

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

ADVANCED COURSE
1932-1933

M I L I T A R Y H I S T O R Y

OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION 8TH INFANTRY (5TH
DIVISION) IN THE MEUSE-ARGONNE OFFENSIVE, OCTOBER
13 - October 22, 1918.

(Personal experience of a company and battalion commander)

Captain Laurence B. Keiser, Infantry

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A very good, clear and accurate account of the 5th Division from its period of organization until the Armistice.

3d Army Corps

Report of Operations, 3d Army Corps, A.E.F., September 9 to November 11, 1918.

A brief statement of the activities of the 3d Army Corps, A.E.F., during that period together with copies of all field orders issued by the 3d Corps.

Viereck

As They Saw Us.

A condensed opinion of foreign leaders as to America's part in the World War. Fairly accurate only.

5th Div. Records

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A War Department compilation of all Field Orders, 1918 of the 5th Division.

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Battlefields of Metz-Verdun-Meuse Argonne.

A brief summary of the Meuse-Argonne area and its important battle centers. Compiled by G-3 section, G-8, Hqs. A.F. in G, 20 November 1922.

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The reports of General Pershing and General Liggett. Published by G. S. School Press, 1923.

MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS USED

5th Div. Hist.	"The Official History of the Fifth Division."
3d Army Corps	"Report of Operations, 3d Army Corps, AEF."
1st Army	"Report of First Army, AEF."
Staff Ride	"Battlefields of Metz-Verdun-Meuse Argonne."
Viereck	"As They Saw Us."
5th Div Hist. FO	"Records of the World War."

INTRODUCTION

It is October 13, 1918. The 6th Infantry, part of the 5th U. S. Division, is resting in the small woods east of Montfaucon. Since late September this regiment, together with the rest of the division, has been moving forward by truck and marching from the St. Mihiel attack toward the Argonne. Each movement has brought it closer and closer to the big battle which, according to rumors received on the march up, is one of the biggest battles raging on any front of the allied battle line. On the way up wild rumors were heard of high commanders who had been relieved of their commands, of divisions that had not succeeded so well and these rumors naturally indicated a hot time up ahead.

As company commander of Company B 6th Infantry, I had seen all the actions participated in by this company since it arrived overseas. Beginning in June 1918 this organization had seen service in two sectors in the Vosges Mountains and also in the St. Mihiel operation. The men were fairly well trained and experienced, according to the standards of that period. We did have quite a few replacements since the St. Mihiel attack, but as a whole the company was composed of men who had been together for some time and were at least average men as would be obtained in an emergency.

NARRATIVE

As stated before, it is October 13, 1918. The company theoretically is resting in the small woods just east of Montfaucon. I say theoretically resting because I doubt if anyone who has ever spent any

time in those woods during the war secured much rest. As you may imagine, latrines were not constructed in bivouac areas in those days and from the amount of refuse there I believe that every combat division in the Meuse-Argonne must have stopped in those woods at some time or other. It was certainly not a bed of roses. In addition thereto, Montfaucon, which was an important traffic centre, received its daily bombardment of heavy caliber shells shot at the crossroads in the town. All these shells were not well directed. Even the duds were annoying because the whine and roar of their coming left you with sort of an anti-climax or gone feeling, when they failed to explode.

COMMENT

It appears apparent that the selection of a bivouac area for the troops was not well made. A bivouac position near an important terrain feature, which without doubt will be heavily shelled or harassed, will harass the troops also. Troops on whom you will depend upon for some future important action should be well rested and fresh when they enter action.

The unwarranted pollution of the ground in these woods was a serious menace to the health of the command. A great amount of dysentery that occurred in the regiment was no doubt started here.

Shortly after noon the battalion commander sent for the company commanders to go forward on reconnaissance with him. As far as he could tell us, another big push was on for tomorrow morning and we were in it. Our division was to execute a passage of lines of the 3d Division now located along the line

COMMENT

This daylight march fortunately did not result in any casualties. The order to clear the east or west line through the town was necessary in order to move other supporting troops into the area we were occupying.

Map #1

Riding to the north we located the 38th Infantry of the 3d Division on the ridge about 1000 yards south of the Romagne-Cunel road; here it was generally occupying the Trench de la Mamelle. Arriving at the C. P. of the 38th Infantry we found conditions there not so cheerful. They had seen serious fighting in reaching their present position. I recall particularly conversing with a classmate of mine, Sidney Young, who was then commanding all the machine-gun companies operating with the 38th. He told me that of the three companies, he had then a total of some forty men actually present to man the guns. That sounded bad to all of us.

Some staff officer took us forward to the crest of the hill and pointed out the terrain to the front. We asked him about Romagne and the ridge to the north of the Romagne-Cunel road. Were all those points in the hands of the 38th? "Oh, yes!" said this officer, "we had those some days ago but due to the fact that the 32d Division on our left couldn't get forward as far as we did, we were forced to fall back here. However, we patrol those at night and only small German patrols are encountered." (2) His statements were without doubt correct and we believed him

Not covered
(2) 3d Army
Corps, Oct.
13, 1918,
p 12

Romagne-Cunel and we were to push forward to the Grand Carre farm somewhat to the northwest. Our brigade was to attack between Romagne and Cunel with our regiment on the extreme left. The regiment was to attack in column of battalions with the 3d Battalion in assault, our battalion in support and the 2d Battalion in reserve. After the 3d Battalion had captured Bantheville our battalion was to pass through and continue the assault to Grand Carre farm. Detachments of the division engineers were to follow the assault battalion and *were to* carry ~~ed~~ foot bridge materiel with which to span the Andon creek ravine. (1)

(1) 5th Div. ✓
Hist.,
F.O. 55,
p 299

COMMENT

The tactics employed in this attack seem to be similar to those used against the Argonne Forest. The woods on our flanks were considered the enemy strong points and the attack was to pass them by and then by converging on the north of the woods to pinch out their resistance.

We staked all this information on our maps and then rode forward to locate the troops of the 3d Division in our sector. The battalion was placed in command of the senior officer left in the bivouac area with orders to feed supper and then proceed via the Montfaucon-Cierges road toward Romagne. As I remember the battalion had to clear an east and west line through either Montfaucon or Cierges at some certain hour in the afternoon. This forced the battalion to execute a daylight march forward.

Map #1

because no shots were fired at us while we stood out there in the open in plain view from the front. However, as you will see, later, conditions the next day in this locality had changed somewhat. Looking to the north and northwest we had an excellent view of our zone of advance. The way was all open with woods bordering the flanks. Romagne was to our left front, Cunel on the right. Ridges appeared to parallel our line of departure. Looking to the northwest we could even see the object of our endeavors, the Grand Carre farm, from which enemy artillery was now firing at some position in our lines far removed from us. No other enemy activity was noticeable.

COMMENT

The reconnaissance made was extremely valuable and was a most important phase in a proper understanding of the attack. The methods and manner in which a reconnaissance is conducted should be such that no warning or indication of your intentions be furnished the enemy. In this case, no doubt, we were continuously observed and the enemy probably warned of an impending attack. According to later reports, two desertions to the enemy from a front line regiment had occurred on the night of October 13-14. The information received from these men, no doubt, was of extreme value to the enemy for his counter-preparations on October 14.

Our task of the reconnaissance seemed complete. We were well informed as to our zone of action, the locations of the 38th Infantry, and we had a very good idea of the terrain in our zone of advance. Prior

to taking our departure, I said to Sid Young, "Hold this sheepskin coat and field glasses for me until we come through you tomorrow morning." Sid took them, and unfortunately for me that was the last I saw of Sid until many years later. The articles were never returned. He had been wounded during the night and the articles, as was customary, disappeared on his way to the hospital.

Just as we were leaving a sharp conflict broke out to the right of the 38th Infantry. Troops could be seen running south from Cunel. Who they were it was too far off to distinguish. A little later two men from the 4th Infantry, as I recall, stumbled into the P.C. of the 38th and stated that their positions were being attacked by tanks supported by a heavy machine gun and artillery fire. (3) They believed that everyone was pretty much shot up and had fallen back. The commanding officer of the 38th paid little attention to their statements, gave us a knowing wink and told the men to rest a bit. However, we decided it was about time for us to be on our way and meet the battalion on its way up from Montfaucon.

not correct
(3) 3d Army Corps,
Oct. 13, 1918,
p 12

COMMENT

The war experience of the commander of the 38th Infantry caused him to pay but little regard to the story of these individuals who were excited to such a degree that, without question, anything viewed by them, *was highly exaggerated.*

We met the battalion near Cierges. It was almost dusk. An enemy plane was approaching overhead evidently making the last flight for the day. He saw

the battalion, circled over it for a few minutes and signalled by some means to his artillery which fired a few rounds that fell some hundred yards west of the road. The battalion commander promptly moved us by the flank off the road to the east. The enemy plane had moved to the north and the artillery fire which had been corrected to strike the road, found no target.

Shortly thereafter it rapidly became dark. The battalion was led into a bivouac in a small ravine northeast of Cierges. Although the men had been fed a hot meal prior to leaving Montfaucon, most everyone proceeded to open up a can and we enjoyed a little food and rest in a relatively quiet surrounding.

While it was still dark in the morning the battalion was formed in column of companies, each company in column of twos and we marched forward. Companies were placed in position in the column as they would be in the advance. Company A now in the lead would be the left assault company, Company B the right assault, and then C and D as the left and right support companies. The regimental machine-gun company, which was attached to the 1st Battalion, left its carts at this point and moved forward by hand. Its platoons were to follow the support companies.

I had passed on to my platoon leaders and senior noncommissioned officers what verbal orders had been issued for the attack and acquainted them with the results of our reconnaissance. The men were in good condition for an attack. They had had sufficient food, were reasonably well rested and were well supplied with reserve rations and ammunition. On

Map #2

moving out to our line of departure we moved in column to facilitate control and to prevent loss of direction.

Shortly after 5:00 AM the battalion, still in column, was proceeding down the forward slope of the hill just south of our jump-off position. Our artillery barrage which was to precede the 3d Battalion in assault, came down. From our position it appeared to fall directly upon the positions held by the 38th Infantry. The companies deployed immediately into their assault formations and took cover in shell holes in the vicinity. We had hardly deployed when the German counter-barrage fell. This landed in the area occupied by the battalion. Communication with anyone was difficult due not only to the semi-darkness but to the barrages as well. Some distance to my left I could see a regular fireworks display caused by one of our gas companies firing thermite or phosphorus shells.

After enduring the enemy counter-preparation for about five minutes, I decided that the barrage falling up ahead was not quite so heavy. Sending runners to the platoons and to the battalion commander I told them that the company would move forward at once to the reverse slope of the hill in our front and reform there. I had arrived at this decision for two reasons. First, I believed that the barrage up ahead was less severe than the one we were now enduring and, second, I knew that the time for our jump-off was close at hand and I certainly felt that I did not care to be left behind in the very beginning of our attack.

The company moved forward to the ravine. High explosive and gas shells greeted us on the way. One gas shell burst in front of the company command

group and threw liquid in our faces. Gas masks went on and we experienced our first advance in a fog, through a barrage, wearing a gas mask which was foggy inside. We could scarcely see. I fell into a deep shell hole, stumbled into the creek and finally ran into a hedge through which I searched vainly for a passage. Not having any success, I took off the mask and found a way through. At this time I saw a lieutenant of mine attacking the hedge as I had done and with all the confusion and mess going on I managed to find a little laugh still in me.

We finally reached the reverse slope of the hill and proceeded to occupy shell holes along with the 38th Infantry. Contact with our other companies was soon gained along the hill. All company commanders had decided upon the same course of action as myself. The battalion commander had likewise come up and he immediately got in contact with our 3d Battalion which was on the same hill with us but a bit further to the west. They had received instructions that the attack was delayed until 6:30 AM. Later on the time was changed several times and I recall that it was approximately 8:30 AM before the 3d Battalion moved forward in attack. (4)

(4) 1st Army,
p 65

COMMENT

In General Pershing's report on Operations of the First Army, it states that the 5th Division of the III Corps and the 42d Division of the V Corps were to make the converging attack. Between these divisions the remainder of the V Corps was to execute what was known as a holding attack. This holding attack was set for 8:30 AM. Barrages and distribution of troops

were so arranged that the time would not be changed to our time. The change in our time of attack was no doubt arranged for verbally by our division in order to coordinate the advance with that of the adjacent unit on our left in the V Corps.

While we remained on this hill the shelling still continued although not with the intensity of the initial outburst. Our own barrage must have ceased or gone on as we saw no more of it. My company had suffered some but to what extent at this time I do not recall. I do remember that the men had become pretty well shaken. Many men had received a lot of gas. We all could just about whisper due to the condition of our throats. Men requested permission to go to the aid stations fearing that they had become seriously afflicted. These requests were firmly refused. Checking up was difficult. Troops of the 38th Infantry and two battalions of the 6th Infantry were pretty much tangled. We did the best we could but my platoons were still trying to locate men when it was time for us to move forward again.

At the time scheduled for our advance I recall signalling forward and moved out with my runners ahead of the company as provided in the approach march formation. To this day I can't recall whether the company followed or not. After my signal I saw some men start up but just then the enemy fire fell with increasing severity. We all were forced to advance from shell hold to shell hole. I stopped for a minute undecided what to do. Should I continue on in front,

advancing from shell hole to shell hole and set an example to the company in the manner of advance, or should I stay behind and by the use of runners and personal contact, push the platoons forward? I can't remember what my process of reasoning was, but as it worked out I moved out with my runners confident that my unit would follow. My control over the company ceased right then as I actually commanded myself and the runners and nothing else.

COMMENT

Control is necessarily an important phase of battle tactics. Without it the best laid plans and orders will be worthless and success extremely doubtful. (Control of any large group of individuals must necessarily be done through subordinate leaders.) In this action my control of the company was negligible. I failed to deal with the subordinate leaders and therefore laid the burden of the advance upon them. Perhaps unknowingly I had made a correct solution of the problem.

Not clear

Upon reaching the crest of the hill on which we had stood nonchalantly the afternoon previous, things apparently changed. The German artillery was pounding the ridge and its forward slopes with calibers of all descriptions. (5) Not much time could be spent going from one hold^e to the next. My runner group was split in halves. I led the first half to a place and as the rear half came up we moved out again. During one move the rear half was destroyed^d by a shell exploding in the shell hole they were occupying.

Insured

(5) Staff Ride,
p 36

Progress was slow. To my front, particularly to the left, I could see troops advancing in the same manner as ourselves. Who they were I did not know. Maybe they were from the 3d Battalion, maybe from Company A, maybe from my own company who had gotten ahead of me while I was holding down a hole too long. I realized right then that I must have tied up this battle gloriously. I didn't know where my company was nor did I appear to be doing any good except to lead a few runners forward.

No semblance of any tactical formation existed anywhere that I could see. Not even a small group was noticeable. Shortly after passing the crest small arms fire was directed at the area through which I was passing. Enemy machine guns from Romagne and Cunel and the ridge to the front were sweeping the hill. The cross fire from Romagne and Cunel was grazing the ground and we were kept face down on the ground at one time for about ten minutes. Any wiggle brought fire immediately and I didn't wiggle very much.

Finally I got going again. We were able to reach a point about four hundred yards from the Romagne-Cunel road. Machine gun fire was coming from a hedge north of the road. Deciding to try my marksmanship, I borrowed a runner's rifle and shot a clip. The fire still continued.

Some engineers carrying small foot bridge material appeared on the scene to my left. Knowing that they had been detailed to follow the attacking battalion, I immediately felt at ease and realized that we were keeping our proper place in the attack. (6)

(6) 5th Div.
History,
F.O. 55,
Par. 3 (c),
p 300

Map #2

Journal

(7) Viereck,
p 264

As we proceeded further down the slope the advance became somewhat easier. The leading battalion had overcome the resistance in its front and was just reaching the rise north of the Romagne-Cunel road. As I approached the road an officer from the 11th Infantry came running down the hill from my right front requesting immediate aid to repel a counter-attack. Gathering a few men nearby, including a Chauchat gunner, I moved to the northeast toward Hill 271. On reaching the crest of the hill, I took a quick look only. Things were in a pretty bad way here. The enemy was certainly defending his position with vigor. (7) About 600 yards due north was a section of German 77's firing point blank at the troops. Machine guns were rattling from the front and from the edge of the woods to the north and east. Men of the 11th Infantry who had passed beyond the crest were trying to get back. Running, stumbling and crawling, they endeavored to come back. It was a sad sight. Placing the men I had on the crest, I directed fire on the gunners of the 77's. A shell landed on my Chauchat gunner and although the other men fired at the gunners they continued to make the crest of that hill a hot place.

As nothing more could be done, I reconnoitered to find what officers were present in the vicinity. Within a few yards I found Major Muncaster commanding the assault battalion of the 11th. His morale was pretty well shaken but he was good and mad. He told me that a lieutenant and himself were the only officers present with the battalion, that his casualties were enormous and that it was luck only if they could hold on where they were. How long I remained there I

cannot remember. I knew however, that the capture of the Grand Carre farm was still somewhat distant. The enemy resistance was too well placed for an attempt to advance over open ground without driving him by some manner or means from the sheltering woods on the flanks.

I sent a runner out to find my battalion commander to report where I was and that I would stay with the 11th Infantry with the few men until conditions cleared. Some time afterwards the runner returned with the battalion adjutant. He told me that the battalion commander had been wounded at the jump-off and that I was in charge of the 1st Battalion.

Map #2
Overlay #

Gathering the few 6th Infantrymen in the vicinity I moved to the left rear and found the battalion on the reverse slope of the hill about two hundred yards in rear of the 3d Battalion. Companies were badly mixed up and in addition thereto some troops of a battalion from the 61st Infantry were mixed in with us. This battalion from the 9th Brigade had been detailed to act as a support behind the 6th Infantry. Seeing that the advance had been definitely stopped they were collecting their men preparatory to withdrawing to the southeast. For the remainder of the day reorganization and the evacuation of wounded continued. The battalion scarcely numbered three hundred men. The enemy artillery continued intermittent shelling of the position with gas and high explosive but the shelter on this reverse slope was fairly good. The shells were generally falling south of the Romagne-Cunel road.

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT COMMANDANT
FOURTH SECTION

Fort Benning, Georgia
December 16, 1932.

MILITARY HISTORY MONOGRAPH -- COMMENTS ON ORAL PRESENTATION

Capt. Laurence B. Keiser, Inf.

Effectiveness of delivery:- The delivery was informal and somewhat lacking in animation, but was well directed toward the class.

The speaker's method of turning the presentation into an open forum tended to slow it down and make it less effective.

Clearness:- The narration was clear in general, and the speaker gave an intimate and descriptive battle picture.

The numerals on the cut-outs could not be distinguished easily from the back of the hall. This, together with the failure of the speaker to refresh his hearers occasionally as to which battalion was the assault battalion, caused some confusion as to whether the company in question was an assault company, a reserve company of an assault battalion, or a leading company of a reserve battalion. To all appearances, company and battalion symbols were used interchangeably.

Emphasis:- Emphasis was properly placed on the problems and actions of a company commander during the one day of combat.

Utilization of time:- The speaker did not finish in the allotted time. The conclusion is most important and one or two minor incidents should have been eliminated to permit the speaker to be certain of finishing.

Instructional value:- The method of instruction was generally sound and the presentation was instructive. However, it is a poor plan to call for extemporaneous comment without being certain that this will contribute to the instructional value of the presentation.

The necessity of protective fires to cover the flanks of an attacking unit when these are exposed was clearly illustrated.

The first two situations presented for solution by the class contained some obscurity and the students called upon were not quite clear as what was wanted.

The third situation presented for solution by the class - that involving helping the 11th Infantry - was well chosen and well reconstructed. The speaker, however, as on the first two occasions, named an individual before asking his question and the question did not sufficiently indicate what was wanted. It would have been better had the speaker summed up three or four general plans open and asked the class to decide which one should be adopted. There was insufficient tactical discussion of the student's answer and the historical solution.

A faint attempt to push forward was made on October 15. The attack order as issued by the corps is now available for study but at that time all we received was a telephone message, "Attack at 8:30. No change in order of battalions. Barrage precedes you." (8) We were all set to go but on conference with the battalion commanders of the 6th and 11th Infantry we had agreed that in the event of no barrage there would be no attempt to advance. The advance the previous day over this open ground had been too disastrous and another attempt was bound to be unsuccessful unless careful preparations were made. Zero hour approached and no barrage was furnished. All battalions of both regiments stood fast. Report of our decisions was made to regimental and brigade headquarters and fortunately they were in accord with us.

COMMENT

The decision of the battalion to disregard an order was an important and dangerous one to make. They (the battalion commanders) believed that they understood existing conditions better than those who issued the order. The battalion commanders were willing to assume the responsibility. The higher commanders likewise relied on their judgment. There is no telling exactly what would have occurred if the attack had been made, but it was evident that heavy casualties would have resulted ^{and} probably very little gain obtained.

On October 16, pursuant to III Corps orders, the division was ordered to hold its present position and consolidate for defense preparatory to another

✓
(8) 3d Army
Corps,
F.O. #29

(9) F.O. 30,
PC 3d Army
Corps

7/5 source
2

advance. (9) The 1st Battalion moved from its position close behind the 3d Battalion to a position on the hill from which the attack started on the 14th. The staking out of trenches on the forward slope for us to occupy was started by the engineers but on my objection to the brigade, we were finally authorized to take position on the reverse slope. This placed us out of direct observation from the enemy positions to the northwest. The 3d Battalion was moved into a reserve position in the Bois de Cunel and the 2d Battalion took over the front line.

On October 20, the 1st Battalion moved forward and took over the front line position from the 2d Battalion and also that part of the 11th Infantry sector west of the woods. The 11th Infantry was being consolidated at this time in front of the Bois de ^SRappes _A for an assault on those woods.

Pursuant to a telephone message from brigade on the late afternoon of the 20th, I was directed to send a strong combat patrol of one company up the Andon Creek ravine to Bantheville and a small demonstration group to work along the western edge of Bois de la Pultiere and Bois de ^SRappes. _A (10) This latter group was to attract the attention of the enemy to the eastern edge of Bantheville while the company rushed the town from the west. I issued the necessary orders to the group commanders at the battalion P.C. which was located in a sort of natural cave, just north of the Romagne-Cunel road. Arrangements were made to have a signal, a red V.R. flare followed by a green, fired when the town had been secured. Upon report of this

(10) 3d Army
Corps,
Oct. 20,
1918,
p 15

signal by our O.P.'s, the remainder of the battalion would immediately advance over the open ground to Bantheville. Shortly after dark the groups moved out. A few shots to the northeast along the edge of the woods were heard not so long after the patrol had moved out. In about forty-five minutes the O.P.'s reported numerous red and green signals from Bantheville and vicinity. Something was evidently wrong. Our groups could not have made that distance in that time. No attempt was made by the remainder of the battalion to advance. Shortly thereafter two men from the patrol on the right reported back. They had been ambushed along the edge of the woods. These two men were the only ones that escaped. The company advancing up the creek valley made no progress. They were met by machine-gun fire, saw the signal lights and continued on their way toward Bantheville. The company commander reported that there appeared to be considerable machine guns and enemy to the south and southwest of the town and that it was evident the place could not be secured by any surprise attack.

COMMENT

A system by which the enemy could listen in on our conversation must have existed. The rapidity with which they met this situation was exceptional. Prisoners from the right group might have disclosed this information but I doubt if sufficient time had elapsed to relay this information back to Bantheville.

This ended the activities of the battalion on the front. On the afternoon of the 21st the 11th Infantry secured the Bois de Rappes by a brilliant

(11) 5th Div. ✓
Hist.,
p 104

surprise attack. (11) Plans were in motion to capture Bantheville by a flank attack of the 6th Infantry from the west when word came that a brigade of the 90th Division would relieve our brigade on the night of October 21-22. (11a) (12) The units of the 90th Division began arriving at about midnight. Following the relief of the machine-gun company I gladly turned over the command of this sector to the new battalion commander and departed for the regimental P.C. to report the relief completed.

(11a) 3d Army ✓
Corps,
FO 35,
Par. 2 (c),
21 Oct.

(12) 5th Div.
Records,
FO #61,
p 135

Rifle companies were relieved first and proceeded to the vicinity of Nantellois. The machine-gun company was relieved last.

LESSONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In the above narrative the main important lessons to be learned are as follows:

1. Control of units is highly essential for complete success in battle. The larger the command the more difficult control becomes. In reality the half squad or squad is the largest group that can actually be under direct control or supervision of one individual. For this reason I believe in combat training in small groups of five or six men. The dispersion or distances between individuals of the group during combat to be that deemed necessary by the group leader. The group may all advance bunched together or there may be extended intervals between individuals according to the nature of the terrain and the local combat conditions.

In my actual combat experience and also in many large maneuvers and combat practice exercises since the past war, I believe that the units would

have had better control and would have accomplished their missions with far greater success if the method of group fighting had been used.

2. The methods to be employed in reducing enemy strong points vary with each particular situation. In the attack of October 14 the advance of our brigade was to be made directly through open ground exposed throughout to enemy observation and fire. The wooded areas on the flanks of this open terrain were known to be strongly held. The plan of attack was based upon the supposition that a drive through the open area, in coordination with more or less of a holding attack upon the wooded areas, would cause these areas to fall. Actually the wooded areas were so strongly defended on the flanks that the attack over the open ground failed and the supposed holding or frontal attack actually was able to make better progress.

As a company commander in combat, I was naturally not aware of the tactical maneuver we were scheduled to make in this case. I do remember, however, that we thought our part in advancing across this open terrain was decidedly wrong. The casualties and the failure to make any appreciable advance certainly sustained our conclusions.

I believe thoroughly in the isolation of strong points by maneuver on the flanks. However, this maneuver should take place some distance on the flank, it should not pass in close proximity to the enemy position unless some covered or defiladed ground exists.

Pressure from the flanks and rear on a position even

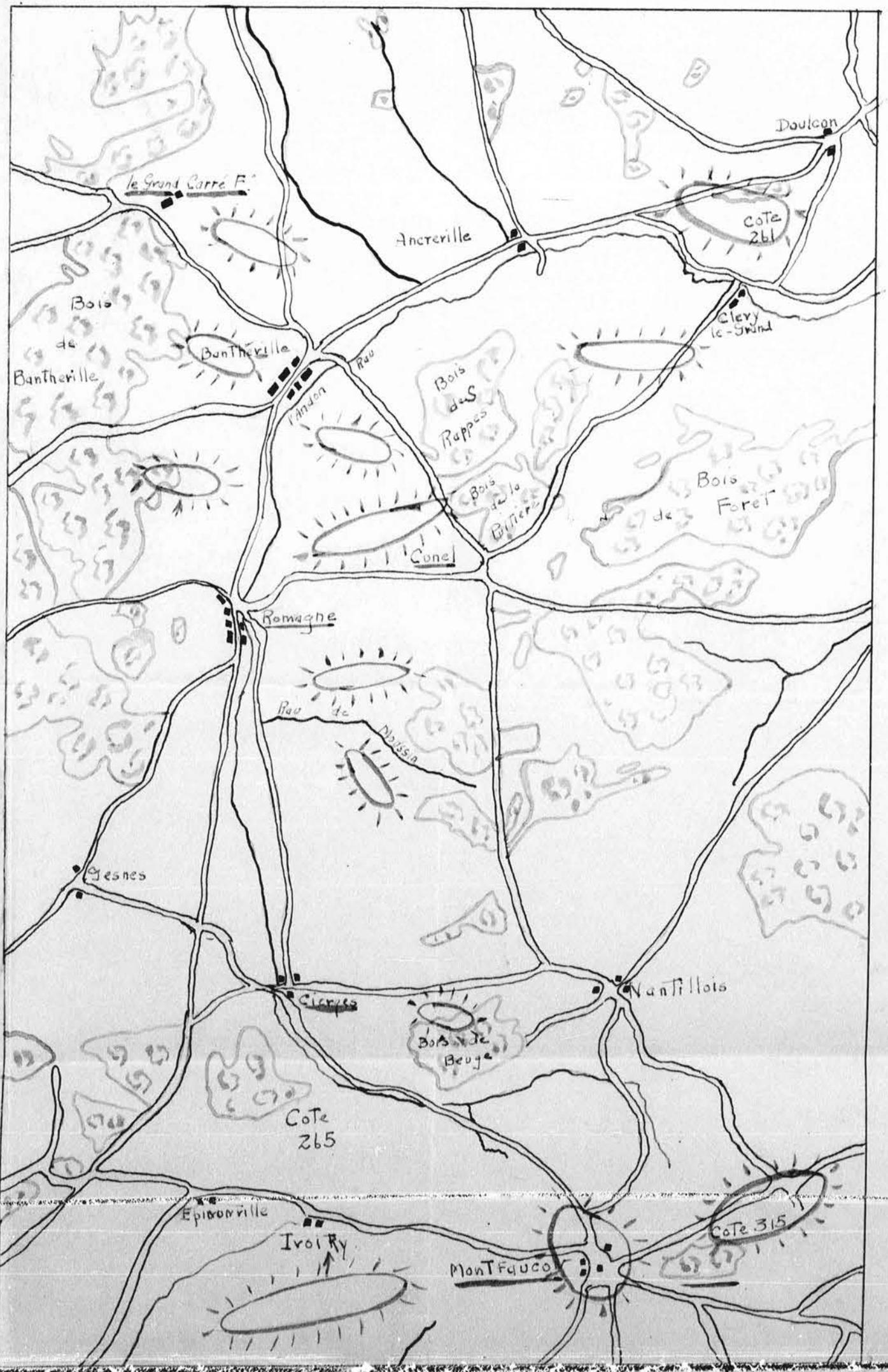
though somewhat removed is quite effective and will save excessive losses to attacking troops.

3. The employment of machine guns to initially support our advance was decidedly poor. This was due to our lack of experience in the proper utilization of machine guns. The machine gun platoons followed our support companies and actually were of no use to us.

4. The lack of forward artillery observers and liaison officers was the cause of poorly directed artillery fire. In the capture of the Bois de ^SRappes, the liaison with the artillery was excellent and the artillery fire was largely responsible for the infantry success. In ~~an~~ ^{our} initial attack it was lacking entirely.

General Map

Romagne-Cunel, Meuse-Argonne



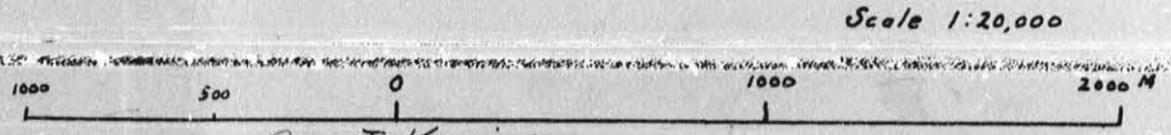
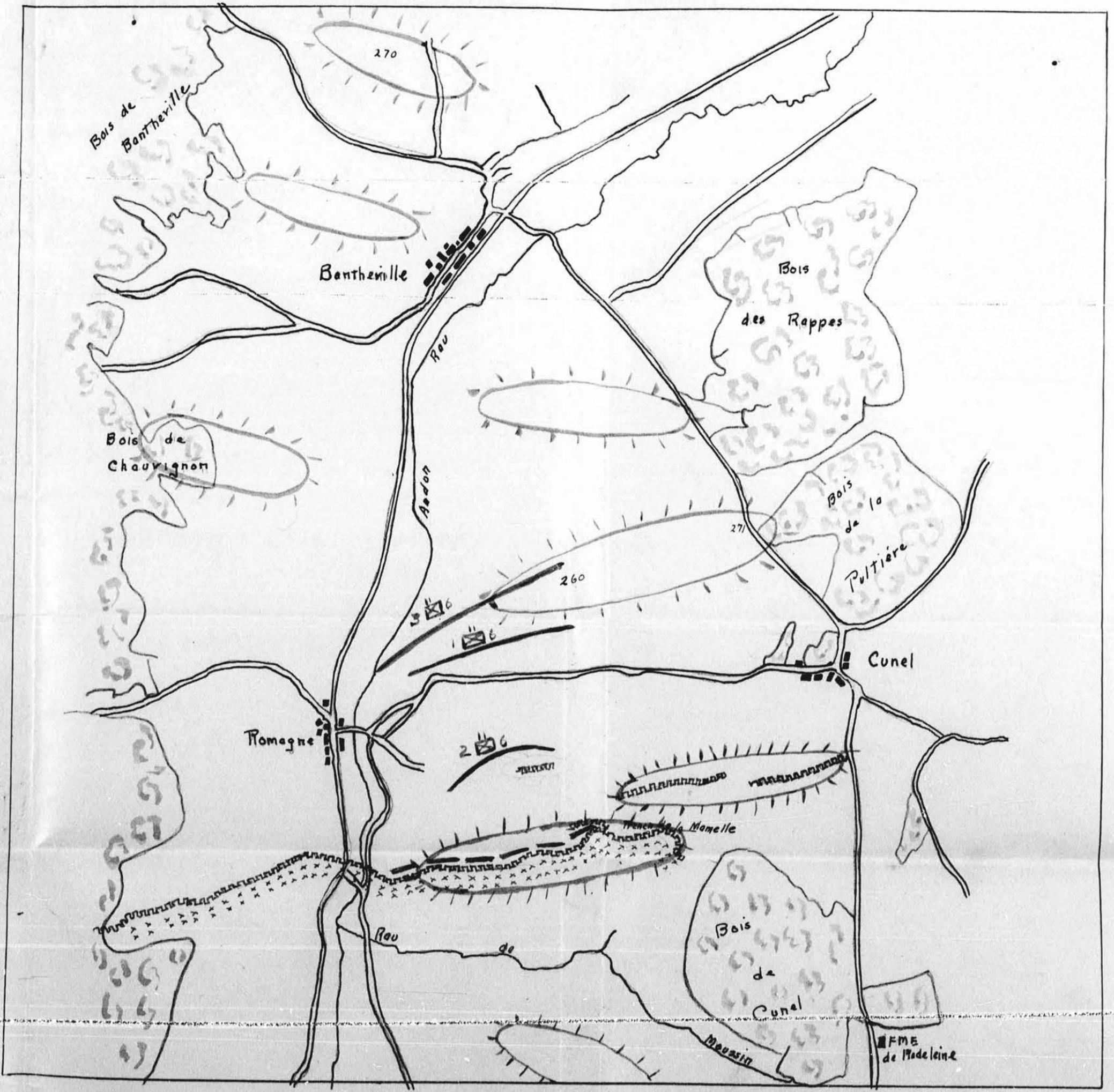
Scale 1:50,000

1000 500 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 METERS

capt. Keiser.

Operations 1st Battalion Sixth Infantry

Vicinity Romagne, October 13-14, 1918



Capt. Keisen.