

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
COMPANY A  
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

2-1

ADVANCED COURSE  
1927-28

OPERATIONS OF THE  
3rd BATTALION 28th INFANTRY  
1st DIVISION  
IN THE  
THIRD PHASE  
MEUSE \* ARGONNE  
NOVEMBER 1-11, 1918..

*1st Lt Lee*

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**1**

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*Spelling*

322.12  
5th

"The Attack; a Chronological Statement of Events by Hours and Days, with reference to Orders upon Which Actions were based."

322.12  
5th

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"Capt. W.G. Livesay"

Statement may be given full credence.

Major C.R. Huebner

Statement reliable and trustworthy.

"Capt. J.L. Dunn"

Statement coincides with observation of writer.

"The writer"

Statements based on precise knowledge. Statements may be regarded as unbiased"

MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS USED

1st Army	"Report of the First Army, American Expeditionary Forces."
1st Div.	"History of the First Division during the World War, 1917-1919."
28th Inf.	"The Story of the 28th Infantry in the Great War"
Liggett	"Eiggett, Hunter"
Personal Observations	"Personal observations of the writer"
2nd Brig. op	"Operations No. 16, 2nd Infantry Brigade."
Capt. Huebner	"Statement of Major C.R. Huebner"
Capt. Livesay	"Statement of Captain W.G. Livesay."
Capt. Dunn	"Statement of Captain J.L. Dunn."

## INTRODUCTION

The period November 1-11, 1918, marks the third and final phase of the Meuse-Argonne offensive which began September 26, 1918. (1) It was during this phase that the Germans, unable to withstand the forceful attacks of the American First Army, were compelled to retire across the Meuse river. The retreat of the enemy along this part of the front necessitated a general withdrawal along the entire front to prevent the capture of large quantities of troops and supplies. (2) The progress of the First Army during this attack took the form of a vigorous pursuit consisting of night marches and night attacks, giving the enemy little opportunity to recover. (3)

(1) 1st  
Army, p 87,  
82.

(2) 1st  
Army, p 84,  
85.

(3) 1st  
Army, p 85.

The 28th Infantry, the 3rd Battalion of which this paper will deal, was one of the infantry regiments of the 2nd Infantry Brigade, 1st Division. (4) It participated in all of the engagements accredited to the 1st Division during the period of the

(4) 1st  
Div. p 1

(5) 28th  
Inf.

World War from October, 1917 to November, 1918. (5) Arriving in France in July, 1917, officered by men of long service and experience, with the exception of about twenty five junior officers of less than eight months service, the regiment within a month began to witness the beginning of a cycle of change of officer personnel which continued throughout the duration of the war, except during the latter months of 1917, and the first few months of 1918. During this period of comparative stableness the regiment was fortunate in having as its commander an officer of marked leadership ability who instilled in the officers and men of the the regiment the indomitable spirit which characterized their service throughout the war. Up to and including the 31st of October, 1918, the 28th Infantry had taken part in four major and one minor engagements. (6) Its casualties had exceeded the total strength of the regiment. (7) While the morale of the regiment was very good, yet it was the concensus of opinion among the officers that the possibility of continued warfare during the coming Winter months was having an adverse effect upon its efficiency. This in spite of the fact that conditions at the time favored the Allies.

(6) 28th  
Inf. p 3.

(7) 28th  
Inf. p 75

ACHIEVEMENTS OF FIRST ARMY;

SEPTEMBER 26th TO OCTOBER 31, 1918.

In order to present a comprehensive narrative of the operations of the 3rd Battalion, 28th Infantry, it is necessary to outline, briefly, the achievements of the First Army during the period appearing above.

On September 26, 1918, the First Army launched its initial attack of the Meuse-Argonne offensive, the front of which extended from the west bank of the Meuse river to the Argonne forest. (8) This attack was facilitated to some extent by the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient, in that it denied the enemy the advantage the salient would have afforded for launching a counter attack, or counter offensive, and deceived him as to the exact location from which the expected subsequent attack

(8) 1st  
Army p 50

~~would be launched. (9) The ultimate object of the attack was to sever the main German artery of communication which~~

(10) 1st  
Army p 35

ran through Carignan, Sedan and Mezieres. (10) These lines were of vital importance to the enemy, and the loss or domination of them by the American First Army meant almost insurmountable difficulties for him in properly and efficiently supplying his army in northwestern France and Belgium. (11) In order to adequately protect these strategical points it would be necessary for him to hold that portion of the front now opposed to the First Army. To do this it would be necessary for him to withdraw reserves from some other part, or parts, of the line, and in so doing that particular part of his front would be proportionately weakened. Thus we find thrust on the shoulders

(11)  
Liggett,  
p 76

of the officers and men who made up the First Army an

(12) 1st  
Army, p35

exceedingly responsible and difficult task. (12)

The initial attack was launched, from right to left, by the III, V and I Corps. It was a complete surprise, and a

(13) 1st  
Army p 48,  
50.

success. (13) Followed by succeeding attacks, followed-in- which were persistent and intense, the enemy was eventually

(14) 1st  
Army p 50

forced to evacuate the Argonne forest. (14) In accomplishing

(15) 1st  
Army, part  
IV

(16) 1st  
Div. p 176

*W. C. Clegg*

(17) 1st  
Div. p 213

(18) 1st  
Div. p 213

(19) 28th  
Inf. p 32

(20) 28th  
Inf. p 33

(21) 28th  
Inf. p

(22) per.  
observations

(23) 2nd  
Brig. Op 16

*W. C. Clegg*

this task the First Army employed twelve divisions. (15)  
Among the divisions employed was the 1st Division which  
relieved the 35th Division on the night of November 1st. (16)

The 1st Division attacked on the morning of October 4th  
which was followed by a series of attacks driving a wedge  
seven kilometers deep into the enemy's positions, and in  
effect forcing him to evacuate the Argonne forest (17). The  
casualties sustained by the division in this attack were  
7,500 in killed and wounded. (18) The total casualties of  
the 28th Infantry in this attack were some 1,600. (19)

The 28th Infantry, after being relieved by a regiment  
of the 42nd Division on the night of October 11-12, by a series  
of long, hard marches went into billets in the vicinity of  
Erize St. Dizier. (20) Here on October 20th the regiment  
received replacements for the casualties of the Argonne. The  
new men were at once given intensive training. (21) It is

interesting to note, at this time, that since leaving its  
training area in the Gondrecourt area, training in rifle  
marksmanship and musketry was conspicuous by its absence. This  
condition existed due in a large degree to the lack of  
sufficient time (the regiment was almost constantly on the  
move) and adequate facilities. (22) These new men fared  
no better for on the night of October 31st, after only ten  
days of preparation, they found themselves along with the  
rest of the regiment bivouaced in the Bois de Romange as  
part of the 1st Division in V Corps reserve. (23)

#### SITUATION OCTOBER 31, 1918

The situation confronting the Allies on this day was  
somewhat brighter, due in a large measure to the strenuous  
and successful efforts of the American First Army in clearing  
the Argonne forest. This had resulted in substantial gains

(24) Liggett, all along the western front. (24)

(25) Page, In addition, Austria and Turkey had capitulated. (25)  
p 128

The American First Army now held the line: the northern edge of the Bois de Foret, the northern edge of the Bois de Bantheville, thence almost due west to and including the northern top of the Argonne forest. (26) Only about thirty five

(26)1st  
Army p 80

kilometers now separated the present front line from the town of Sedan. Preparations for the continuation of the offensive were completed by the night of October 31st. The III, V and I Corps, from right to left were in readiness for the

(27)1st  
Army p 80

attack.(27) The mission of the First Army remained unchanged.

(28)

(28)1st  
Army p50

#### TERRAIN

The terrain confronting the First Army consisted of a broad defile bordered on the east by a commanding ridge

running west and north west from Dun sur Meuse, through Buzancy and Stonne, and on the west by the high wooded country

of Bois de Loges and Bois de Bourgogne. The terrain of the defile was rolling. Only Barricourt, on the east, offered a

logical point for attack. This compared favorably to the

terrain which the Germans had to defend in the earlier stages

of the offensive.(29) In all the terrain, as well as the tactical situation, favored the enemy. The shortening of the line

(29)1st  
Army p 81,  
82.

between the First Army and the Fourth French Army on the left

permitted the enemy to transfer some of his divisions from

the front of the Fourth French Army to that of the First Army.

(30)1st  
Army p 80

(30) A salient comparable to St. Mihiel existed between the

First Army and the Fourth French Army, due to the terrain

conditions mentioned above.

#### BOUNDARY

The original west boundary of the First Army included the town of Sedan. During the progress of the attack this boundary

was changed several times. These changes were more or less

instrumental in the confusion which appeared prevalent

during the latter stages of the operation, especially on  
November 7th.(31)

(31)1st  
Army, p 85

#### PLAN OF ATTACK, FIRST ARMY.

The plan of attack of the First Army had as its immediate objective the capture of the heights of Barricourt which, in effect, would insure the control of Buzancy, and the subsequent development of Boult aux Bois. These moves would cause the retirement of the enemy across the Meuse.(32)

(32)1st  
Army, p 82

The V Corps, center, was given the mission of driving deep to the north and capturing the ridge west of Barricourt which (as mentioned before) seemed to lend itself more to a direct attack. In this operation the V Corps was to be

supported on the right by the III Corps, and on the left by the I Corps.(33) This attack launched in conjunction with

(33)1st  
Army, p 82

the Fourth French Army, and by a subsequent attack by the I Corps on the left was expected to have a similar effect to the attack of St. Mihiel, that is, to "pinch out" the enemy occupying Bois de Loges and Bois de Bourgogne.(34)

(34)1st  
Army, p 83

This attack was planned for October 28th, but as the French Army was not ready it was postponed until November 1st.(35)

(35)1st  
Army, p 81

A determination, by the Army Commander, to drive the attack beyond Barricourt ridge caused him to place the 1st and 42nd Divisions in close reserve behind the V Corps so they could, without delay, relieve the 80th and 2nd Divisions in case it was found necessary to lend fresh impetus to the

(36)1st  
Army, p 83

attack.(36)

#### MOVEMENTS OF 1st DIVISION

On November 1st the 1st Division, in bivouac in the Bois de Romange, was in close reserve of the V Corps.

The attack of the V Corps that morning was plainly heard by the members of the 1st Division. It was preceeded and

accompanied by artillery fire which was regarded as an innovation in the employment of this arm. After a fire of destruction for two hours preceeding the attack, in which all sensitive points were systematically bombarded, the entire corps front of more than eight kilometers was covered with a barrage fire to a depth of more than 1666 yards. In all a total of 608 artillery pieces of all calibers were used. In addition to this the fire was thickened by the machine gun fire of the machine guns of three divisions.

(37) 1st  
Div. p 222

(37) The Corps, advancing on schedule, reached its objective on Barricourt ridge, nine miles away, at the end of the days attack. This was mute evidence of the power of the artillery, and the determination of the infantry. (38)

(38) 1st  
Army, p 84

In order to keep up with this rapid advance the 1st Division was compelled to strain every effort. The presence of the

~~Division in rear of the assault divisions seemed to spur those divisions on to greater speed. Therefore we find the~~

1st Division constantly pressing forward, over the muddy, shell torn roads and soggy fields, ever threatening and finally going into action on November 6th. (39)

(39) 1st  
Div. p 226,  
227.

#### MOVEMENTS OF 28th INFANTRY

The 28th Infantry on the night of November 1st, at 5:30 P.M., marched from the Bois de Romange with Landreville as its destination. (40) After being on the road all that

(40) 28th  
Inf. p 34

night, and about 17 hours the next day, the regiment finally reached Landreville, a distance of about 10 kilometers. (41)

(41) 28th  
Inf. p 34

The troops had been on the road a total of 22 hours without much chance to rest, and, of course, no food. The march consisted of frequent halts, so numerous that the column resembled an accordion functioning. As a matter of fact these blockades happened with sickening regularity. That the patience and endurance of every man withstood the demands made upon ~~him~~ is remarkable to say the least. A rest in the mud of

France did not appeal to the soldiers, tired though they were. Once during the long march the men showed signs of interest in the war. This occurred the night of November 1st when the column happened to pass the men of the 1st Field Artillery Brigade who had taken part in the attack of the First Army that day. (35) They had not seen each other since the last days they were together in the Argonne, October 1-12th. The Artillery was ordered to remain and support the efforts of the 42nd Division, which had relieved the 1st Division there. (36) It was natural for the artillerymen to say uncomplimentary things of the efforts of the 42nd Division, and they did-but in doing so they proved that the infantryman and artilleryman working together as members of a team develop unlimited confidence in each other. This meeting, coming as it did during the tedious hours of the night, gave the infantrymen a topic of discussion and diverted their attention from the hardships at the time.

(35) 1st  
Div. p 224

(36) 1st  
Div. p 219

59  
56  
60  
56  
55  
56  
59  
56  
57  
57  
51

After a one night stand in the vicinity of Landreville, the regiment was marched the night of November 3rd to the Bois de Foli. The latter bivouac was reached at about 8:00 A.M. on the 4th of November, after experiencing similar march difficulties of the 1st and 2nd. Here the men once again set about to get their clothing and equipment into good condition. The soggy ground did not offer much in the way of an opportunity to ~~so~~ secure complete rest, but the prospect of an early meal did much to allay any tendency toward harmful unrest. When a soldier believes there is prospect <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ food in the offing the thought of it is dominant, especially when he is hungry. (37)

(37) per.  
ob

The Brigade commander, 2nd Brigade, in the course of these marches stressed the importance of the reconnaissance of roads and trails preceding each days march. (38) The need for such reconnaissance was prompted <sup>by</sup> the difficulties experienced and by the fact that the maps in use by the

(38) 2nd  
Brig. op  
20

regiments, in many cases, failed to show all the artificial terrain features. The enemy in his four years occupation of the ground had seen fit to construct new roads and trails. It is obvious that to encounter one of these newly constructed roads or trails is disconcerting to the officer responsible, and injurious to the command's morale. An error in the route of march will always be discovered by the men, and their consequent loss of confidence in the officers ability will be exceedingly difficult to regain. (39)

(39) per.  
ob.

#### PROGRESS OF V CORPS

In the meantime the lines of the V Corps had been pushed forward with surprising rapidity, due in some measure to the ever constant threat of the assault divisions (2nd and

~~3rd, V and I Corps, respectively) being relieved by the~~

(40) 1st  
Div. p 224

1st and 42nd Divisions, in V Corps reserve. (40) At least twice during these days the V Corps Commander made preliminary arrangements to have the 1st Division relieve the 89th Division, but in each case the division commander of that division (89th) objected strenuously and the orders were revoked. (41) On November 5th the 42nd Division moved forward to relieve the 78th Division, I Corps.

(41) 89th  
Div. p 596

*Spelling*

1st Division  
again enters the line.

~~Between 2:00 P.M. and 3:00 P.M., November 5th the~~

1st Division received orders to relieve the 80th Division, then on the right of the I Corps, and attack at 5:30 A.M., November 6th using as its line of departure the Beaumont-Stonne road. (42) The mission of the division was to seize a crossing of the Meuse river at Mouzon. (43)

(42) 1st Div.  
p 227

(43) F.O.  
118, 1st Div.

The march to position was made at night over wet and soggy ground, on roads and across country. The relief was effected without reconnaissance. At 4:00 A.M., November 6th, the division reached its line of departure and attacked at 5:30 A.M. At 7:00 P.M., same day, the advanced elements had reached and ~~was~~<sup>WERE</sup> holding the line: Villemontry - Mouzon, which was along the west bank of the Meuse. (44)

(44) 1st Div.  
p 228

#### MOVEMENTS OF 28th INFANTRY

In the meantime the 28th Infantry, in Bois de Foli, where we left it, had received orders placing it in 2nd Infantry Brigade reserve. (45) The regiment started the march after 6:00 P.M.

51  
(45) 28th Inf.  
p 34

~~headed for Beaumont, where definite information as to the exact disposition of the troops was to be given the regimental commander. This information was handed to the regimental commander about two miles from Beaumont at about 6:00 A.M., the 6th, and directed him to take up a position in the woods west of the town of Beaumont. As the position of the regiment was then about two miles from enemy positions on the east bank of the Meuse the regimental commander realized that in order to escape observation of the enemy at the breaking of dawn, which was close at hand, the column would have to increase its gate of march. Accordingly As the column approached Beaumont it was subject to interdicting fire of the enemy artillery, resulting in several casualties. Nevertheless ~~the~~<sup>the</sup> route column was maintained, for the reason that the percentage of direct hits on a road is relatively small and where the ground in the immediated vicinity is soft or soggy, as in this case, the damage inflicted ~~was~~<sup>is</sup> reduced to a minimum.~~

man attempted to provide a comfortable resting place for himself. In this he was soon disappointed for it began to rain again. It was a cold, steady rain and the only way to keep warm was to keep moving, no fires being permitted. The rain continued throughout the day, making the uniforms and blankets exceedingly wet. The men were thoroughly drenched by 8:30 A.M. and remained so throughout the day. Protection from the rain was impossible. With no prospect of being dried out, and with night gradually approaching the command was brought to the realization that a very uncomfortable night was inevitable.

52  
(46) per.  
ob.

52  
(46)

PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS AND  
ORDERS FOR AN ATTACK ON SEDAN.

In the early afternoon of November the sixth, while the assault regiments of the division were fighting their way towards Mouzon, the Corps Commander, V Corps, was arranging for the necessary co-operation and co-ordination for the advance of a division on Sedan. He visited the 89th Division that afternoon and informed the division commander that the Commander in Chief desired to have the honor of entering Sedan fall to the American troops, and that he (The Corps Commander) was sending one division due north, supported by the rest of the Corps. He further stated that co-operation on the part of the 89th Division would require them to protect the right flank of this division by crossing the river. It is interesting to note that no bridge equipment was available for this move, none being on hand within the division.

53  
(47) 89th  
Div. p 596

53  
(47)

At about 4:00 P.M., November 6th, the regimental commander, 28th Infantry, summoned the battalion commanders and ordered them to prepare their battalions for forward movement and probable action. He inquired about the physical and mental state of each battalion, and then advised them that movement might have to be made without having an opportunity to feed

The decision in this case was further justified because a more rapid rate could be maintained on the road and in addition the time element was an important factor. Greater distances between battalions, companies and platoons were ordered, but otherwise, as previously stated, the formation remained unchanged.

Reconnaissance parties, preceding the regiment, soon returned with the information that a bridge near Beaumont had been destroyed and it would be necessary to move the column across country. After carefully inspecting the map at this point, and taking a compass bearing, the regimental commander led the column across country. After marching across country about one and one half miles it was discovered that a new road, which had been constructed by the Germans and which did not appear on the map, nearly caused the temporary loss of the regiment. About ten minutes were necessary to accurately locate the position of the troops. As the column approached its position it found itself at the base of a commanding hill over which it must cross to reach the position, designated by Brigade, in time. It was now past dawn, but a heavy fog, which showed signs of lifting, served as screen. A line of battalions in column of companies, in platoon columns, was the formation employed to cross the hill. When the leading elements reached the crest of the hill the fog had lifted. The enemy positions across the Meuse could be plainly seen, and doubtless the regimental formation was in plain view of enemy observation. The only reason which could be attributed to his failure to act in this case was that he was greatly concerned over something more vital to him. Earlier in the war such a target would have received his undivided attention. Uneasiness which must have existed in the regiment at this time disappeared when the column passed from view, and finally reached its position in the woods about one half mile west of Beaumont.

Once in position provisions/ were at once made for proper concealment from enemy observation and protection from enemy artillery fire. After attention to these matters was over each

the men. Transportation in the form of machine gun carts had been sent to the Bois de Foli, where the kitchens and other transportation had been ordered to remain because of the indefinite orders received the night before, to assist in expediting the forward movement of food. Prospects of food soon vanished for about 5:00 P.M. the Battalion Commander, 3rd Battalion, was ordered to report to 2nd Brigade Headquarters. Before leaving he was informed that the battalion would be marched to a position on the Beaumont-Stonne road, where he would rejoin it after leaving the Brigade Command Post. The Brigade Command Post was located in an old frame house situated at a crossroad, about 2 miles from Beaumont. When the Battalion Commander entered the Command Post there were present the Brigade and Regimental Commanders and certain members of their respective staffs.

#### ORDERS FOR 3rd BATTALION

The orders and instructions issued by the Brigade Commander were very brief. In substance they were: The mission of the Brigade, which was to reach a line of departure on the hill on the west bank of the Meuse, opposite the town of Sedan, at 5:15 A.M., in order to be ready for a division attack against Sedan at 5:30 A.M., the morning of the 7th.

The fact that the 3rd battalion was to be the advance guard of the brigade and the route of march to be followed. -12-

The battalion was to move out as soon as the necessary orders were issued. The exact location of the enemy was not known, but it was believed that he was somewhere between Stonne and Artaise. The Battalion Commander and the Regimental Operations Officer, who was to accompany the advance guard commander, were advised to divest themselves of all marks of identity for it was believed by the Brigade Commander that the battalion would become quite seriously engaged with the enemy during the night.

It was about 5:30 P.M., November 6th, when the battalion commander rejoined his battalion which was then on the road about one half mile east of the Brigade Command Post. The company commanders, the battalion staff and the regimental Machine Gun Company Commander, whose organization was attached to the battalion for the operation, were immediately assembled at the head of the column to receive the necessary instructions and orders. The situation was then briefly outlined to them, and the orders given. It was growing dark about this time, making it very difficult for the officers to follow on the map the instructions given. By use of a flashlight, shielded by a blanket, some idea of the route to be followed and the nature of the terrain over which the column was to march was obtained. The route of march prescribed was: Stonne--Artaise--Chemery--Chehery--Chevenges; thence to the line of departure. Company K was selected as the Support, and was ordered to precede the Reserve by 200 yards. The selection of Company K was based on the ability of the company commander, and the belief that of all the company commanders he would be most likely to go through. Of the other company commanders only one showed a trace of timidity and this disappeared somewhat when he became engrossed in his duties. While all these Company commanders were veterans, only one was a captain. Three of these officers had returned to the regiment from the hospital only a week or so before, and had not had time to become thoroughly familiar with the replacements received on October 20th. The majority of the platoon commanders had been with the battalion only a week or two. Therefore it might be said that while the regiment, or battalion, might be classed as a veteran organization, yet it was veteran in name only. (49)

. To return to the order: Double connecting files were to be provided. The Battalion Intelligence Officer, accompanied by two runners, was to march with the point and was charged with the responsibility that the prescribed route of march would be maintained. Automatic riflemen were to be placed on the flanks of their respective squads alternating from right to left, and were charged with repulsing any concerted bayonet charge by the enemy. The column was to push on regardless of enemy fire.

The order of march was: Companies I, M, E and machine gun company. The battalion commander was to march at the head of the reserve. Upon the completion of the issuance of the instructions and orders the Machine Gun Company Commander informed the battalion commander that his machine gun carts had not returned from Bois de Folie, where ~~it~~ had been sent to bring the food forward, and that it would be impossible for him to carry the guns and ammunition by hand. However, he agreed that the company could carry half of the guns and two boxes of ammunition per gun with a reasonable assurance of getting them to the position. This was a total of eight guns and 16 boxes of ammunition. A lieutenant of the machine gun company and the battalion adjutant were sent in the direction of Bois de Foli with instructions to intercept the carts, pick up the remainder of the guns and ammunition, and expedite their forward movement. During the issuance of orders the regimental commander, under pressure from brigade, constantly urged the battalion commander to make haste. Before leaving to rejoin their companies the company commanders were enjoined to take the necessary steps to preserve silence during the march. (50)

55  
50) per.  
ob.

55  
(50)

## THE MARCH

The 3rd Battalion was in motion by 5:40 P.M. The company commanders issued their orders during the march, there being no opportunity to do so before the battalion moved out. Complete silence, except for the tread of feet, was very evident even at the outset of the march. The men seemed anxious to march for it meant that in a short time they would be warm again, and somewhat dry. The road to Stonne was good and the men made good time, about 2 miles per hour. At this rate ~~the~~ <sup>they</sup> would reach their destination, Sedan, 15 miles away, about 4:00 ~~A.M.~~ <sup>A.M.</sup> the next morning, providing no opposition was encountered. This would allow about one hour for arrangements prior to the attack. As this rate far exceeded the usual rate, <sup>as</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>it</sup> was realized ~~that it could not be maintained throughout the march every~~ effort was made to retain this rate of march as long as possible. The clothing and packs of the men were still weighted by the afternoon rain, and hunger was beginning to be felt. There was some question about the new men being able to withstand the effort. After turning off the Beaumont-Stonne road towards Artaise le Vivier the column soon encountered a shallow, muddy creek which slowed up the rate of march. Upon resuming the march the expectation of soon passing through the enemy's line tended to make the silence more pronounced. Again expectation ran rife as the column approached Artaise, but again the enemy had vanished. By this time the conditions of march were again normal with only a long plodding march in view. The enemy was believed to have retired across the Meuse. About midway between the towns of Artaise and Chemery another bridge was found to be demolished by the enemy in his destructive retreat. By this time the enemy had become very proficient in the art of delaying a persistent foe. The bridge in question had had

a span of at least thirty feet and covered a culvert constructed of cement. The culvert was about 12 feet deep, the sides of which were so steep that men in trying to ascend the far side would slide to the bottom after reaching within a distance of about five feet of the top. The obstacle was overcome by the employment of a system used in wall scaling, that is, placing two men on the far side, top, who would grasp the hands of the men ascending and haul them to the top. By having men work in relays the battalion was across in about an hour. About another hour and a half was required to get the remainder of the regiment across. The progress of the battalion was delayed accordingly.

56  
(51) per.  
ob.

56  
(51)

When the column was finally put in motion again it soon met with another obstacle after entering the town of Chemery ~~not to mention the apprehension caused~~ <sup>by</sup> noise and bustle

emanating from the town as the troops drew near. The occupants proved to be members of the rear echelon of the 42nd Division. Excellent judgement on the part of the Battalion Intelligence Officer prevented possible casualties. The kitchen sections of the 42nd Division were preparing the morning meal for their troops. That the troops of the 28th Infantry remained in column while passing in full view of these culinary preparations was an indication of good discipline. (The men had not eaten since the night of the 5th)

The obstacle referred to above was in the form of a huge mine crater the diameter of which was about 100 feet and the depth about 50 feet. The bottom of the crater was covered with water to a depth of about 15 feet, and the sides were soft and slippery. It was located at the crossroad at the western exit of the town, and wrought such destruction that it was with considerable difficulty that the road over which the troops had to march could be located. At the time the leading troops began to move around the brink of the crater

the 42nd Divisional Artillery began to cross the path of the of the battalion. There were no military police troops to regulate the traffic, so the two columns soon became badly tangled. An effort was made to regulate the traffic, but the artillerymen in fear of being left behind their column would not be denied. The infantry had to resort to breaking through wherever and when ever they could. After struggling through the artillery column the men had to form a single file in order to pass along a fifty foot section of the crater whose <sup>inner</sup> border was within about one foot of a twelve foot fence. At this point the darkness and the water at the bottom of the crater made a slip or false step precarious. The route from this point took the column thru back yards and between houses until the Chemery-Chehery road was reached. All this entailed more delay and more or less fatigue. In order to insure the battalion a

against loss of personnel about twenty guides were employed

to see that the men followed the right route. (52)

Again the battalion moved forward, only to be halted by order of the Brigade Commander after it had marched about one mile. It was now about 4:30 A.M., the 7th. As the halt was to be for an indefinite period the men were moved to the left side of the road where a grassy bank, which seemed to have shed most of the moisture, looked particularly inviting and afforded cover from hostile fire from the right. Sleep, by this time, was overpowering and in less than a minute the men were fast asleep - all except the necessary march outposts. (53)

The delay of the battalion, shortly after it had left the town of Chemery, was occasioned by opposition encountered by the 26th Infantry between Chemery and Connage in the nature of machine gun fire coming from the vicinity of Omicourt. While there is nothing definite on this move yet it is reasonable to believe that the Brigade Commander did not want the 26th Infantry to advance further until assurance was given him that this resistance would be overcome. (

Spelling

57  
(52) per.  
ob.

58  
(53) per.  
ob.

The Brigade Commander arrived at the head of the battalion reserve at about 5:30 A. M. and ordered the advance guard to resume the march immediately. He had no additional information concerning the enemy to impart, and made no change in the mission of the battalion despite the fact that it was then past the hour designated for the attack. The Brigade Commander marched with the battalion commander, at the head of the Reserve. It was now daylight and firing could be heard and seen. However, none seemed to be directed on the column so it continued in route column as it made for better and more rapid progress. At this time the Battalion Adjutant rejoined the battalion with the information that he had located the carts, but due to obstruction they would not be able to reach the battalion until late in the afternoon. He left the Machine Gun Officer behind to take charge. (54)

As the head of the of the column approached the town of Chehery, increased activity in enemy firing was very noticeable.

The Brigade Commander, who was still with the Battalion Commander, at this time, ordered the battalion deployed and moved forward at once. (55)

#### DEPLOYMENT OF BATTALION

Complying with the ~~battalie~~ Brigade Commanders orders the battalion was deployed in the customary and, by this time, accepted formation, that is, deployment in depth. Two companies, K and I, Company I on the right, were in assault and Companies M and L, Company M on the right, were in support. The distance between support companies was about 300 yards.

Each assault company placed two platoons in assault and two in support. The distance between these platoons was about 75 yards. Each assault platoon placed one section in assault, and one in support. Each section formed line of skirmishers. In the support platoons of the assault companies

and within the companies themselves the formations were similar to the assault companies, except that each section was in section columns. The troops were deployed under cover of the Support and <sup>were</sup> protected somewhat by the town of Chehery and the woods to the north thereof.

The boundary between companies was the Chehery - Cheven-  
ges road. About fifteen minutes were required to complete the  
deployment. <sup>61</sup> (56)

<sup>61</sup>  
(56) per  
ob.

#### TERRAIN

The confirmation of the terrain, as viewed from the position from which the battalion deployed, presented the a picture resembling a huge amphitheater. It consisted of a valley about 500 yards wide with gentle ridges on each side and a commanding hill to the north, about 2 and 1/2 miles

*Grilling*

The Chehery-Chevenges road ran through the center of the valley, encircled the right half of the town of Chevenges and half way up the hill in rear resumed its normal course and disappeared into the woods beyond. The river Bar paralleled the road until it reached the outskirts of the town of Chevenges where it turned to the left, taking a course perpendicular to the road. The river was easily fordable.

Movement in the valley could easily be detected from the hill in rear of Chevenges. White flags were flying from the houses of Chehery and Chevenges, an indication that the enemy was in the immediate vicinity. <sup>62</sup> (57)

<sup>62</sup>  
(57) per.  
ob.

#### THE ATTACK

The attack was launched on signal from the battalion commander, who from his position could see every man of the battalion. The men advanced with rifles at high port, bayonets fixed. The assault lines were uniformly aligned, due to the

nature of the terrain. The rate of march was about 25 yards per minute. The Battalion and company commanders advanced at the head of their respective companies. At this stage the control exercised by the leaders appeared to be very good.

As the assault waves reached a point about midway between the towns of Chehery and Chevenges they were met, without previous warning, by machine gun fire that was almost as destructive as it was intense. The suddenness and the fury with which this fire was directed upon the advancing lines provided a surprise and a shock that the infantryman can only combat by "hitting the ground!" This they did with the alacrity of trained acrobats, and stayed there until they recovered their bearings. Efforts to make them move were fruitless.

When a man would move to arise the guns would again pour forth increased fire. It was decided that in order to relieve this pressure action would have to be taken against the

enemy flank machine guns, for it was believed that the most deadly fire was coming from them, especially from the one on the right flank. This action was to be in the form of combat patrols to the right and left flank. It was very difficult to locate the exact positions of the enemy guns. The only definite way to tell from which flank the fire was coming was to observe the strike of the bullets on the road nearby.

Before the battalion commander could get back to the Battalion Command Post, which was established by the Battalion Adjutant near the road and abreast of the assault support companies, the enemy began to employ direct artillery fire which appeared to be quite accurate. As soon as the Battalion Command Post was reached a runner was dispatched at once to the commander of the right support company directing him to send out a combat patrol to the right flank and clean up the machine guns on that flank, and thereafter provide the necessary protection on that flank. While a similar message was being written to the support company on the left the

2nd in command of the regiment, a Lieutenant Colonel, arrived at the Battalion Command Post. He gave the Battalion Commander an arbitrary order that the battalion would be moved forward at once. An effort to explain the situation to him was of no avail. After condemning the action taken by the battalion commander in providing flank protection he left the Command Post. That he spoke in haste and without due deliberation, is confirmed by the fact that after returning to the Regimental Command Post he caused Company A to be sent out to protect the right flank. This company materially aided the efforts of the battalion. <sup>63</sup> (58)

<sup>63</sup>  
(58) Capt.  
Livesay

While moving forward to carry out the orders of the 2nd in Command the battalion could see the attempts ~~made-~~ being made by the right support company commander to send out the flank patrol. He was being hampered somewhat by antilery fire which was being directed on his company. This coupled with his natural ~~indecisiveness~~ <sup>63</sup> made the delay ~~soon~~

<sup>64</sup>  
(59) per.  
ob.

interminable. They were finally put in motion about about fifteen minutes after receiving the message. <sup>64</sup> (59)

The other men of the battalion were still on the ground, and hardly a rifle was being fired. Another signal was given to move forward, but few men seemed to want to take an unnecessary risk. After strenuous efforts were made some of the men attempted to move, they hit the ground again as soon as the enemy fire was again increased.

The men of the company on the left, protected partially by the town of Chevenges, and responding to the constant pressure of the company commander finally started forward again, rather slowly. Realizing that his left was exposed this officer extended his line to the left until he had command of the terrain to the left of the ridge. A machine gun opened fire from the left rear of the company and a squad was sent out to silence it. The firing soon ceased.

The company on the right was not so easy to move. ~~It was~~

It was in a position from which it received fire from both flanks. The fire was demoralizing, and most of the men reacted accordingly. The company commander and others were pressing the men as much as was humanely possible, but the law of self preservation ~~was~~ was proving difficult to overcome. The men would flock together, like sheep, at places; some would crawl and others would roll toward a ditch running parallel to the road - all seeking cover and protection. In the ditch there were already many men of the 166th Infantry, 42nd Division who, for some season, were giving encouragement to the men of the battalion in their efforts to reach the ditch. After what seemed hours there was a slight cessation of fire, due to the progress of the right flank patrol. (60)

65  
(60) per.

ob

The right flank patrol received considerable machine gun fire as it moved along the ridge, making the progress of the patrol very slow. The direction of the fire could not be ascertained, so cleverly did the enemy site his guns. This patrol while it did not function with the resoluteness which should characterize its work yet its presence did much to relieve the pressure on the assault line. (61) As a result of the presence of this patrol on the right flank the right company was finally brought under control, and started to move forward. (62)

66  
(61) Capt.  
Dunn.

67  
(62) per.  
ob.

The company on the left, after extending its left up the ridge, also began to move forward more rapidly, under the personal leadership of the company commander. As previously mentioned, its right was partly protected by the town of Chevenges which, no doubt, contributed much towards the more rapid progress of that part of the line, until it reached the north side of the town where once again it was subjected to effective enemy fire. The company commander, out in front of, and leading his company, moved forward with a good rifleman on each side of him, slightly to the rear.

When the base of the hill was reached the ~~company~~ found it necessary to regulate his advance to short rushes, as he was then within about 100 yards from the crest of the hill and the enemy's fire was becoming more desperate. His company, inspired by his utter disregard to danger, followed him without the need of additional pressure. The enemy realizing that the capture of the hill seemed imminent rushed a machine gun down the forward slope to a better position and opened fire at once. The company commander observed this and endeavoured to out maneuver it. In doing so the company received a wrist wound, which was so painful he was compelled to seek aid. The Battalion surgeon ordered him evacuated and another officer was sent

In the meantime several messages were received at the Battalion Command Post from members of the 166th Infantry Staff warning the battalion that their division artillery was going to shell the hill, up which the 3rd Battalion was advancing. Steps were taken to ascertain the exact time this artillery would fall, but nothing definite could be learned. As the troops gradually approached a point from which an assault of the hill could be made the situation became more difficult. Should the line be halted, or should they be allowed to push on in spite of the threatened, or promised, artillery support? The question did not require an answer for at the regimental Command Post in Chehery the Division Commander, 1st Division, in person, had given the regimental Commander orders to halt the battalion where it was, and dig in. This message was relayed to the troops and at about 11:00 A.M. Companies after manuevering for a well protected position dug in.

The enemy continued to fire at the least sign of movement on the part of the troops until about 4:00 P.M.

## ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

While there are many things open to criticism in the actions of the 3rd Battalion during the attack of November 7th, at Chevenges, France, the harshness of it disappears when due consideration is given the circumstances and conditions connected with the entire operation. The conduct of the men of the battalion may be considered admirable in spite of their apparent lack of aggressiveness during the attack. It must be remembered that up to this time practically all advances of troops against stubborn defenses were usually made with the support of artillery. There is no question but that the resistance met by the battalion at Chevenges was very stubborn, and no artillery was available for the support of the attack, the 1st Artillery Brigade did not arrive until the afternoon of the day of the attack, which was after orders had been given to halt the battalion. (69) Had the battalion received the necessary amount of instruction and training in rifle marksmanship and musketry it is firmly believed that better results would have been obtained.

The formation of the battalion in the attack was very cumbersome and unwise. It is believed that a formation similar to the one now taught at the Infantry School would have been much better. The formation used by the battalion denied the battalion commander the power of maneuver after he discovered this power was needed. By moving their companies too close to the assault companies the support commanders also showed a lack of appreciation of the power of their commands. However, this criticism can be traced directly to the custom established earlier in the war. Battalion and company commanders had little opportunity to prescribe the formations their organizations would take in any given situation, the formation usually being prescribed by higher headquarters. As the customary deployment had always been in depth, it is

71  
(69) Capt.  
Huebner.

69  
(64) Capt.  
Dunn

However, the fire after 1:00 P.M. was mostly indirect artillery fire which fell near Company M which had taken up a position near the outer wall of a cemetery. (64)

The halt of the 3rd battalion was caused by a change that had been made in the west boundary. The territory between Mouzon and Sedan was turned over to the French.

A message to the effect that French troops would pass through the lines of the battalion that night was received at the battalion command post about 3:00 P.M. Upon the passage of the troops the 3rd battalion stood relieved.

As soon as darkness arrived detachments were sent out to bury the dead. This work was completed about 8:40 P.M.

The French passed through the line at about 6:30 P.M. They moved along the road in advance guard formation and marched up the hill without opposition. At about 8:00 P.M. the

battalion was assembled and marched towards Artaise. The first halt was made about 9:30 P.M. As the men were very tired they were permitted to sleep until 11:00 P.M.

The town of Artaise was reached about 2:00 P.M. November 8th. It was raining by this time, and the area assigned to the 3rd Battalion was covered with water. An effort to locate a place more suitable was fruitless. The men could resist sleep no longer. Each man threw a blanket on the ground and fell asleep, immediately. Toward morning it turned very cold. When the men awoke they found their clothing and blankets frozen stiff. Some of the men had some difficulty in opening their eyes, and became alarmed thinking they had suddenly become afflicted with blindness. (64)

70  
(64) per  
ob.

At about 8:00 A.M. the battalion, which had rejoined the regiment, started to march in the direction of La Besace. About a mile from Stonne, at about 11:00 A.M. the troops were given breakfast, their first meal since the afternoon of the 5th. That night they bivouaced in the woods near La Besace.

was only natural for these officers to assume that that formation would be justifiable. A better solution for the formation would have been two companies in assault, one in reserve and one given the mission of protecting both flanks. The four company battalion in a situation of this kind, however, is unwieldy, at best.

Throughout the entire operation on the 6th and 7th the principle of the objective was uppermost in the minds of all the officers of the battalion.

The offensive spirit of the troops was always present, even though at times it appeared to be on the wane.

Mass was employed by the battalion in the attack, but improperly. By permitting the entire battalion to become engaged loss of power for a main effort was denied.

The principle of economy of force was well demonstrated by the enemy in his clever system of defense. It is estimated that his defense at Chevenges consisted of about five machine guns and one battery of artillery.

Surprise is well illustrated by the manner in which fire of the enemy was opened, checking the advance of the 3rd Battalion at least one hour.

Security was violated by the battalion when it deployed without flank protection.

The principle of simplicity is well illustrated by the order given the battalion by the brigade commander. In this he told the battalion; where he wanted the battalion to go, what he wanted it to do and when he wanted him to leave. This to all intents and purposes was all that was necessary for such an operation.

The support company commanders failed to fully co-operate in the battalion advance by not taking care of their respective flanks without being ordered to do so. This, it might be said, was not willful.

## CONCLUSIONS

The following seem to be the outstanding lessons learned during the operations of the 3rd Battalion in the 3rd phase of the Meuse-Argonne:

(a) A forced march should never be made unless the necessity for such a march is mandatory. (There appears to be no logical reason why the 3rd Battalion should have made the march on Sedan).

(b) To insure the success of a forced march bridging equipment should be provided, and should accompany the advance guard.

(c) Reconnaissance before and during a night march is indispensable.

(d) Formations prescribed for the Infantry should be elastic and simple; and in the training and instruction of officers of the Regular Army, the National Guard and Organized Reserves opportunity should be taken to impress this fact upon these officers.

(e) In the absence of well trained men in a command during action it will often be necessary for the commander to personally lead his men. And finally,

(f) Too much stress can be given to the so-called artillery-Infantry team to the detriment of the Infantry man's principal weapon, his rifle.

In conclusion it might be fitting and proper to say that any officer who permits any soldier, whether he be of the Regular Army, the National Guard or the Organized Reserve, to leave the service after a period of honorable service without having done his utmost to teach that man the value of being able to accurately aim and fire his rifle is not doing his full duty to the man, himself or his country.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Why was the 1st Division placed in close support of the of the V Corps? Ans. In order to effect a prompt passage of the line if fresh impetus were needed.
2. Why was the 28th Infantry marched across country near the town of Beaumont? Ans: The bridge along the route of march had been destroyed.
3. What did the 28th Infantry do during the attack of the 1st Division on November 6, 1918? Ans: It was in 2nd Brigade reserve.
4. Why were the men of the Regimental Machine Gun Company ordered to carry their guns on the march to Sedan on November 6th? Ans: The machine gun carts had been sent to Bois de Foli for food, and were not therefore available.
5. What caused a delay of the 3rd Battalion between Chemery and Artaise, during the march on Sedan? Ans: A bridge, which had been destroyed.
6. Was the attack of the 3rd Battalion supported by artillery? Ans: No.
7. What friendly troops did the 3rd Battalion pass between Chehery and Chevenges? Ans: Members of the 166th Infantry, 42nd Division.
8. Who gave the battalion orders to deploy and attack on the morning of the 7th of November? Ans: the Brigade Commander.
9. What troops relieved the 3rd Battalion the night of November 7th. Ans: French.
10. What conditions governed the relief of the 3rd Battalion? Ans: They were to stand relieved when the French troops passed through the line held by the 3rd Battalion.



ROUTE OF MARCH  
OF  
3<sup>RD</sup> BATTALION, 28<sup>TH</sup> INF.  
NOVEMBER 1-11, 1918

# MEUSE-ARGONNE

Scale 1:200,000

5 Kilometers

SYMBOLS:  
ROUTE →  
3<sup>RD</sup> BATTALION

