage, ~~and from which the Division Commander expected moral rather than material result.~~

for the forest was so dense that observation for ar-

(31) History of the 77th Division; Page 150.

tillery fire was impossible. (31) The American troops to the right of Major Whittlesey's Command were held up before the strong defenses of the Bois de la Naza.

(32) From Upton to the Meuse, 307th Infantry; Page 211, History of the 77th Division.

(32) The French, to the left, advanced, but were repulsed at La Palette Pavillon, and fell back before Binerville. Major Whittlesey's Command reached the designated objective, and upon endeavoring to effect liaison with the French, to the left (See Appendix

(33) History of the 77th Division; Page 151.

No. 3), and Americans, to the right, found that they had not advanced. (33) In the meantime the enemy had

linked up his trench system leading south from La Palette Pavillon, ^{on another side} ~~on~~ and extending along the ridge which leads to the Bois de la Naza, and which positions were now between Major Whittlesey's Command and the Franco-American front line. ^{supporting} He also posted additional machine ^{guns} to cover the ravine, along which

(34) New York Times Current History; Page 233.

the ~~so-called~~ "Lost Battalion" had advanced, and (34) had filtered a large force (between the French, who were to the left rear of the American Force, and the Americans) into the linked-up trench system referred to, (See Appendix No. 4), and had connected up the wire system all along the front. The ~~so-called~~ "Lost Battalion" was surrounded, and the enemy gradually drew his cordons around it.

TERRAIN

(35) Personal Knowledge and Experience.

(35) The terrain over which the so-called "Lost Battalion" passed during its advance, on October 2, 1918, was along the wooded slopes of the ravine referred to, and leading north, where ^{to the} (it) joins with ^{the ravine} the head of the Ravine de Charlevaux, through which flows the Charlevaux Creek. ³⁵ Upon reaching the slopes

overlooking the Charlevaux Mill, Major Whittlesby selected his position for defense about four hundred yards east of the Mill and on a slope just south of the Binarville-la Viergette Road, in the vicinity of the Bois de Buirrone. This slope is covered with thin underbrush and young timber. It was the only position available which would afford protection against artillery fire, as it provided a reverse slope to the enemy, and was near the Charlevaux Mill, the objective designated by the Division Commander. To the south of the position, and leading parallel with it, is the head of the Ravine de Charlevaux, and the Charlevaux Creek runs quite near the foot of the slope which the ~~Surrounded Force~~ occupied. The slopes and hills to the east of the position rose above it, ^{These} and were also covered with timber and underbrush, which afforded the enemy some protection and good observation of the surrounding territory. The terrain offered very little protection to the right flank of the position, from this direction. The left flank and western portion of the position was somewhat protected by a defilade in the form of a spur of the slope, which extended slightly south into the head of the Ravine de Charlevaux. From this point the valley widens out to the west. The left flank of the position rested just east of the spur referred to, and which defiladed some of the enemy machine gun fire. The position extended east along the contour of the slope, and occupying a front of about three hundred and fifty yards. The northern edge of the position rested along the Binarville-Viergette Road and was near

of the wounded. Company "K", 307th Infantry, with one section of Company "D", 306th Machine Gun Battalion, held the right flank. One company of the 308th Infantry, with one section of Company "C", 306th Machine Gun Battalion, held the left flank. The remainder of the companies of the 308th Infantry were equally disposed around the position. The front of the position was heavily held. The rear of the position was thinly held, owing to the open ravine to the south, which was about two hundred yards in width, from slope to slope, and which provided the force a field of fire and good observation. Groups were shifted to meet attacks as situations arose. The enemy held the heights to the front, the rear, and the flanks. Thus did the so-called "Lost Battalion" fight its fight, and alone, completely surrounded by the enemy, and many times outnumbered.

PLANS AND ORDERS

(37) History of the 77th Division; Pages 150 & 199; And Personal Experience as a result of conversation.

(37) ~~to the~~ American Divisions on the right of the Forest had passed beyond the right flank of the 77th Division, and were well to the right front, the Division Commander issued orders, on the morning of October 2, 1918, for a general advance along the entire Divisional Front. ³⁷ This advance was to be made in conjunction with the French on the left. The objective was to be the east and west Binerville-^{du} La Viergette-Monlin de Charlevaux Road, ~~(38)~~ and the railroad running parallel to it, as shown on the map. ^{Because the French were unable} Due to the inability of the French to overcome the determined resistance to the left of the Forest, their right flank still remained to the left rear.

(38) History of the 77th Division; Page 150.

the crest of the slope. The slope had been cut away somewhat in building the road, leaving a steep embankment in some places. Immediately north of the road the slope rises abruptly to its crest, so as to form a sort of a cliff, extending for about seventy-five yards along the front from the left flank. The remainder of the front is gradually rising ground, ^{thru} and from which direction the enemy directed his frontal attacks upon the position occupied by the "Surrounded Force". The slopes south of the Charlevaux Creek, and facing the rear of the position, rose above the occupied slope.

DISPOSITIONS

(36) Personal Knowledge.

(36) The position held by the so-called "Lost Battalion" was established on the contour of the slope described. ³⁶ The force being far ahead of the American front lines, and completely surrounded by the enemy, the position was prepared for defense in order to meet attack from any or all directions, and also from artillery concentrations. The position was elliptically shaped, and extended from east to west, occupying approximately three hundred and fifty yards along the slope. The depth of the position, extending from north to south, was seventy-five to one hundred yards. The nine machine guns were disposed so that two of them covered either flank of the position, the remaining five being equally disposed. Riflemen and Chauchet riflemen were disposed so that an attack could be resisted from any direction. Fox-holes were dug all the way around the position, and excavations dug and prepared in the center of the ellipse for the protection

(39) Our Greatest Battle;
Palmer, P. 54.

of the 77th Division's left flank. This circumstance now exposed both flanks of the Division. The right flank did not concern the Division Commander a great deal, as the American Divisions were well forward on the right, but the left flank was exposed to the enemy. (39) The Division still occupied the broad front originally assigned to it, and was now in the heart of the Forest. Due to this combination of ^{therefore} circumstances, the Division Commander directed that the objective designated be gained by all elements of the Division, regardless of losses and the exposed condition of their flanks. As ^{have said} before ~~stated~~, he planned to make the main effort on the left, and in conjunction with the French, who were to advance simultaneously with the 77th Division, assisting the main effort and covering its left flank, which was exposed to the enemy territory to the west and northwest. If successful, this would also force the enemy to withdraw from his positions in the Bois de la Naza, (which positions ^{movement} faced and opposed the right elements of the Division), ^{as} the American Divisions operating on the right of the Forest, being well forward, provided protection to the right flank of the Division. In spite of the fact that the American Divisions, operating on the right of the Forest, were well forward, ^{yet} the enemy still stubbornly clung to his positions in the Bois de la Naza; ^{and} also, ^{on} the ridge extending west, and would continue to do so until the French, to the west and the left of the 77th Division, could move forward, in which event he would be obliged to withdraw to avoid being caught in a pocket and suffering capture or annihilation.

The orders issued by the Division Commander were positive and precise, ~~as~~ it was obvious that the various organizations could not possibly cover their wide zones of action while fighting in this dense wall of foliage, therefore, it was imperative that one organization cover the advance of another. If the Division halted, it found that the enemy had time to cut openings in the foliage to give his machine guns a field of fire, to string wire entanglements, and in various ways strengthen his highly organized defense, ^{he} where they saw fit, as ~~situations arose~~. The 77th Division could not stop, and it moved forward into a close wall of foliage, combed and re-combed by fire of every character, and the men fired blindly into the leaves as they went.

OPERATIONS.

(40) Personal Experience & Knowledge.

(40) In writing the account of the advance to, and the subsequent defense of the position occupied by the so-called "Lost Battalion", the writer will ^{I shall} endeavor to ~~chronicle~~ events as ~~he~~ personally saw them. Although the historians have referred to the incident in a general way, no accurate and detailed account of the defense of the position occupied by this Command has ever been written.

The testimony of the survivors, in many cases, was taken too soon after the relief was effected, which tended to ~~exact~~ ^{when} from them, on account of their harrowing experience, ^{their} testimony which was vague, consequently events as they occurred and developed each successive day of "The Siege" were not in many cases given in sequence. ^{persons} also the correct dates, and circumstances surrounding events, were in some

cases confused.

shall I be able
Nor will it be possible for the writer to give a strict detailed account of "The Siege", for to give a detailed account of each individual act of heroism and self-sacrifice, and of many other important and interesting incidents which occurred during those five memorable days, *I will fill* would well furnish data for a complete volume. *single descriptive which affected* Only the events affecting the defense of the position in which the combined efforts of the entire command were exercised, will be given in this monograph.

"THE SIEGE OF THE SO-CALLED 'LOST BATTALION'."

(41) Supported by a barrage from the divisional artillery, and a simultaneous attack by the French holding the Binarville sector to the west, the 77th Division, at 12:30 p.m., October 2, 1918, launched an attack along the entire divisional front. The six companies of the 308th Infantry, supported by two platoons of the 306th Machine Gun Battalion with nine machine guns, and commanded by Major Charles S. Whittlesey, advanced as planned, along the east side of the north and south ravine referred to. This force was successful in breaking through the enemy resistance and pushed forward to the slopes overlooking the La Viergette Monlin de Charlevaux road, reaching ~~their~~ objective about 6:00 p.m. During its advance this force encountered determined resistance, but protected its flanks with strong combat groups while advancing, which enabled it to meet at the same time the resistance from the front, ~~but~~ after hard fighting, *it* was successful in breaking through to the designated objective. (42) The force suffered

(41) History
of the 77th
Division;
Page 199.

Refutation

south of the position occupied by the six companies of the 308th Infantry. Having obtained information as to their exact location from one of their outposts, Company "K", 307th Infantry, outposted the position for the night, and remained in support, as ordered. Owing to the denseness of the Forest and the blackness of the night, ~~nothing could be accomplished other than to remain alert.~~ *There was nothing to do except* A small reconnaissance patrol was sent out but soon fell into the hands of the enemy. *The enemy learned from the* ~~Information was also obtained from the outpost that the outpost was a part of a system of runners-~~ *outpost that it* posts which had been established by Major Whittlesey, back to regimental headquarters of the 308th Infantry inside the American front lines, soon after the occupation of his position. Although the enemy had completely linked up his trench and barbed wire defense system, during the night of October 2nd and held the ground in force, between Major Whittlesey's Command and the American front lines, he permitted the runner-posts to operate until late on the morning of October 3rd. This ~~was~~ *was* evident, as patrols sent in directions, other than along the runner-posts, were annihilated or captured. Two whole companies of Major Whittlesey's Command, sent across the little valley to the south on similar missions, one early on the morning of October 3rd, and the other one later in the morning of the same date, ~~became~~ *were* completely surrounded and suffered heavy casualties before they could withdraw to the position occupied by ~~"The Surrounded Force"~~.

Owing to his almost impregnable defense system, the enemy was having no difficulty in holding up the advance of the American and French lines, which were

(42) History
of the 77th
Division;
P.150, par 37.

between ninety and one hundred casualties during the advance, but it will be interesting to note that it captured from the enemy, while in his midst, two officers, twenty-eight privates and three heavy machine guns, and had penetrated and crossed his heavily wired trench system. Upon reaching the objective, Major Whittlesey immediately selected his position and ^{began to organize it} ~~commenced its organization~~ for defense, ^{since} as his mission was to hold it at all costs until the other elements of the Division could come up on the new line which he had established, in accordance with the general plan.

^{When it was known} Information having been received in the American lines that Major Whittlesey's Command had successfully penetrated the enemy positions and was established on the objective; that the French on the left, in spite of their repeated attacks and efforts, had been repulsed in front of La Palette Pavillion and had fallen back before Binarville; also that the remainder of the 77th Division, to the right, had been held up

(43) From Up-
ton to the
Meuse, 307th
Infantry.
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before the Bois de la Naza, (43) three companies of the 307th Infantry, ("I", "K" and "M"), were ordered, late in the evening of the 2nd of October, to ~~again~~ ^{once more} endeavor to push through to the objective along the route of advance taken by Major Whittlesey's force, and to remain there in support of the force under Major Whittlesey until another attack could be organized, ~~for due to the failure of the elements on his flanks to advance,~~ ^{July} the seriousness of his position was realized. Two companies of this force were unable to break through the enemy line. Company "K" succeeded in reaching the slopes about three hundred yards

Repetition

still endeavoring to advance. He was evidently effecting plans for the capture of the ~~"Surrounded Force"~~, and permitted the runner-posts to operate as a ruse until he was ready to carry out his plans, when he promptly broke the chain, capturing or killing most of the men. In the meantime Major Whittlesey, having received orders to hold his position at all costs, was busy preparing his position for defense.

At 6:30 a.m., October 3rd, Company "K", 307th Infantry, was ordered by Major Whittlesey to establish a position on the right flank of his force, as the command by now was completely surrounded by the enemy.

At this time Company "E", 308th Infantry, was detached from the command and sent back across the ravine to the south of the position, Company "K", 307th Infantry, taking its place on the right flank. Company "E" was under orders to attack on the west ~~side of the north and south ravine (the ravine along~~ which Major Whittlesey's command had advanced on the afternoon of October 2nd) in an endeavor to force the enemy back, and to assist the (See Appendix No. 3) two companies of the 308th Infantry, who had been fighting west of that ravine on the afternoon of October 2nd, to move forward to the objective, and thus strengthen the ~~"Surrounded Force"~~.

Ration details were also sent back under the protection of this company, as the force had advanced with only one day's rations for four companies, ~~two of the companies being unable to obtain their~~ supply; Company "K", 307th Infantry, went forward

~~without rations, as assurances had been given the~~
company commander that rations would come forward,
as it was thought that the Division would soon ad-
vance. These ration details never returned. Some
of the men were captured and some were killed. Those
who reached the American lines were unable to return
with the rations, as the enemy had, on the afternoon
and evening of October 2nd, linked up his trench
system between the "Surrounded Force" and the Ameri-
can front line.

The organization of the position for defense,
which had been started on the evening of October 2nd,
was now renewed with vigor, and the men set to work
enlarging the fox-holes all around the position.
Excavations were ^{They dug} dug in the center of the ellipse
for ^{to} the accomodation and the ~~protection~~ protection of the
wounded. The command had carried ^{with it} it's wounded with
it, incurred during the advance to the position,
and from all indications, many more casualties would
soon be inflicted upon the "Surrounded Force".

At about 8:00 a.m. an enemy air-plane flew over
the position and after some reconnaissance disap-
peared. At about 8:30 a.m. enemy artillery shelled
the position and the road leading along the foot of
the position. ^{Very} few shells fell into the posi-
tion, owing to the reverse slope. When the Command
had gone forward on the previous afternoon it had
carried a cage containing five carrier pigeons.
While the German artillery was pounding at the posi-
tion Major Whittlesey released the first pigeon, and
it carried the following message to the Division
loft at the 77th Division message center:

---twenty---

"We are being shelled by German artillery."

Can we have artillery support? Fire is coming from the northwest."

The enemy batteries were soon forced to pull back, owing to the American counter-battery fire, and during the remainder of "The Siege" his artillery could not be employed against the "Surrounded Force", for in firing over the reverse slope of the position, he would register upon his own infantry holding the high ground to the south of the slope occupied by Major Whittlesey's men.

About 10:00 a.m. one officer and eighteen men of Company "E", 308th Infantry, which company had been sent on its mission at 6:30 a.m., fell back upon the position. This officer stated that the company had encountered a large force of the enemy while endeavoring to penetrate his wire, and had become surrounded. Before the company could withdraw it had suffered heavily, and some of the survivors returned to the position in a wounded condition.

The enemy, having found that his artillery could do the "Surrounded Force" no harm as long as it remained dug in on its reverse slope, at this time brought up a trench mortar, and ^{began} commenced to fire on the position from the northwest. A platoon was sent out in an endeavor to capture the trench mortar. This platoon soon came under galling machine gun and rifle fire, which forced it to fall back upon the position, with the loss of some of its members. This platoon, while out among the enemy, captured a prisoner, from whom information

to advance and soon come up on his flanks, Major Whittlesey continued with the organization of his position, and at 10:40 a.m. released his second carrier-pigeon, bearing the following message:

"Our runner-posts are broken; Germans working to our left rear. Have sent Company "K", 307th Infantry, to attack and endeavor to open the line. Patrol ran into Germans to the east at (295.1 - 276.3). Have located German trench mortar at (294.05 - 276.30). Have taken prisoner who states his company brought in last night from rear by motor trucks. German machine guns constantly firing on valley from our rear. "E" Company (sent to meet "D" & "F") met heavy resistance. Two squads have just fallen back on position."

In the meantime, Company "K", 307th Infantry, had crossed the ravine, which was effected by infiltration and under harassing fire. As this company was crossing the ravine, a German from the heights to the north of the position called in a loud voice to those holding the slopes to the south of the position, informing them that one company of the "Surrounded Force" was crossing the ravine to the south. A guttural reply was made from the south slopes, and when Company "K" arrived on the slopes across the ravine, they found that the enemy had withdrawn farther back into the "forest". Company "K" ^{began} commenced its advance due south, with scouts well out and strong combat groups covering the flanks. After passing the first barbed wire system the company came under galling flank and frontal machine gun and rifle fire. The men continued

was obtained that the Germans had brought in many troops during the previous night and had strongly re-inforced their lines opposing the 77th Division, also the French to the left.

While the trench mortar was firing from the northwest, the enemy ~~commenced~~^{began} to close in on the "Surrounded Force", appearing on the slopes to the south of the position. In the meantime bursts of machine gun and rifle fire were directed upon the position from many locations. The enemy trench mortar was registering upon the position at will, and his combined fire was ~~commencing~~^{beginning} to take it's toll of the "American Force".

As the enemy was closing in on the left rear, Company "K", 307th Infantry, holding the right flank, was ordered to cross the Charlevaux Creek to the south of the position, and upon gaining the slopes across the ravine, to attack the enemy and ~~attempt to push him back.~~ ^{that attempt were} Company "K" ^{was} ~~to make~~ an extensive reconnaissance through the "Forest" in the direction of the American front line with a mission of determining the strength of the enemy, and ~~to~~^{to} establish liaison with the 77th Division, if possible. Company "K", 307th Infantry, moved out promptly, as ordered.

Heavy firing could be heard to the south, which indicated to the members of the "Surrounded Force" that the remainder of the Division, and the right of the Fourth French Army, were making every effort to advance. Hopes and morale were high, and discipline was most excellent throughout the command. Although he expected the American and French lines

forward, firing as they advanced, and penetrated a second barbed wire system. It soon became evident that the company was completely surrounded by a powerful force of the enemy. A withdrawal, covered by a rear-guard action, was conducted. This company, after a hard fight, withdrew ~~back~~ to the position occupied by Major Whittlesey's men, carrying it's wounded with it, and arriving about 1:30 p.m.

Upon reaching the slope occupied by the "Surrounded Force", it again took position on the right flank. During the remainder of "The Siege" no force larger than a small combat group was sent out of the position, as the loss of a single man would weaken the defense of the position.

Soon after the return of Company "K", the following message was communicated to all company and detachment commanders of "The Force":

"Our mission is to hold this position at all costs. Have this understood by every man in the command".

*Note: The Stars and Stripes printed an article relative to the commendable way in which the so-called "Lost Battalion" held its position, stating that the command could have fought its way back to the American front lines at any time during the first two days it was surrounded.

*There were three good reasons why Major Whittlesey could not have retired to the American lines. First: - He had been ordered to hold his position at all costs. Second: - While ^{he was} preparing his position for defense, and expecting the American and French lines to advance, the enemy had closed around him. Had he ^{tried} made the endeavor to withdraw ~~back~~ to the American lines, he ^{his entire command would have been} would have gotten his entire ~~command~~ enfiladed, and annihilated or captured in the enemy barbed wire systems, as it would ~~not~~ have had a chance to defend itself. His force, established as it was, had protection from artillery fire from

The writer wishes to state that the force could not have retired without complete annihilation, (Article appears on page 3, of the October 18, 1918, issue, The Stars and Stripes.

the front. It was protected to the rear by a natural barrier in the form of the ravine running parallel with the position, which was open, affording a good field of fire, and through which ran the Charlevaux Creek, from which water could be obtained for the wounded. Third: - Had Major Whittlesey left the reverse slope, the enemy artillery would have concentrated on his command, as it was far in the enemy territory, which rendered it possible for the enemy artillery to fire, and at the same time to remain secure against counter hostile artillery fire of the French and American batteries.

Definite orders ^{about} affecting the defense of the position were now given all units, and a strong patrol was sent to the ridge to the left front for observation to the north. It soon returned and reported that large numbers of the enemy could be seen moving in from the northwest.

defense
of fire

The ~~presence of the enemy re-inforcements~~ ^{began} soon commenced to make themselves evident, for suddenly a heavy trench mortar again opened fire from a position about six hundred yards to the northwest. It soon obtained the correct range, and many shells fell into the position. Scouts sent to the crest of the ridge reported that it was protected by machine guns. A combat group was organized and sent out in an endeavor to capture the mortar, but soon came under rifle and machine gun fire, and the survivors fell back upon the position. The enemy could not use his artillery, owing to the reverse slope occupied

by the "Surrounded Force", but counteracted this inability, to a large extent, by employing light (minenwerfers) and heavy trench mortars, which owing to their high angle-fire, were able to register occasionally upon the slope from any location around the position. From the afternoon of October 3rd he continually pounded the position with these high-angle weapons, causing the command many casualties, ^{and} untold agony and distress, but he was never able to break the morale of the men.

However, Combined with the fire from this trench mortar, machine gun fire was placed on the position from the west and southwest, and sniping began from all directions. All of this was only a fore-runner of the first enemy organized attack, which came at 3:00 p.m. It was a surprise attack, made with the view of storming the American position and capturing the entire force. ~~They launched their main~~ ^{was} attack from the front, supported by machine guns and trench mortar fire from flanks and rear. They ~~attacked from the front~~ with potato-mashers and hand grenades, with a thin line of riflemen advancing with the Grenadiers. In their eagerness and excitement to storm the position, they exposed themselves to the American firing line, and when the rifle and Chauchat rifle fire was poured into their ranks the attack was soon broken up, for the enemy fell back in disorder.

The so-called "Lost Battalion" had not taken forward trench mortars or one-pounders, ^{and} therefore, could not counteract the fire of the enemy trench mortars, but with ~~it's~~ ^{its} nine machine guns, many

Chauchat rifles and rifles, the "American Force"

could deliver a terrible burst of small-arms fire, and in any direction. "The Force" had not carried food forward, for that had been arranged for, had the lines advanced, but extra ammunition was carried by all men, ^{all the men carried} ~~as a difficult advance and determined opposition was anticipated by the Division Commander.~~ ^{since the Division Commander anticipated}

Upon falling back, the enemy immediately commenced to effect ^{plan} his plans for another attack. In their ^{has} eagerness they again gave their plan away, ^{he} for an American officer, whose company was on the left flank of the "American Force" and who could speak and understand German, over-heard the German officers calling to each other and giving instructions. This ^{At 5 p.m. the enemy made} attack was made by the enemy upon the ^{a fierce attack simultaneously} "Surrounded Force" at 5:00 p.m. It was a fierce ^{on} attack, and the enemy attacked both flanks simultaneously with infantry groups, which came supported by the Grenadiers from the front. The trench mortars ^{also} assisted in the attack, and machine gun fire raked the position. The Americans waited until the enemy came into plain view; the command "fire" was given, and the ravine rang out with echoes of machine guns, Chauchat rifles and rifles. The American machine gunners also swept the slopes to the south. The men were steady, cool, and deliberate, during ^{as they fired.} the delivery of their fire. Their accurate ^{cy} fire caused the enemy to again fall back in disorder, and gutteral ^u cries of pain were heard all along his line. The cries of the enemy wounded could be heard until long after darkness had

settled down, when their comrades came and carried both their dead and wounded to the rear. From the night of October 3rd, the enemy carried his dead and wounded back each night under cover of darkness, except his dead who had ventured too near the ~~American~~ position in their eagerness to annihilate or capture ~~"The Command"~~.

The enemy had been repulsed in his two assaults upon the ~~"Surrounded Force"~~, but had inflicted many casualties, for, by now ~~"The Command"~~ had suffered, from the afternoon of October 2nd, one hundred and fifty-six casualties, in killed and wounded. No medical officer had accompanied the command, and as the enemy ~~had been~~ ^{was} content to remain under cover after his last attack, the entire personnel of ~~"The Force"~~ now turned their attentions to the care of the wounded. Three enlisted men of the Medical Corps were present and they were directing the application of the dressings. Their supply of bandages and every first aid pack in the entire command ^{was} were used that night. The wounded were dressed and placed as comfortably as possible in excavations ^{behind fallen logs} and ~~under cover of other~~ protection which ~~had been provided for them, in the form of fallen trees and~~ ^{or} behind larger trees, which afforded protection from grenades hurled from the slope to the front. Thus did October 3rd pass for the ~~so-called~~ ^{so-called} "Lost Battalion"; a day of events which had so closely pursued each other that the men could hardly realize that some quiet had come at last.

The men, especially the wounded, suffered

bitterly from the cold during the night of October 3rd. The wounded were possessed of heroic fortitude. Men who had been shot through the stomach, and others whose arms and legs had been badly lacerated by trench mortar shells, remained quiet, and strove to grit the pains and anguish between their teeth, ~~which was so~~ unlike the enemy wounded, who would cry out until their comrades would come up under cover of darkness and carry them back. The remainder of the night of October 3rd passed quietly. Scouts were sent out under cover of darkness in an endeavor to carry information of the plight of "The Force" to the American lines. These scouts either returned wounded or did not return at all.

Day-light of October 4th, and the second day of "The Siege", found the men very tired and hungry, for what few rations they carried forward had been consumed by the wounded during the morning of October 3rd. ~~In spite of all,~~ ^{Nevertheless} morale was high, for all were certain that the Franco-American lines would advance that day. The dead, who had fallen on the afternoon of October 3rd, were buried with great difficulty, for the men were exhausted from fatigue and hunger. About 8:30 a.m. a new and serious situation arose, which proved very discouraging and distressing to the command. The enemy had brought back two light trench mortars (minenwerfers) and had placed them in positions; one slightly to the right front, and one to the left front. This swelled his number of trench mortars to three. During the remainder of "The

~~Siege~~ he kept up an incessant fire with these weapons, causing the "Surrounded Force" many casualties, and only ceased his fire when the American artillery fire forced him to retire temporarily. He would always return and continue his nibbling torture.

Scouts who had been sent out returned with the report that Germans in large numbers were all around the position. ^{They were waiting} ~~No attempt was being made by them to assault the position at this time, but~~ ^{were concentrating} ~~harassing machine gun fire was being delivered~~ upon the position and snipers were busy. The men had developed their fox-holes, and could now remain safe from enemy machine gun and rifle fire, but the death dealing, silent flying, trench mortar shells would appear on a high angle, descending upon the position or upon the road at the foot of the position. About fifteen percent of his trench mortar shells fell into the position but many of those failed to explode. One redeeming ^{luckily for the Americans} ~~feature was observed by the men, in that a~~ great deal of the enemy trench mortar ammunition was defective, ^{and so} ~~which rendered many of his shells~~ ^{more} ~~useless~~. Many of his shells passed over the occupied reverse slope and struck along the road to the rear of the position and in the ravine to the rear. Had all of the trench mortar shells fired by the enemy fallen into the position, ~~then there~~ ^{would have really been a} ~~would have really been a~~ ^{lost} ~~Lost Battalion~~.

At 10:30 a.m. Major Whittlesey sent a member of his air-service, in the form of another pigeon, to the rear, bearing the following message:

"Germans are all around us. We have been heavily shelled by mortars this morning. Situation is rapidly cutting in our strength. Men are suffering from hunger and exposure. The wounded are in very bad condition. Should have more ammunition. Cannot support be sent at once?"

Harassing machine gun and rifle fire continued until the afternoon, and the men of "The Surrounded Force" returned the fire. The machine gunners delivered their fire upon the slopes occupied by the enemy, and occasionally one of the riflemen would observe a form come tumbling down from his concealment.

During a lull in the afternoon, an American artillery barrage began to fall upon the slopes to the south-east, for the pigeon released had arrived at Division Headquarters, and the artillery were endeavoring to break up the enemy groups which were forming to assault the position. Each pigeon released had carried the map co-ordinates of the position. Increasing its intensity, the barrage crept down the slope to the rear of the position, crossed the marshy bottom of the ravine, where it hurled mud and brush into the air and settled dead upon the position occupied by the so-called "Lost Battalion". The shells intended for the enemy's destruction were now registering repeatedly upon the slope which sheltered the beleaguered force. Excavations were caved in upon the wounded. When the men would endeavor to shift their position in order to avoid the shells, enemy machine gunners and snipers would rake the position. The German

trench mortars threw in their shells, which added to the fury of the friendly barrage. Out of this inferno of fire and brimstone flew Whittlesey's last pigeon, and the last link of communication between the so-called "Lost Battalion" and the Franco-American lines, and it carried the following message:

"We are along the road parallel 276.4. Our own artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us."

When the barrage, and enemy fire had ceased many dead and wounded were added to the already fast~~y~~ dwindling band. *had suffered many bases*

About 3:30 p.m. an American plane flew high over the position. The Battalion Signal men succeeded in attracting its attention by placing white panels in an open space in the trees, as a rocket signal from the plane was observed. The plane soon descended, and later another plane came flying over the "Forest" and quite low. Upon passing over the American lines and approaching the "Besieged Force" it was fired upon by seemingly every enemy machine gun in the vicinity. It circled around and over the position and dropped message containers with long streamers, but they were lost in the swamp or fell into the enemy lines.

At 5:00 p.m. the enemy made another attack upon the position, but ^{it was} not ~~as~~ determined as ^{was} the attacks of the evening of the third. *The Americans* This attack was ~~repulsed~~, and the ~~men~~ again turned their attention to the wounded, for ~~the command~~ ^{they} had suffered heavily during the day. Water was obtained

for their casualties. The wounded were again dressed, and silence soon settled over the hillside, except for an occasional moan or half-suppressed cry from the wounded. By now the wounded were in frightful condition; weak from the loss of blood, and ^{without} ~~no~~ food with which to replenish the ~~fast~~ falling vitality. The remainder of the night was bitterly cold and rainy.

Dawn of October 5th, and the third day of "The Siege", found the men very tired and hungry. The usual routine of sending out patrols and scouts was resumed. Scouts returning from the slope to the northeast reported that they had sighted a body of about two hundred Germans moving into the hills to the south and rear of the position. ^{the} ~~Some~~ of the ~~dead~~ ^{Some of the dead} had been buried on the afternoon of October 3rd, and the melancholy duty ~~was again resumed~~ ^{resumed} on the morning of the fourth. ~~Weakness from~~ ^{from} the lack of food and sleep made it almost impossible for the men ^{could scarcely} ~~to excavate~~ ^{break} graves in the hard ground occupied by the command. They dug cheerfully, that their fallen comrades might have their last earthly tribute. The work could not be continued, for suddenly trench mortar, machine-gun and rifle fire was directed upon the position. The enemy had observed the men rise from their fox-holes to perform their sacred duty. From the morning of October 4th, the dead could not be buried, for when a burial party would attempt to work, the enemy would deliver upon the position fire of every ^{sort} ~~character~~. ~~Hopes of~~ the American lines advancing were high, and the ~~men were certain that they would advance on that~~ ^{the American can lines}

X

from a muddy stream running along the ravine below
~~the position. A caravan of water cost a casualty,~~
for the enemy soon found that the men were carrying
~~water from the little stream. He cross-fired on it~~
from four positions. He laid his guns to enable
him to fire by night, as well as by day, and would
fire at irregular intervals, which would deceive
the men. So many men were wounded while on the
mission of obtaining water for the wounded that
guards had to be placed at intervals to keep the
men from going for water by day. After the wounded
had been made as comfortable as possible, the men
endeavored to obtain some much needed rest. A
chilly rain added to the discomfort, but soon after
8:00 p.m. rifle fire and fire from the American
Chauchat rifles could be heard from over the ridge
to the south. The morale of ~~the~~ "The Force" was still
high, which would seem impossible, for certainly
the lines would advance, as they were fighting by
night as well as by day.

7

~~The enemy, having made many endeavors to capture~~
the command by direct assault, and ^{having} had each time
failed to gain the position, now changed their
method of attack. About 9:00 p.m. flares began
to shoot all over and around the position, lighting
up the entire slope. From all along the slopes to
the front hand grenades and potato-mashers began
to fall. The enemy rained them onto the position
at will. It was indeed a surprise attack, but the
men fell on the firing line and delivered a burst
of small arms' fire that soon sent the enemy over
the hills in confusion. They returned soon after

day, for the low rumbling sound of the American Chauchat-rifles could be distinguished above the rapid sound of the German machine guns. At least the men knew that every endeavor was being made by the 77th Division to advance. Several entire battalions of the 77th had been reduced to a negligible strength in their endeavor to come up on the flanks of the so-called "Lost Battalion". The French and American planes ^{began} commenced to fly around the position, but did not seem to descend so near the position. This was a discouragement to the men, for could it be that the force had been considered annihilated or captured? The planes circled high in the air and soon flew back to the rear. Sniping was kept up by both the enemy and the American Force until along in the afternoon. The Germans seemed to be quieting down, and the men wondered if they were preparing to withdraw, for the Franco-American attack during the entire morning had been fierce, as could be determined by the firing to the south and southwest. This hope soon faded away ^{when the} upon ^{ceased} the cessation of the firing to the rear, and the enemy groups could be seen moving about on the slopes. About 3:00 p.m. a French plane came flying over the position; enemy machine gun fire greeted its appearance, but it continued to circle the position, and soon flew back toward the French lines. The enemy, no doubt, had ^{his} their reason for remaining quiet, for, (no doubt), he was preparing to launch another attack upon the "beleaguered force".

The French plane had carried information to ^{inform}

his own lines to the effect that the "Surrounded Force" could not be located, but that a concentration of enemy troops was being effected near the position. The French Commander, on the left, informed the Division Commander of the 77th Division that he was going to lay down an artillery concentration upon the German troops in that locality, stating that the so-called "Lost Battalion" had, no doubt, been annihilated or captured. In spite of the objections of the American Commander, the French opened fire. The shells came southwest from over Binarville, many of them striking dead into the position occupied by the "American Force". They would strike all along the slope, and when groups would attempt to shift to safer ground, the enemy would sweep the position with all of his fires. No shells seemed to pass over the position and onto the enemy beyond, but either fell short or travelled along the slope occupied by the Americans, and the barrage fell for one hour and thirty-five minutes.

When the men realized that it was another friendly barrage, which had been intended for the enemy, the first thing ^{they} remembered was, that Major Whittlesey had released his last pigeon the day before and no word could be sent to the artillery, informing them that their barrage was falling short. That hour and thirty-five minutes seemed days, and between shells the men were busy with the enemy. No guns of the French batteries lifted during the entire barrage, consequently the enemy was quick to take advantage of the terrible plight of the

refutation

Americans, and during the hour and thirty-five minutes, had effected their plans for an attack the moment the friendly artillery lifted. He was ready, and as the last few shells came over the hills, he launched his attack upon the "Surrounded Force". Although the French barrage had rendered ^{caused} a disorganization, to some extent, the men fell on the firing line and poured their small arms' fire into the ranks of the enemy, ~~which~~ ^{ing} again forced him to fall back to cover.

The ~~Division~~ Commander soon saw that his estimate of the situation had been correct, when he informed the French that the "Surrounded Force" was still holding out, for as soon as the French barrage lifted, the Chauchat rifles and machine guns of the "Surrounded Force" could be heard far back in the American lines, ~~while~~ resisting the attack made by the enemy upon the position soon after the French barrage had lifted. Hardly had the fight ended, when an American plane came flying over the Forest and swooped down toward the position. The enemy machine guns opened fire on it, but had no effect, for the plane seemed most persistent and continued to fly around and around the position, swooping down and then up, as if endeavoring to dodge the enemy fire. Soon it started for the rear.

The men of the "Surrounded Force" wondered at the queer actions of the air-plane, for soon another one returned and ^{again} ~~commenced~~ to drop packages from the cock-pit. The men now realized that the Command had been discovered by the Air-Service, and

~~that every effort was being made to assist, for~~
it was thought that it was food and ammunition
which the planes were dropping. Owing to the queer
formation of the terrain about the vicinity of
the slope occupied by the "surrounded force", it
was most difficult for the Air-Service to observe
and judge correctly, for the packages all fell to
the enemy. The plane soon disappeared, which ^{and so ended}
~~closed~~ another day of harrowing events and exper-
iences for the so-called "Lost Battalion".

The Command looked to the care of ^{its} it's wounded.
Bandages were now being taken from the dead and
applied to the wounded. Wounds were being wrapped
with the spiral-puttees worn by the soldiers, and
taken from the legs of the dead. These proved to
be excellent bandages, for the stub of an arm or
a leg, or a badly lacerated wound could be securely
wrapped with two of these leggins. ^{which} They were ~~also~~
~~made of wool and quickly absorbed the blood.~~ It
was growing more difficult to obtain water, for
the enemy continually fired upon the water hole by
day and by night. Darkness soon settled over the
hill-side, and for once all was deathly silent,
save for the moans of the wounded and the occasional
crack of a rifle.

Morning of October 6th, and the fourth day of
~~The Siege~~, ^{began} brought another day to ~~be~~ dragged out
it's weary length. Machine gun and rifle fire ~~com-~~
^{started} ~~menced~~ early, and the trench mortars again took up
their pounding. Faint sounds of American rifle
and Chauchat-Rifle firing could be heard from over
the ridge to the south, but they seemed so far

*Found in
the Stars
and Stripes.

away that it seemed they spoke of despair, rather than of hope. It was at this time that Major Whittlesey, in talking to his few remaining assembled officers and non-commissioned officers, *compared the faint low steady sound of the American Chauchat-Rifles, far back in the American lines, to the Bag-Pipes at Lucknow. The indescribable suffering of the wounded, and the seeming failure of the Franco-American lines to advance with re-inforcements, failed to shake the morale of the men, for one thing in that desperate situation no one forgot. The command had advanced to the ravine, where it remained under orders to take the position, and to hold it at all costs until the other elements of the line could reach it. The orders were plain. On this morning there was a general ^{feeling} sensing throughout the now little band that the test had come. ~~Without~~ ^{Although not} a command or a suggestion ^{had been} being given, it was known throughout the command by every remaining officer and man, that if the Germans captured the hill-side they would find there the last of its defenders, dead at his post.

At 9:30 a.m. another air-plane appeared and again endeavored to drop packages upon the slope occupied by the ~~surrounded force~~. It was greeted by fire of every character, but doggedly continued to circle the position, and soon flew straight to the American line. It was to get its revenge, for it had signalled the American field artillery ~~to the effect~~ that there were many enemy troops around the ~~so-called~~ ^{the} "Lost Battalion". It had sighted the air-plane parcels, ~~put out by the~~

~~"Beleaguered Force"~~ At 10:00 a.m. an artillery
barrage began. It again came from the southeast,
as ^{it had} on two days ^{before} previous. It registered dead on
the slopes across the ravine to the rear. It
pounded the slopes for many yards in width and in
depth. It ^{crept} crept down the slope to the ravine,
and crossed over the creek in the bottom. Suddenly
it lifted and landed squarely on top of the ridge
to the north, where the enemy had formed for his
daily assaults upon the so-called "Lost Battalion".
It was the American artillery, of the 77th Division.
It literally tore up the ground all around the
position. It registered at will to the rear, upon
both flanks, and to the front of the slope occupied
by the "Surrounded Force", and the men were amazed
at the accuracy of its fire. So badly did the
American artillery break up the enemy organization,
that they were unable to launch their attack upon
the "Surrounded Force", for which they were pre-
paring. The American artillery had atoned for its
less fortunate barrage two days previous. The ar-
tillery, obtaining the correct range and fire data,
assisted by the air service reconnaissance, and
firing such a perfect barrage, no doubt saved the
~~so-called~~ "Lost Battalion" from complete annihila-
tion that day. The air-planes soon after returned
and again made every endeavor to drop food and
ammunition upon the "Beleaguered Force". The
packages could be easily seen descending, and it
looked as if they would surely fall into the posi-
tion, but they always fell to the enemy. Some of
the Germans around the American force could speak

English, and upon obtaining the packages would call down to the Americans from the heights around, and inform the men of the contents of the packages. They failed to gain the confidence of the men of the command, for the Americans would curse them in reply. The writer had never before known that the American soldier's vocabulary contained so "much enlightening information", and so many "endearing terms", and the Germans understood them perfectly. The Air-Service, for the remainder of "The Siege", made every endeavor to assist the "Surrounded Force". They had assisted the artillery in obtaining the correct fire data, which had so completely broken down the enemy formations during the morning, and they kept the sky clear of enemy planes, who would surely have bombed the position had not our air service kept ^{him} away. They lost two planes and two officers killed while making their courageous flights, ~~and~~ in the face of fire of every character over the position occupied by the so-called "Lost Battalion".

During the afternoon a few ranging bursts of fire were directed against the position from enemy machine guns to the south and southwest. Suddenly the Germans laid down an intense machine gun barrage covering every part of the slope. The hillside was baptized in bullets, ^{which} and were delivered from positions from every direction. This was one of the most unpleasant experiences of the entire "Siege". Although the men had flattened themselves in their funk-holes, upon the delivery of the ranging bursts, many casualties were caused. It was

immediately followed by a grenade and potato-masher attack, supported by the two light trench mortars, as the American artillery had destroyed the heavy one firing from the northwest during the delivery of its barrage in the morning. This attack was met and dispersed by the small arms' fire of the Americans, but the usual toll of dead and wounded had been taken by the enemy. The wounded were cared for, and more wrapped-leggin bandages applied.

The enemy, having suffered heavily during the day, as the result of the American barrage; also the accuracy of the American rifle-men and machine gunners, was content to remain quiet all during the evening and night of October 6th, but came up, as usual, after darkness and carried back his dead and wounded.

Ammunition was running very low, even though the command had gone forward well supplied. Soon after dark, the rifles and ammunition were taken from the enemy dead who had fallen near the position, in their effort to venture too near during some of their attacks. These dead the enemy could not carry back, as they had fallen too near the position occupied by the "surrounded force". A good supply of rifles and ammunition was obtained, and their rifles made very fine sniping weapons, although they did not compare with the American rifles for long range work.

The reader may imagine by now that the morale of the command must be shattered. The writer wishes to point to an incident which occurred after darkness had closed over the "Hill-Side", on the night

of October 6th. One of the men who had been sent out with the party to bring in the rifles and ammunition of the enemy dead, promptly upon his return to the position, requested permission to again return to the enemy dead. He gave as his reason, his desire to search their packs for rations. Now this soldier had been shot high in the head and was bandaged. His request was refused at first by his Company Commander, but as he ~~so~~ insisted, the Company Commander ^{consented} soon ~~relented~~. The soldier crawled back out of the position and out among the enemy dead. He had been absent for some time, consequently some concern was felt for his safety, lest he fall into the hands of enemy patrols. He soon came crawling into the position, and ^{when he was} upon being asked about the enemy rations, ^{he began} ~~commence~~ to haul something out of his shirt front. He said to his Captain, "here, Captain, I have a fine souvenir for you", and immediately ~~showed~~ ^{shoved} a magnificent pipe toward his Company Commander. ~~He~~ ^{He} having satisfied himself that he had made it ^{all right} ~~alright~~ with the Captain, ^{he} proceeded to pull out of his shirt bosom notebooks, looking glasses, shaving utensils, combs, pencils, pens, buttons, ornaments, and other articles too numerous to mention; ~~in fact,~~ ~~he had gathered a good load.~~ The point is, ~~he~~ ^{he} had not gone out there for rations at all, but for souvenirs. ~~The writer believed~~ ^{these} ~~the above~~ to be a fair demonstration of real morale and fortitude. The American soldier is the biggest morale raiser ~~in the world.~~ He is brave, resourceful, and exceptionally cool under fire, and will obey orders

to the last and smallest detail.

On the morning of October 7th, and the fifth day of ~~the Siege~~ ^{to} it was almost impossible to find men who had strength enough to go to the slopes as scouts. There was no change, as far as the situation was concerned, for as fast as patrols would venture out they were immediately driven in by the enemy. The position by now was in a bad state, for the dead of three days' fighting had not been buried, nor was it possible to accomplish this. ^{Bury them} The wounded were suffering intensely, ^{as} gangrene had set in on most of the living wounded, and many men were dying. Every bit of strength had to be conserved in order to repel attacks of the enemy from the ridge above the position. The American planes were still trying to drop food and ammunition, for no man knew when relief could possibly break through. Faint firing was heard in the direction of the American lines, which spoke for the endeavors of the Division to come up on the flanks of the ~~"Beleaguered Force"~~ ^{"Beleaguered Force"}.

In spite of everything which had gone before, the morale and discipline of the command was high, and hopes of relief on the morning of the seventh were entertained. Just before noon the enemy launched a bitter attack from the front, and his machine gunners to the flanks again raked the position. The men ^{dragged} themselves to firing positions, and in their eagerness to hold the enemy out of the position, soon forgot their wounds, for by now, men who had been sorely wounded were taking part in the resistance. This attack was repulsed

after a vigorous burst of fire delivered by what
was ~~remained~~ of the ~~American~~ command. Harassing
fire continued during the afternoon.

At 4:00 p.m. the enemy firing ceased, and from
the left flank there appeared a soldier limping
toward the position. All were cautioned to hold
their fire. The soldier was carrying a long stick,
upon which was tied a white piece of cloth. He
passed into the position in sight of the enemy ob-
serving from the heights. He had been captured by
the Germans while attempting to obtain some of the
packages dropped from the American airplanes
during the morning of the seventh, and had been
blind-folded and accompanied to the opening where
he was released. He was the bearer of a letter
from the German commanding officer. The letter
was addressed to the commanding officer of the
"Surrounded Force", dictated in English and neatly
typewritten on a sheet of good quality paper, and
it read as follows:

"Sir:- The bearer of this present, Private
....., has been taken prisoner by us. He
refused to give the German Intelligence Officer
any answer to his questions, and is quite an hon-
orable fellow, doing honor to his Fatherland in
the strictest sense of the word.

"He has been charged, against his will, be-
lieving that he is doing wrong to his country, to
carry forward this present letter to the officer
in charge of the battalion of the 77th Division,
with the purpose to recommend this commander to
surrender with his forces, as it would be quite

useless to resist anymore, in view of the present conditions.

"The suffering of your wounded men can be heard over here in the German lines, and we are appealing to your humane sentiments to stop. A white flag shown by one of your men will tell us that you agree with these conditions. Please treat Private as an honorable man. He is quite a soldier. We envy you.

The German Commanding Officer."

Legend has made famous the reply, "Go to Hell", which Major Whittlesey is reported to have hurled at the Germans upon reading the demand for surrender. No answer, written or ^{oral} verbal, was made by him to the German Commander's letter. Major Whittlesey ordered the two white air-plane panels to be taken in at once. There was to be nothing white showing on that "Hill-Side".

The writer will explain the origin of the phrase, "Go to Hell", which has been attributed to Major Whittlesey. Some of the enlisted men were standing grouped around nearby while the letter was being read by Major Whittlesey and two other officers present. Some of the sergeants had also heard the contents of the letter. In a very few minutes the news and contents of the letter was known all over the command. The men ^{soon} commenced to call out to the Germans, inviting them to come over and take the command if they wanted them, and many choice oaths were conveyed along with their invitations. The German Commander very soon found that his offer would not be considered by Major Whittlesey and his

men, for, in plain words, the men had told them to do the thing, which no doubt, Major Whittlesey thought, but did not say.

The Germans waited for their reply, but no reply was being prepared, for Major Whittlesey was busy re-disposing what few effective men he had left, and preparing for the attack which was sure to follow. A very small amount of ammunition remained, and the men could be seen shining their bayonets in the wet dirt, for owing to the depletion of ~~The Command~~, it was expected that the enemy would surely make a bayonet assault upon the position. Gutteral commands could be heard all around the position. When all was ready, a furious attack was launched by the enemy upon the position. He directed his main attack upon the center and the right flank. His grenadiers came over the cliffs from the left front, and the "American force" found itself resisting the fiercest attack of the entire ~~Siege~~. The enemy employed his machine guns, snipers and light trench-mortars (minenwerfers) to support the attack. Men too weak to stand, and men severely wounded, drew themselves up to the firing line, took deliberate aim and fired into the advancing enemy. Those who could not fire loaded rifles for their comrades. The attack had reached its height, when ~~liquid~~ liquid fire shot into the ranks of the two companies holding the right flank.

The enemy had reserved his ~~liquid~~ liquid fire until the last, and had employed it with the intention of turning the right flank of the force and causing

disorganization. His plans did not work, for this act angered the men instead of disorganizing them, and the men rose out of their fox-holes, went forward to a new firing position and killed the Germans carrying the flame throwers. It seemed that the enemy must come over, but the men made one last effort and he fell back, never to come again. Germans could be seen drifting around the flanks of the position from the slopes to the south, which was a good sign that the Americans were coming forward. The firing of the American Chauchat-rifles could now be distinctly heard to the south, and hopes of relief was again renewed. Cries could be heard from the slopes above the position, which testified to the fact that the American rifle fire had been effective. Gradually the Germans withdrew, carrying their dead and wounded with them, ~~for the American and French lines were advancing.~~

It would have been impossible for the command to withstand another such fierce onslaught without annihilation, for only two machine guns of the original nine remained, and no gunners remained to man them. Rifle, machine gun, pistol and Chauchat rifle ammunition was practically gone, and hand grenades all expended. The command would have met the next attack with the bayonet.

Dusk soon came, but the survivors who had prepared to suffer another cold night of hunger and thirst, now realized that the almost despaired of relief was coming. ^{There had been} No food whatsoever since the ~~early morning of the 3rd of October had been tasted~~ by the command, and the water obtained was very

slimy and bad. The moans of the severely wounded penetrated the stoutest of hearts.

As the enemy groups withdrew, the American lines came up from the south driving the enemy before them, and passed on to the front, where they outposted for the night the position occupied by the so-called "Lost Battalion".

The news that the remainder of the Division, and the French to the left, had come up on the flanks of the "Surrounded Force" soon spread rapidly along the hill-side. There was no demonstration or cheering of any kind. The survivors rose from their fox-holes, which they had expected would be their graves, and silently passed among their dead and wounded, assisting the relieving force ^{to make} in making the wounded as comfortable as possible. The Division Ambulances could not arrive until the morning of the eighth, and the survivors lay down to rest for the first time in six days with their dead and their wounded.

The Siege of the ~~so-called~~ "Lost Battalion" was only one of those incidents and situations which are bound to arise during military operations incident to campaign, and especially during operations so difficult, as were those in the ^{Argonne} Forest of Argonne. The ~~so-called~~ "Lost Battalion" only played its part in helping to break the enemy spirit and morale, and the fact will always remain, that this "American Force", no matter what the circumstances were, advanced under orders, seized and held the position designated; fought and starved

• for five days and five nights to defend and hold

~~It; to avoid being captured by the enemy, and to~~

uphold the traditions of American Arms.

GAINS AND LOSSES

Gains (Our Gains)

As to gains of the so-called "Lost Battalion", it took thirty-four prisoners and four machine guns from the enemy while out in his midst. It gained its objective and held its designated position. ~~By holding its position, the enemy~~ ^{It shows} was forced ^{the enemy} to employ many of their ^{his} men to attempt the capture of ^{annihilation} of the command. This ^{compelled} forced him to take many men from his main line of resistance, which was established between the American lines and the "Surrounded Force".

^{Battalion} The ~~force~~, holding out as it did, completely surrounded and many times out-numbered, no doubt, lowered the morale and spirit of the German troops in that vicinity.

The Enemy Gains.

The enemy did not realize any gains, for he suffered many casualties and was forced to detach troops and ^{to try to} ~~assign them to the mission of effecting the capture of~~ the American force, which weakened his main line of resistance. ~~He also failed in his mission to effect the capture of the command.~~

Enemy Losses.

The enemy losses around the position occupied by the so-called "Lost Battalion" could not be estimated, as the Germans came up under cover of darkness and carried their dead and wounded back. The American force was far ahead of its first line and surrounded, therefore, the enemy was not

molested in withdrawing his wounded. The cries and groans of his wounded ^{began} commenced after every fight, and would continue until after darkness. Many of his dead were found close up to the position, ~~as~~ during the early part of "The Siege" many of them were very bold in their endeavor to capture the ~~"Surrounded Force"~~, and upon coming into the swept space of the American rifles, ~~would fall~~ ^{fell} so near the position that their comrades could not withdraw their bodies, even after darkness, ~~as~~ ^{for} the Americans had good observation for about seventy-five yards to the front and north, and about two hundred yards to the rear and south. Many of the enemy dead were found within fifty yards of the position, ~~These~~ ^{and} dead were buried by the Americans.

American Losses.

There are a great many conflicting reports and opinions concerning the losses suffered by the ~~so-called~~ "Lost Battalion", as well as of the circumstances surrounding its advance and subsequent "Siege". ~~The~~ ¹ writer, with the assistance of some officers and non-commissioned officers, made an endeavor ^{ed} to determine the number of casualties suffered, while the Division was ~~at~~ ^{in the vicinity of} Chateauvillain (France) and ~~vicinity~~ ^{vicinity} soon after the cessation of hostilities.

Figures collected in any case would only be fairly accurate, for many officers and men were still in the hospitals which were scattered all over France. ~~It was impossible to make the determination from company records, as during the~~

~~eighteen days the Division was in that dense forest~~ it was utterly impossible to keep an entirely accurate check on the personnel. The companies were well filled for the initial thrust, but considering the deaths, wounded, stragglers, and men detailed on various duties, no accurate record could be obtained. Many made ^{tried} the attempt to make the check, and in many cases it was necessary for new company commanders (who had been assigned after the cessation of hostilities) to ask the men of the various organizations involved, as to whether or not they had been in ^{of the} "The Siege" of the so-called "Lost Battalion".

The following organizations were in "The Siege": Companies "A", "B", "C", "E", "G" and "H", 308th Infantry; Headquarters Runners and Scouts of the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 308th Infantry; two platoons of Companies "C" and "D", 306th Machine Gun Battalion, and Company "K", 307th Infantry.

It is very true that the organizations had become much depleted by noon of October 2, 1918, at which time and date the advance of the force was initiated, for the Division had been fighting in the "Forest" since the early morning of September 26th. Replacements were received from time to time and rushed into the lines. The combination of circumstances rendered it most difficult to keep the records straight ^{as} casualties, etc., would occur. Owing to the broad zone of action held by the Division, organizations and their headquarters' records were often separated for periods.

~~Company, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th, 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th, 40th, 41st, 42nd, 43rd, 44th, 45th, 46th, 47th, 48th, 49th, 50th, 51st, 52nd, 53rd, 54th, 55th, 56th, 57th, 58th, 59th, 60th, 61st, 62nd, 63rd, 64th, 65th, 66th, 67th, 68th, 69th, 70th, 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, 76th, 77th, 78th, 79th, 80th, 81st, 82nd, 83rd, 84th, 85th, 86th, 87th, 88th, 89th, 90th, 91st, 92nd, 93rd, 94th, 95th, 96th, 97th, 98th, 99th, 100th~~
on October 2, 1918, it included approximately 700 officers and men. Of this number approximately 100 became casualties during the advance to the position. Approximately 600 men took part in "The Siege", of which number 107 officers and men were killed; 299 officers and men severely wounded. 194 were able to walk out of the position, of which number, many bore wounds of some description.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISMS.

Analysis.

This force would have accomplished its mission of establishing the new objective for the Division on October 2, 1918, had the French been successful on the left. The plan to pinch out the forest was not carried out from the first day of the offensive, ~~owing to the inability of the French to overcome~~ ^{because} ~~the determined resistance to the left,~~ ^{was unable} in spite of their repeated efforts. The American divisions were

~~based on the right of the Forest, and had the~~
French advanced on October 2nd, when the Franco-American attack was made, the enemy would have been forced to withdraw on the right, as the talked-of pocket would have been created. Had the French reached the objective along with this so-called "Lost Battalion", the lines could have been connected up to the right, as the American divisions on the right had advanced far ahead, and which would have caused the enemy to rapidly withdraw to avoid capture. The repulse of the French to the left before La Palette Pavillion permitted the enemy to remain in his highly organized defenses in the Bois de la Naza.

which defended ~~the~~ ~~had~~ ~~posed~~ ~~the~~ ~~right~~ ~~elements~~
of the 77th Division, and he held his line for five
and one-half days and five nights.

The question is often asked, "Why did not Major Whittlesey withdraw when he found that he was surrounded"? There are several good reasons. First; he had been ordered to take and hold his position at all costs; the orders were plain. Second; had he made the attempt to withdraw he would have lost his entire command in the cleverly constructed barbed wire system to the south. He would have come under enfilade machine-gun and rifle fire from every conceivable direction, and had he left the reverse slope upon which he was organized, the enemy artillery would have assisted in the annihilation of his command. He would also have been forced to abandon his wounded to the enemy. The so-called "Lost Battalion" initiated its advance at 12:30 p.m., October 2, 1918, and remained in the enemy's midst until a few minutes past 7:00 p.m., October 7, 1918, when it was relieved by the advance of the American and French front lines.

Criticisms.

When it was realized that the French, in spite of their determined and repeated efforts, were not thrusting forward on the left of the Forest, owing to the determined resistance to their front, and which prevented the creation of the contemplated pocket, according to the general plan, another division might well have been thrown in the Forest on the left of the 77th Division. This would have eliminated any necessity of directing a flank attack

45
(44) "How We
Cleared the
Argonne", Ad-
dress of Lieut.

Gen. Hunter Liggett; Delivered at meeting of the San Francisco Sector of the Association of the Army of the United States, November 23, 1922; Page 3.

upon the Forest in the vicinity of Cornay on the early morning of October 7, 1918. The 77th was to be a Division of "moppers-up", and was supposed to follow up as the Germans withdrew from their forest stronghold. The Division had been assigned a seven kilometer front in anticipation of their ~~uninter-~~ interrupted progress through the Forest. The failure of the French to the left ^{meant that} resulted in the enemy lines ^{held} holding fast in their highly organized stronghold. The 77th Division continued to hold its broad front combined with an exposed left flank.

The writer does not find ^{no} any reasons whatsoever why the Division Commander of the 77th Division, nor any of his officers, should be criticised. The Division Commander saw his Division falling behind on the left of the American line; also he was being urged to advance. He realized that he was holding a front with a far greater width than that of any other division along the entire line. He saw ~~that the French could not come up on his left~~ flank, owing to the determined resistance in front of La Palette Pavillion, consequently the enemy did not withdraw from the Forest, according to the general plan. He saw no American or French divisions moving in on his left to relieve the situation. It was the 77th Division's fight, and it came out before Grandpre, having fought its way through the entire length of the ^{Argonne} "Forest of Argonne", and without being relieved during the entire period of eighteen days.

LESSONS.

1. A position for defense skillfully selected

can be held by a force many times outnumbered by
the enemy.

2. Never allow a force as large as a battalion to start on any mission without supporting weapons, in the form of the 37 millimeter guns, trench-mortars and machine-guns.

3. Fox-holes properly constructed will render a command safe in the face of machine-gun and rifle fire of the most severe character. They are also a protection against shell fragments.

4. Teach the soldier to shoot; and to dig with his entrenching tools before sending him into a fight. Our country will always be confronted with the responsibility of training raw material in time of war. The civilian fights the war, and must be taught, at least, some things. Too many men were sent into battle who scarcely knew how to load their rifles, or how to use their entrenching tools. This is very important.

5. ~~The infantry, artillery and air service~~ should have combined training. They function perfectly together when properly trained. One cannot survive without the other.

6. The training of carrier-pigeons should not be over-looked in time of war.

7. Have intermediate plans effected, for one plan may fail.

8. Do not assign any body of troops a zone of action in woods which is too wide for it to properly cover, for it is impossible to maintain contact.

9. More should be written and taught on woods¹ fighting. This is very important and essential.

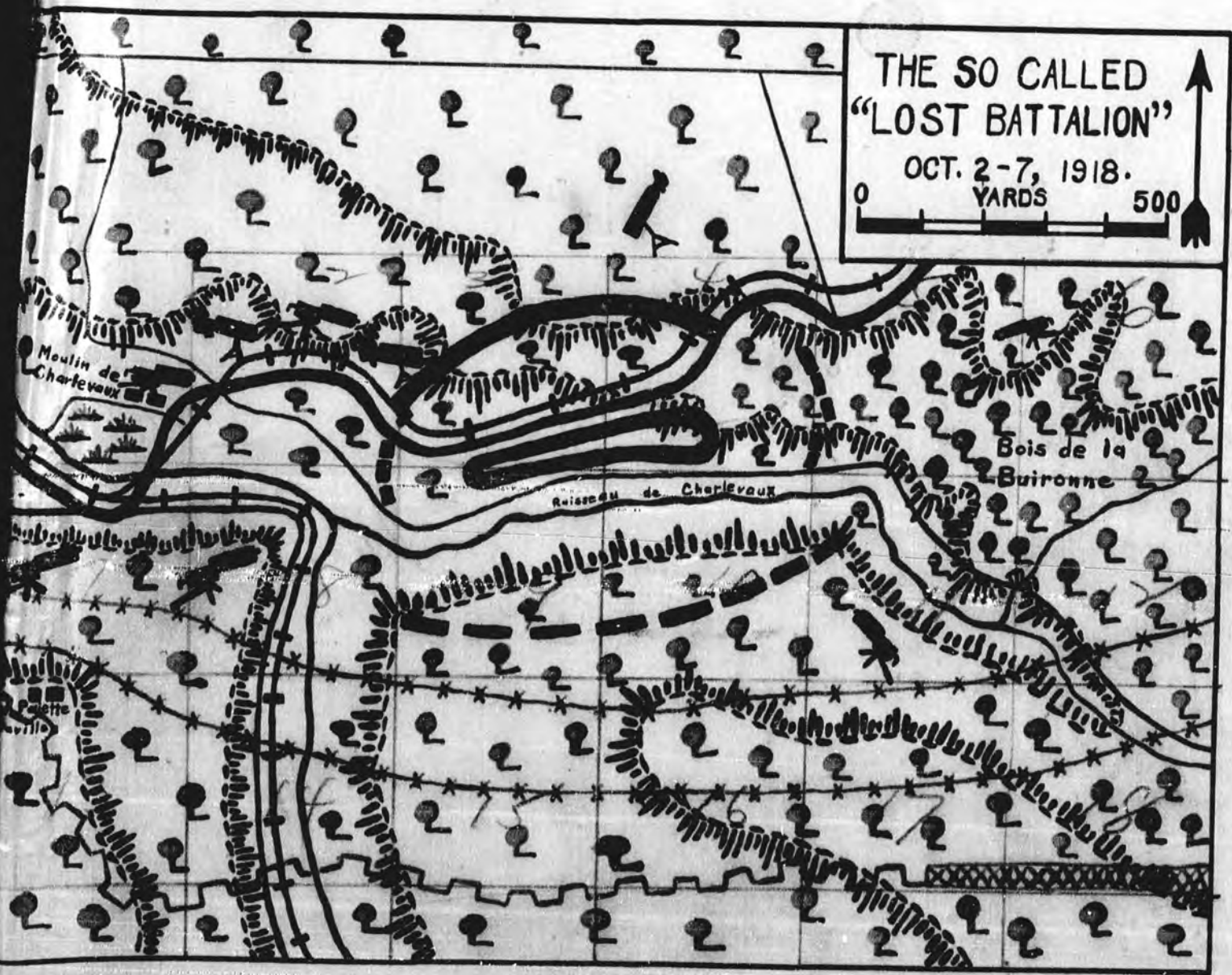
10. Security is necessary but must not limit the scope to undue timidity.

11. Although defensive positions are not normally held by occupying reverse slopes, situations may arise where circumstances demand it. The selection of a forward slope, nose, or military crest, for defense, in the case of the so-called "Lost Battalion", would have exposed the position to enemy artillery observation and concentration, which would have rendered the defense helpless. This command was nearly a mile ahead of its own front lines, in the enemy territory, and operating against an enemy provided with a great deal of artillery. A small besieged force without artillery, occupying a position in defense, where natural features must be utilized, operating ahead of its own front line, and against an enemy well-supplied with artillery, which artillery must remain at distant range to avoid counter-hostile artillery fire, should select a reverse slope to the enemy as a position for defense, with a natural barrier to its rear, in the form of a canyon, wide ravine, stream or swamp, one of which can nearly always be found. Very seldom will such situations arise and are an exception. In providing ^{Protected} protection against enemy artillery concentrations, by selecting a reverse slope for defense, this force was able to successfully defend its position against a far superior force for five days and nights.

THE SO CALLED
"LOST BATTALION"

OCT. 2-7, 1918.

0 YARDS 500



until relief came. It is also interesting to note that one heavy trench-mortar and two light trench-mortars (minenwerfers) fired on the position almost continuously for four days, and only about fifteen percent of their shells fell into the position, many of those failing to explode, owing to the inferior ammunition used by the enemy.

12. ~~As an observer,~~ ^T those enlisted men of the ~~so-called~~ "Lost Battalion" taught ^{me} ~~the writer~~ a lesson in courage, determination, coolness, discipline, and self-sacrifice.

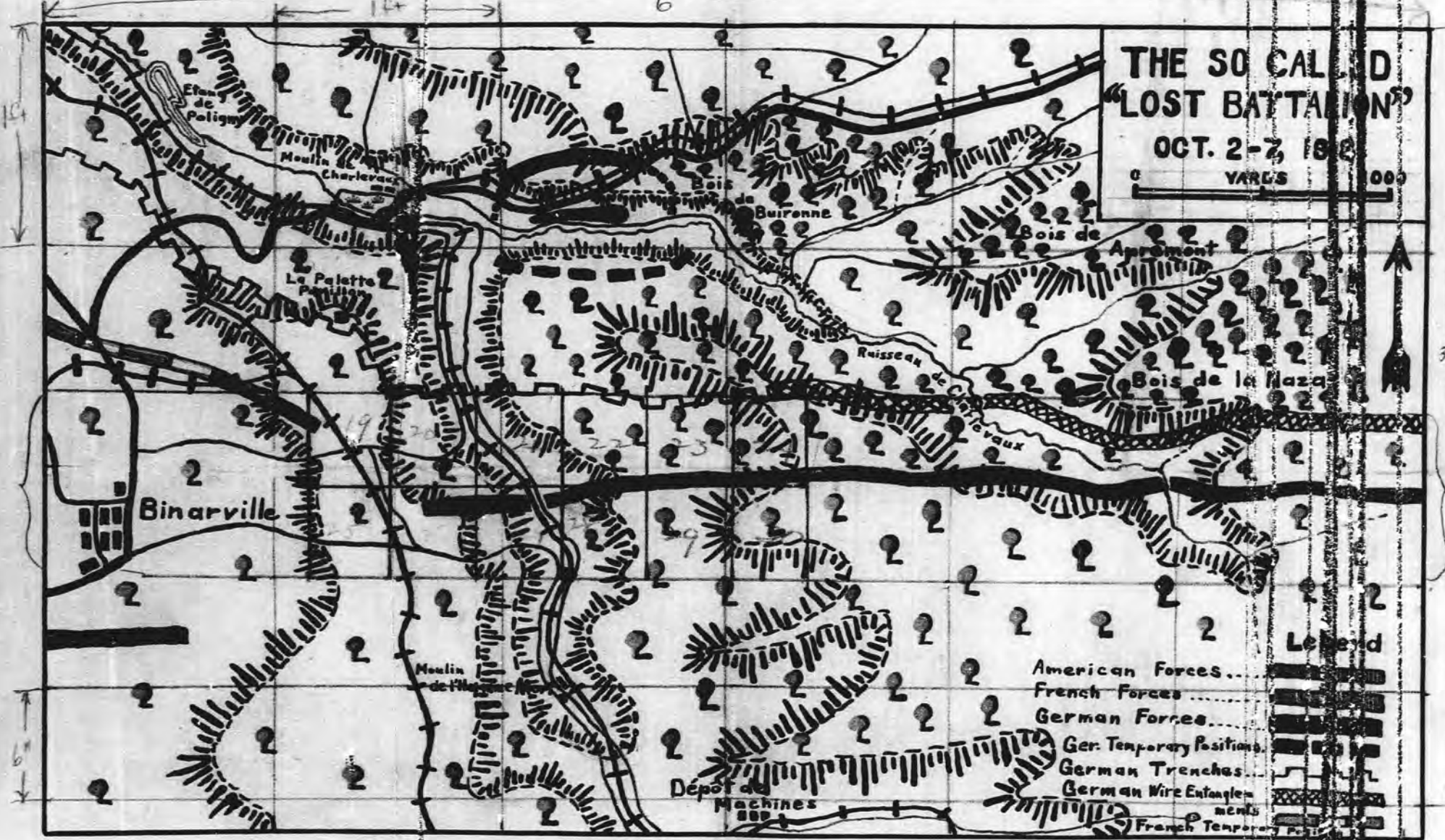
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THE SO CALLED "LOST BATTALION"

OCT. 2-7, 1918

0 1000 YARDS

35 ft



CITATION OF "LOST BATTALION" FOR ITS
EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM IN
ACTION.

Headquarters, 77th Division, American E.F.,
April 15, 1919.

General Orders No. 30.

I desire to publish to the command an official recognition of the valor and extraordinary heroism in action of the officers and enlisted men of the following organizations:

Company "A", 308th Infantry
Company "B", 308th Infantry
Company "C", 308th Infantry
Company "E", 308th Infantry
Company "G", 308th Infantry
Company "H", 308th Infantry
Company "K", 307th Infantry
Company "C", 306th Machine Gun Battalion
Company "D", 306th Machine Gun Battalion.

These organizations, or detachments therefrom, comprised the approximate force of 550 men under command of Major Charles W. Whittlesey, which was cut off from the remainder of the Seventy-Seventh Division and surrounded by a superior number of the enemy near Charlevaux, in the Forest d' Argonne, from the morning of October 3, 1918, to the night of October 7, 1918. Without food for more than one hundred hours, harassed continuously by machine gun, rifle, trench mortar, and grenade fire, Major Whittlesey's command, with undaunted spirit and magnificent courage, successfully met and repulsed daily violent attacks by the enemy. They held the position which had been reached by ~~supreme efforts~~, under orders received for their advance, until communication was reestablished with friendly troops. When relief finally came, approximately 194 officers and men were able to walk out of the position. Officers and men killed numbered 107.

On the fifth day a written proposition to surrender received from the Germans was treated with the contempt which it deserved.

The officers and men of these organizations during these five (5) days of isolation continually gave unquestionable proof of extraordinary heroism and demonstrated the high standard and ideals of the United States Army.

Robert Alexander,
Major General, U.S.A.,
Commanding.

Official:

Louis B. Gerow,
Adjutant General,
Division Adjutant.

APPENDIX NO. 2.

(Paragraph 37, page 150, History of the 77th Division)

Furthermore, at this time, and in fact at all times during the operations in the forest, the left flank of this division was completely exposed, there being no friendly troops anywhere near us. Consequently the left flank was obliged to look after it's own safety as best it might. This was equally true of the right flank of the Division. But our immediate interest here is with the left flank. This being the situation, I, early on the morning of the 2nd of October, gave orders for a general advance of the entire Divisional line, giving as the objective the east and west La Viergette-Moulin de Charlevaux Road and the railroad paralleling it as shown on the map.

"My orders were quite positive and precise - the objective was to be gained without regard to losses and without regard to the exposed conditions of my flanks. I considered it most important that this advance should be made and accepted the responsibility and the risk involved in the execution of the orders given."

(Paragraph 43, page 152, History of the 77th Division)

The daily and periodical press has seen fit to refer to Major Whittlesey's command as "The Lost Battalion" and to speak of it's "rescue". In the opinion of the 77th Division, neither of these terms is apposite. Major Whittlesey conducted his command to the objective designated for him by the division commander, occupied the position assigned him and held that position until the remainder of the Division was able to move up to him. He held it with the indomitable determination which has characterized the work of the American soldier wherever he has been called upon to perform a task. This command was neither "lost" nor "rescued". It suffered heavy losses; it was subjected to fire from both enemy and supposedly friendly artillery - (The French, in spite of my determined protest, placed artillery fire on this ravine the morning of the 7th of October, being quite convinced that the command must have surrendered.) Notwithstanding all of this, Major Whittlesey and his command held the position to which they had proceeded under my order and were found by me, when I visited them on the very early morning of October 8th, an organized command, in good order, and in excellent spirits. It may be noted that a demand for surrender, made on the morning of the 7th when the command was under it's most disadvantageous circumstances, was repelled with scorn--the command feeling perfectly competent to look out for itself even then.

APPENDIX NO. 3.

The following is a copy of the order, pursuant to which, the so-called "Lost Battalion" initiated it's advance at 12:30 p.m., October 2, 1918.

- - - - -

The following order was received by Major Whit-
lesey at 11:35 a.m., October 2, 1918:

"The advance of the infantry will com-
mence at 12:30. The infantry action will be
pushed forward until it reaches the line of
the road and the railroad generally along
276.5, (which was the objective designated
by the Division Commander and which was
reached by the so-called "Lost Battalion",
where it was besieged) where the command
will halt, reorganize, establish liaison
to the left and right and be ready for
orders for a further advance. This does
not change the plan as given you by (code
word for name of the regimental commander).
You will leave two companies on your left
as a containing force and push forward
your right with the remainder of your
force, that is, the remainder of the First
and Second Battalions. The General says you
are to advance behind the barrage regardless
of losses. He states that there will be a
general advance all along the line."

(Page 207, History of the 77th Division)

EPILOGUE

One of the American Officers at the Rhine, when the Coblenz Bridgehead was turned over to our forces, was Colonel C. S. Sherrill, formerly Chief of Staff of the 77th Division. A short time after that event had transpired, the following letter was received by the Commanding General of the Division:

"HEADQUARTERS 77th DIVISION
AMERICAN E. F.

25th December, 1918.

"MEMORANDUM: For the Commanding General, 77th Division.

"1. As a matter of possible historical interest for the 77th Division, I wish to relate the following incident, which came under my observation while at Coblenz, Germany, on duty with the Third American Army.

"2. I was detailed as a member of the Bridgehead commission under the Third Army for the purpose of taking over the German government. When I arrived at Coblenz, on the 5th of December I found the 1st and 3rd German Armies then crossing the Rhine. The 3rd (German) Army left in Coblenz the 76 Reserve Division, which stayed there until the 11th. This Division, as you recollect, was in front of us all through our operation from the Four de Paris to Grand Pre. It struck me quite a coincidence that it should be the last of the German Divisions to cross the Rhine. This Division on the 11th of December gave a fairwell review in the city of Coblenz, after which it crossed the river in good order. Two officers from this Division were left behind in Coblenz to turn over the German arsenals, munitions and stores. One of these, Lieutenant Heinrich Prinz, informed me that he was in command of a platoon of the German forces which were between Major Whittlesey and the remainder of the 154th Brigade. He also was the officer who transmitted to Major Whittlesey the note urging him to surrender to avoid further useless sacrifice of life. I questioned Lieutenant Prinz to give the German view of our men, and he expressed himself as being a great admirer of our Division for its gallant offensive operation, and especially was loud in praise of Major Whittlesey and his gallant detachment. He stated that the Germans felt that it was absolutely suicidal for the American detachment to persist in its defense, and it was for that reason that he sent the message requesting the surrender. He explained the method by which the Germans infiltrated between the Whittlesey detachment and the supporting troops, saying that it was done between us and the French, who were a kilometer or more in rear of our left flank. Lieutenant Prinz, previous to the war, had been for six years the representative of a German tungsten company in Spokane (Wash., U.S.A.), and expressed his desire to return to America after the war, saying that he intended to look up Colonel Whittlesey, for the purpose of expressing to him his personal admiration for this gallant conduct.

"3. Lieutenant Heinrich Prinz also spoke of the especially gallant conduct of a liaison lieutenant captured from Major

APPENDIX NO. 4 (Continued)

Whittlesey's detachment. He and other German officers made several efforts to secure information from this lieutenant, but they were absolutely without success. He was unable to give me his name, but undoubtedly Colonel Whittlesey will be able to furnish this and from Lieutenant Prinz's statement it is obvious that this officer had exhibited the highest quality of courage and regard for his duty as an American officer.

"4. Commenting on the relative morale of the two forces, at the time they were in the Argonne, Lieutenant Prinz said one of the most discouraging things they encountered was the absolute lack of "nerves" shown by the American troops as opposed to the shaken nerves of the German, who were absolutely worn out by the prolonged service at the front. He said our men seemed to be absolutely devoid of any such things as "nerves" at that time, and this buoyancy had a very depressing effect on his men.

C. O. SHERRILL,
Colonel, General Staff."

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED COMMUNICATION OFFICERS COURSE
1939-1940

SIGNAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN A MECHANIZED
CAVALRY BRIGADE

Lt. E.F. Holton, Infantry