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2-5

ADVANCED OFFICERS' COURSE.  
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ACTION OF THE 58th INFANTRY (4th DIVISION)  
ATTACHED TO THE FRENCH 164th INFANTRY DIVISION VII  
FRENCH ARMY BETWEEN JULY 15th AND JULY 26th 1918.

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## P R E F A T O R Y .

The author ~~at~~ <sup>during</sup> the time covered in this monograph was in command of the Trains of the 4th Division, temporarily, as the proper train Commander, Colonel James Hornbrook, had been recently promoted and ordered to the United States.

I had placed Military Police along a straggler line extending from Braumetz to <sup>Bussieres</sup> ~~Bussians~~ and as our attack progressed I established a strong post at Licy Clignon. From this point the attack from Hautesvernes east could be easily seen and I made this locality my headquarters until July 21st.

From July 19th on, the French headquarters for ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> artillery groups occupied Licy and through them and their situation maps I was able to keep in close touch with what was going on in both the sector of the VII French Corps and the 1st American Corps.

After the engagement I went over the ground covered by this paper in much detail and as things turned out I was assigned to command the 1st Battalion, 59th Infantry on July 23rd. I was therefore enabled to see much of both Majors Cook and Houston and went over the engagement of the 58th with them in detail.

In this monograph I have referred to hours and dates taking same from the History of the 4th Division and the History of the 58th Infantry.

ACTIONS OF THE 58th INFANTRY (4th DIVISION) ATTACHED TO THE  
FRENCH 164th INFANTRY DIVISION VII FRENCH ARMY BETWEEN JULY 15th and  
JULY 26th 1918.

On July 10, 1918, the 58th Infantry, which had been training under the French near Lizy-sur-Ourcq, was assigned to a sub sector in the zone of the VII French Army Corps. This sub sector lay northeast of Rademont.

The ground was organized and the regiment was designated to defend this sector in case of a German break through.

It will be remembered that on July 15th, the Crown Prince threw his First and Third Armies containing twenty-nine divisions against the Fourth French Army under General Gouraud east of Reims and at the same time the Seventh German Army of twenty-one divisions attacked between Chateau Thierry and the Ardre River, southwest of Reims. General Gouraud had information from prisoners captured on intensive raids and extending over a period between June 28th and July 14th, which at first indicated that there would be an attack by the Germans about July 15th. Later definite information was obtained to the effect that the French Fourth Army was to be attacked and finally on the eve of battle, German prisoners told the exact hour on which the attack was to commence.

Until about July 10th it was not certain as to just where the Seventh German Army was to thrust and of course the French along the western edge of the salient prepared positions extending as far west as Maux and as far south as Colummiers.

As the Fourth Division had been assigned to this area for training the French naturally intended using them in case of an attack by the Germans and each regiment was assigned to some sector of defense and had on occasions manned same as a matter of

instruction.

On July 15th the 58th Infantry moved to Rademont from which place details were sent to the French lines, where they remained until hastily recalled on the night of July 17th.

In other words, the regiment was on the alert with advance detachments, commanders and guides in position during the period when the Germans were active on the Western Front of the salient and driving east on the southeastern <sup>perimeter</sup> ~~salient~~.

About noon on the 17th of July, orders were received from Division Headquarters, placing the regiment at the disposal of and attaching it to the French as follows:

1st. Battalion -- Major Samuel H. Houston -- to the 133rd R.I.F., commanded by Lieut.Colonel Kiffer at 11:00 P.M. at Gandelu.

2nd. Battalion -- Major Gilbert R. Cook -- to the 13th Group of Chasseurs a Pied, commanded by Lieut.Colonel Dassauge, at 10:00 P.M. at Cerfort.

3rd. Battalion -- Major Charles C. Drake -- to 152nd French Infantry, commanded by Lieut.Colonel Meilhan at 10:30 P.M., at Braumetz.

Battalion and Company Commanders went ahead to the command posts of the various French Commanders at 1:00 P.M., July 17th to receive the orders for attack and to reconnoiter if possible.

The attack orders were of course written in French and one copy was furnished each Battalion Commander. These officers in turn had to translate the order and explain same to the Company Commanders in English.

This took time and in consequence the reconnaissance was delayed and when undertaken it was hurried.



The plan of battle as drawn by General Gaucher, commanding the 164th French Infantry Division was briefly as follows: The Division was divided into three groups -- one right groupement -- one left groupement, and one reserve groupement.

Between the right and left groupements was placed a liaison battalion which was to cover the interval. This battalion was echeloned to the rear.

Each groupement consisted of three French Battalions and one American Battalion.

Lieut. Colonel Kiffer commanded the right groupement to which

~~Dassauge commanded the left groupement to which the 3rd Battalion~~  
was assigned, while the 3rd Battalion joined the reserve groupement.

The 12th Machine Gun Battalion attached Company "C" to the 1st Battalion and Company "A" to the 3rd Battalion. The 2nd Battalion had with it the Regimental Machine Gun Company.

The 59th Infantry was held as Divisional Reserve and four Companies of the 4th Engineers were attached to the 164th Division to consolidate captured terrain.

The march to various points in the French line as previously assigned began shortly after dark on the 17th. The rain started simultaneously as usual and was particularly heavy and blinding. The night was pitch dark and the roads were littered with wagons - trucks - mounted men - troops, etc.

Foch had made his decision to issue his attack from this sal-

ient, and everything had to move. Troops to attack were not placed in line on any part of this side of the salient until the last moment in order that the Germans would be completely surprised.

March conditions were frightful, as no roads could be reserved and traffic was moving in both directions. Frequently men would not be aware of the presence of a truck or caisson until they were struck by it. On account of the heavy rain it was impossible to march off the roads.

As a consequence of all this, progress was slow and tedious.

~~Shortly after midnight the regiment was ordered to move on the Montigny-Gandalau road by French guides, and from this time movement was more easy, but the regiment did not reach its various positions in line until less than one hour before the attack started.~~

The 1st. Battalion moved to Gandalau and took position in support of the French Battalion which was designated to attack in the direction of Hautevesnes.

The 2nd. Battalion moved through Braumetz, passed through Chezy to the reverse slope east of town and took position there.

The 3rd. Battalion halted in the woods of Chateau Braumetz.

The 2nd. Battalion was the only unit of the 58th Infantry designated as part of the attacking line.

Major Cook had issued his attack orders to his assembled officers on the evening before from the command post of Lt. Colonel Daussauge. These had been issued verbally and had designated Companies "E" and "H" as assault companies with Companies "F" and "G" as support companies from left to right in the order named and

following at 300 meters. *and "H" Companies attacking in two waves.*

One platoon of the regimental Machine Gun Company to accompany the assaulting line -- one section to each company. The remainder of the Machine Gun Company constituted a Battalion Reserve under Major Cook's orders.

The Regimental Headquarters Company was assigned also to the Reserve and such sections as could not perform their normal functions were assigned to the Infantry.

The remainder of the Reserve so called, consisted of the 37mm Gun Platoon and a detachment of the Outpost Company, 8th Field Sig-

The One Pounder Platoon was to assist the 2nd Battalion in destroying machine gun nests.

The Stokes Mortar Platoon had as yet not received its materiel.

The Band was assigned to the surgeon as stretcher bearers.

The topography and features of the sector of penetration assigned the 2nd Battalion are about as follows:

East of Chezy, the ground drops abruptly into a little valley containing a railroad leading to Gandalau from Neuilly-St. Front.

East of the railroad the ground rises gently to form the northern nose of the ridge which encircles Chezy from the South.

From this ridge there is a gradual descent into the valley in which Chevillon lies. Beyond Chevillon comes another gradual rise and southeast of town lies Hill 172, which was one of the objectives.

Still further east is an uneven, broken country resulting from erosion caused by small streams flowing northward to the Ru d'Alland.

Heavy growths of trees were found in the valley near Chevillon and on the high ground northeast of Hill 172 are wooded patches at Sept Bois. Midway from Sept Bois and Courchamps lies the Bois de I'Orme situated on a commanding <sup>hill</sup> ~~ridge~~ and destined to be the center of very heavy fighting.

All of the woods mentioned were strongly defended by machine guns and in addition the open fields, planted with grain, had ripened and were about to be harvested by the Germans.

Chevillon was defended by two lines of trenches and an outpost zone. The outpost zone lay about half way between Chezy and Chevillon ~~and was in a northwest-southeast direction. The German first line~~ was situated on the reverse slopes of the ridge and paralleled the outpost line.

The second line trenches were located on Hill 172.

All trenches were cleverly concealed in the grain fields and protected by interlocking fire of machine guns.

It was 4:00 A.M., before final orders reached all unit commanders, for the attack. These orders were a reiteration of those given company commanders the evening before by Major Cook and in addition the plan of liaison, the barrage line, and H. hour were given.

The French barrage opened at 4:30 A.M. and the advance started at 4:35 A.M. The attack was a complete surprise.

On July 15th the French artillery had been very active along the whole front because of the German drive between Chateau Thierry and the Ardre River.



On the night of July 15-16 this fire had been particularly intense but on the night of July 16-17 artillery fire had been reduced to less than normal and the Germans were lulled into a sense of false security.

On the night of July 16-17 the French installed their Corps and Army Artillery Groups in position and readjusted their Divisional Artillery Groups. On this night all roads for many miles in rear of the lines were reserved for artillery movement from 11:00 P.M. to dawn, and were packed with moving units.

Fire on the night of July 17-18 was normal and restricted to a limited number of batteries whose positions were known to the Germans. When the barrage opened these batteries were moved forward with the result that the German counter-battery fire failed to get many of them.

#### ATTACK of 2nd BATTALION.

There was no artillery preparation preceding the barrage.

The German outpost zone was easily overrun and taken. German S.O.S. barrage fell on Chezy then on the slope east of town, but in each case was too late to have much effect.

The 2nd Battalion, 58th Infantry moved from its initial line with great dash, outdistancing the Battalion of Chasseurs a Pied on its left.

Several isolated German machine guns from the left flank enfiladed our lines but the assault waves kept on. The German troops occupying the outpost zone cleared their first line and dropped back to the second line on Hill 172.

Our troops overran the German first line on the reverse slope, the Chevillon was taken after a sharp fight at 5:30 A.M. About 75 prisoners were captured up to this point and in Chevillon large quantities of ammunition and a number of machine guns were taken.

The 2nd Battalion now changed direction slightly, attacking Hill 172.

They had suffered rather severely and the Battalion on their left was still well behind with their attack.

Major Cook decided not to reorganize but to attack immediately.

It is true that his left flank was badly exposed, but Hill 172 commanded the situation and he decided that it was better to strike the Germans before they had time to organize the hill more strongly.

In consequence he moved rapidly up the hill, echeloning his support companies to overlap and protect his flanks. Hill 172 was taken after a severe fight.

The Battalion was here reorganized and orders were received from the French to split the Battalion. One part to attack the Sept Bois, which lay properly in their zone and the other part to attack toward Bois de l'Orme which lay to the right of the sector.

When the attacking group neared the Sept Bois the Germans counterattacked capturing one officer and ten men. This counter attack coming from an angle to the flank drove our troops back to Hill 172 where they were reorganized.

Later during the afternoon they again attacked gaining a portion of these woods and retaining same.

The right group of the battalion consisting of Companies "H" and "G" moved on Bois de l'Orme. This wood as shown before is <sup>over</sup> ~~near~~ <sup>a hill</sup> ~~the crest of a ridge~~ and as usual was defended by machine guns near the edge of the woods and from platforms in trees. When these companies reached the sunken road about 300 meters west of the woods they reorganized and rested for a few minutes. Upon resuming the attack, the lines had no more than reached the open when they were met by a hail of bullets from the woods and the attack broke down in very few minutes.

Both companies fell back to the sunken road where they remained until relieved. It may be explained here that there was practically no chance to maneuver the Germans out of this position which was highly organized and very strong. The position of the woods allowed all around observation and was provided with all around defense. The attack had progressed so swiftly that the French artillery were in no position to assist this movement and as units on the right and left had not come up the German position in these woods could not be isolated.

The 3rd Battalion, supporting the 152nd F.I.R. until this time now took position on Hill 172 at 3:30 P.M. in support of the 2nd Battalion.

The 2nd Battalion was relieved by the 3rd Battalion 59th Infantry by 7:00 A.M. July 19th, the 3rd Battalion 58th Infantry supporting this organization.

Our line now extended from Sept Bois to a point along the sunken road some 300 meters west of Bois de l'Orme, in this sub sector.

The 2nd Battalion moved to Chevillon covering this town and St. Gengoulph.

Both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were relieved and ordered to Bois de Braumetz at 11:00 P.M. July 20th.

During the engagement the 2nd Battalion - Machine Gun Company and Headquarters Company 58th Infantry lost 118 killed, 10 died of wounds and 340 wounded with 1 officer and 10 enlisted men captured, a total of 479 casualties, or 37 per cent.

#### ACTIONS of 1st BATTALION.

At about midnight July 17th the 1st Battalion moved to a position just west of Vilny.

At 5:00 A.M. July 18th the attack order was received from Lt.

Colonel Kiffer.

His plan of attack subdivided his sector, each half being covered by a French Battalion. The 3rd French battalion and the 1st Battalion 58th Infantry acting as supports and following at 800 meters.

Major Houston assembled his officers and disposed his battalion much as had Major Cook.

Companies "A" and "C" leading with "B" and "D" Companies in support.

Company "C" 12th M.G. Battalion covering the advance some 200 meters in rear of the second wave in line of sections.

At 6:00 A.M., July 18th, the Battalion moved about one kilometer north of Vilny, thence eastward around the nose of the ridge along which runs the railroad from Neuilly.



The battalion was following the French battalion as support in trace and was to strike Hautevesnes to the north flanking it slightly to the south.

This movement to the north is explained by the fact that Hautevesnes was prepared for direct action from the southwest and had the French attacked from Vilny the axial would have run along the long spur extending from <sup>Hautevesnes to a point east of Vilny</sup> ~~just south of Vilny~~ and could be easily covered with long range <sup>machine gun grazing</sup> fire for some  $2\frac{1}{2}$  kilometers.

On the other hand by maneuvering as they did, the French attack began <sup>behind</sup> ~~on~~ a ridge which gave cover to the formation. The attacking lines dropped into a little valley and with any artillery and machine gun preparation the Infantry could approach with ease the top of the scarp about 1,000 meters directly west of Hautevesnes.

This actually worked out as planned. Hautevesnes was taken by the French at 7:30 A.M.

Half of "D" Company 56th Infantry had been designated in orders to mop up the town, which they did without difficulty on their arrival about 8:00 A.M.

The 1st Battalion had started action in full equipment and it soon became apparent that this was telling unnecessarily on the men. Major Houston sent word to drop the packs but this word failed to reach all units.

Packs were dropped by each organization wherever they were and it is supposed a guard was left. However, on being relieved from this action it was found that all packs had been thoroughly rifled

by the French troops following the attack.

Upon passing Hautevesnes the axial lay along the Hautevesnes Courchamps road.

The French attack had been fairly rapid, but because of the gaps on both flanks, small hostile units and machine guns had enfilade fire frequently.

On the crest about 500 meters east of Hautevesnes, <sup>heavy</sup> fire was opened from the left front and flank by German machine guns on the 1st Battalion.

Losses were immediate.

These guns could not be located definitely and as Major Houston had no one pounders he had no way of combating machine guns had they been located, except by laboriously working small flanking groups to the flanks.

Companies "A" and "C" in the forward echelon suffered particularly. Both lines halted and took cover and after considerable delay Major Houston directed them to move forward.

The Battalion, losing men at every step moved to Ravine de la Folie, arriving there about 3:00 P.M. Here they were met by an enemy artillery concentration of such intensity that they were forced to dig in on the east slope of the ravine.

The machine guns from the left flank were still playing havoc, so in sheer desperation Houston directed a reconnaissance to determine their location, intending to take them at all cost if they were within a reasonably short distance and to try to shoot it out with them if they were some distance away.

Those of you who have had experience with German machine guns will remember that after they are moved back some 600 or 800 meters it is very hard to judge their distance by sound.

The reconnaissance was carried out by the attached Machine Gun Company and the enemy Machine Guns were located in the Bois de l'Orme about 900 meters away, almost due north and in position to enfilade the ravine.

Two platoons of machine guns were ordered to take position on the northwest slope of the ravine above the point where the last ravine branches.

They were directed to open fire on these woods and to try to keep fire from being neutralized.

They did as directed, but succeeded only in drawing immediate response from German one pounders on themselves and increased activities on the part of machine guns, who didn't reply to them, but opened a heavy fire through the ravine.

A few minutes later a German battery shot our machine guns out of position.

In the meantime the French advance had been halted on a ridge about 800 meters east of Courchamps and were unable to advance.

The German line now extended from Bois de l'Orme, (which had been unsuccessfully attacked by part of our 2nd Battalion) through Petret Farm and included the hill south of Monthiers.

At this time the 1st Battalion reported its position to the French who ordered it to dig in where it was.

The Germans had occupied this ravine only a few hours before and of course its location was well known to them. As a result, after the first burst of shell the Germans settled down to methodical interdiction fire which lasted until 6:00 A.M. the following morning.

This methodical shelling was varied from time to time with an intensive burst of high explosive from presumably one battery which would last for several minutes.

As a result this battalion suffered heavily and their enthusiasm was dampened materially. Why the Germans let up at 6:00 A.M. no one can say.

In the morning the 1st Battalion was advised that it would advance to Courchamps about noon. On account of losses Major Houston reorganized his companies into three platoons each and at 12:30 noon, on receipt of orders, moved to Courchamps in support of Captain Blanc's Battalion of the 133 R.I.F. which had not moved from its position 800 meters to the east of town and held there since the night before.

This battalion was flanked by fire from the woods at La Grenouillers Farm and La Ramise and could not move.

The 1st Battalion moved forward, "A" and "D" Companies in two waves from right to left, followed by "C" Company in support at 200 yards and the Machine Gun Company at 400 yards, moved to the ravine east of town.

Company "B" as a mobile reserve moved to Courchamps.



The 1st Battalion was relieved at 5:30 A.M., July 21st and marched to Braumetz.

Their casualties amounted to 20 enlisted men killed and 6 officers and 212 enlisted men wounded and missing, a total of 238 casualties out of 967 effectives of 24 per cent.

#### CRITICISMS.

The sub-division of the Divisional sector of attack into two sub-sectors separated by over a kilometer at the beginning of the attack could only be justified where one group <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ designated as the holding attack and the second group attacked enveloping the enemy. In this case some line must be designated beyond which the holding attack must not advance and the axials of attack should meet at some point well in rear of the enemy position.

From the direction of attack assigned to each group, this was not the case and as a result, each was attacking on an axial<sup>nearly</sup> parallel to the other.

The gap was covered by a liaison battalion echeloned to the rear, which does not seem to be good tactics.

The result as seen was, that the Bois de l'Orme had to be attacked by a part of Major Cook's battalion at a time when this whole unit was badly needed in the attack on Sept Bois, with the result that neither place was carried.

When it became necessary to split his battalion Major Cook turned over the part attacking the Sept Bois to his second in command and conducted the attack against Bois de l'Orme. Once committed, neither part of the battalion could render aid to the other as these

At 9:00 P.M., "A" Company relieved the left company of the French battalion in the front line.

At 3:30 A.M., July 20th, the attack was resumed after 30 minutes of artillery preparation. Company "C" and one platoon of "B" Company were assigned to the attack line so as to extend same.

The advance continued steadily to the line of La Ramise - Bois Petret when a well organized German counter attack took the right assault company on the flank causing a hasty retirement of the whole battalion to their former line 800 meters east of Courchamps.

An ~~excerpt~~ was ~~new~~ instituted by the French, to infiltrate to a point from which the German position could be rushed. This looked possible as practically all of the intervening terrain was covered with ripe grain, standing quite high.

As this movement was inaugurated long range machine gun fire was brought to bear on the edges of Bois Petret and other known positions of the somewhat exposed enemy line.

The artillery concentrated with high explosive and gas on Bois Petret.

In forming for the new attack the right flank was echeloned to the rear and at 4:00 P.M. the line moved forward. After stubborn resistance this attack went home and at 5:30 P.M. reached Petret Farm-- Bois Petret and the crest to the east, which was immediately occupied and organized.

This crest dominated the town of Mentiers and made it possible for the 1st American Corps to advance its left through this town without opposition the next day.

positions were separated by about one kilometer.

It will be remembered that Bois de l'Orme controlled the sector in which the 1st Battalion was operating, from a point a little east of Hautevesnes to and including Ravine de la Folie, and that a majority of casualties suffered by the 1st Battalion were caused by machine gun fire from these woods.

The failure of the 43rd Battalion of Chasseurs a Pieds to keep abreast of the 2nd Battalion was not due to any fault of that organization, but rather to the costly rapidity of our advance.

General Gaultier commanding the Division reported the action of the 2nd Battalion as "Being accomplished with splendid dash," but he might have added "and nothing else".

No one is to be severely criticised for this however.

The troops and officers had not received sufficient training and all officers except the battalion commander were green.

The 4th Division had received no training at home which fitted them for open warfare. Such officers and men as had received any training were hastily assigned to the 3rd Division on the eve of its departure from Camp Greene and the Division had to be rebuilt prior to its sailing some six weeks later.

After arrival in France we spent a few days in the British area and were hastily sent to the Chateau Thierry sector after the German attack through Chemin de Dames. Since arrival in this area on June 13th the division had received good instruction, but it takes time to train specialists.

We had not received enough training in new formations. The mechanism of same was fairly well understood, but the application was not. Officers and men knew little of the assistance which could be expected from our own machine guns - automatics - one pounders, or artillery, neither did we fully appreciate the limitations of these arms.

The men however, were well disciplined and the poor officers had been fairly well eliminated. Officers and men had little opportunity of being put through combat exercises employing combined arms.

Auxiliary weapons were a sort of myth which had to prove up and in the meantime, each doughboy figured that he would depend on himself.

Automatic rifles had been received only a short time before going into action. No practice could be held, and the automatic squads hardly knew how to operate their weapon.

Machine gun companies per force had to train in separate areas. About all that could be accomplished in the time allowed was to teach the machine gunner something of the technique of his arm. Infantry Battalion and Machine Gun Company Commanders did not know much of the proper tactical handling of these weapons in an offensive action. They did not seem to realize that machine guns are of little value until opposition slows up the attack and then they are of paramount importance not only for flank protection, but in saving man power in the first lines.

One pounders had just been issued and Stokes Mortars were not yet received.

The men of the rifle companies not realizing the protection



taining force only, was left fronting such positions.

All of this took time but was the correct procedure and the French saved their men. Another angle to all of this must also be figured. A Division ordinarily will operate with Brigades abreast except where very deep penetration is expected. It means that normally four battalions will attack. This is about the minimum frontage. Supposing that a battalion has to be relieved each second day. It will be seen that the Division will probably have to be taken out within four or five days, particularly as

~~the Division reserve will not be committed except in extreme cases.~~

~~Four or five days is enough for a Division when extreme oppo-~~  
sition exists, but in a normal action such as occurred on this part of the line, a Division should have lasted for several weeks at least.

It is interesting to note at this point that this same Division remained continuously in the Argonne Offensive without relief from September 25th until October 19th.

Another mistake in this action was the assignment of the Regimental Headquarters Company to a Battalion. It is probelmatical whether they did any good and they did suffer casualties.

The assignment of the whole one pounder section to the 2nd Battalion was an error of judgment. As things turned out they were of very little assistance to this battalion, while had one or more guns been attached to the 1st Battalion the machine guns located in Bois de l'Orme could and probably would have been silenced by fire from the vicinity of Courchamps.

offered and being skeptical of these weapons did what will be done in the next war.

Feeling that there was no protection offered against bullets coming from places they could not see, their idea was to close as quickly as possible on their objective, fondly hoping that when it was once taken, all their troubles would be over.

It is well they did so after all, because certainly their losses though bad enough, were probably less than had there been confusion or faltering, and the first resistance, due to the element of surprise was over quite soon.

When real resistance developed the morale gained through quickly overrunning the first positions carried them on and it was not until they had suffered a high percentage of casualties that they were stopped.

The French on the other hand must not be criticised for not keeping abreast of our attack. They were veterans and had learned better from past experience\$. We must remember that the French were low in man power. That for over a year they had been conserving <sup>their men</sup> ~~themselves~~ and by forcing the Germans to attack on large fronts were trying to wear them down to a point where there would not be such disparity in numbers.

As a consequence the French were quick to recognize small areas where machine gun resistance would be expected or where strong points were located. They properly did not attack these frontally, but maneuvered them out either by an attack in flank or by pushing by on either flank and taking them in reverse. In each case a con-

Major Houston tried to silence machine guns in position and provided with artificial cover with machine guns. This is impossible and is well worth remembering.

The manner in which the 2nd Battalion was conducted is not open to much criticism in view of the fact that the troops were new.

It is most difficult to maneuver troops to any extent when they are in action for the first time.

Had Major Cook tried to ~~move by bounds~~, or had he attempted a passage of lines - (both movements were carried out ~~separately~~ times) - the result would have been the intermingling of lines with its consequent confusion.

I think that under conditions he did the only thing possible, i.e., overran the enemy position as quickly as possible and penetrate as far as <sup>he could</sup> ~~possible~~ without regard to what is going on to the flanks.

Had he outdistanced the troops on either flank too badly he would have been held up by higher command who were certainly competent to judge.

In the 1st Battalion the formations were entirely too rigid for a unit in support, particularly between Hautevesnes and the Ravine.

This Battalion was not fighting and every thought should have been centered on two things, i.e., first, Cover, second, Distance from the attacking battalion.

Had this battalion when it first received a flank fire,

been sent forward immediately in thin lines from cover to cover or if none existed, then by short rushes losses must have been negligible.

The advance by bounds ~~by~~<sup>of</sup> fractions of each wave would have been better, but would have consumed more time. As it turned out, they wasted more time trying to locate the source of fire unsuccessfully than the latter method would have consumed.

My next criticism of Major Houston is for remaining dug in on the reverse slope of Ravine de la Folie - suffering heavily from ~~shell and artillery machine-gun fire~~ instead of moving to some posi-

Artillery employing long range fire will figure their angle of fall so as to get graze shots on a reverse slope. You can easily picture what a graze burst of high explosive will do when the angle of fall ~~of the shell~~ approaches <sup>a</sup>parallel to the angle of slope. On the other hand, if troops are located near the crest and dug in they are practically safe unless too near the crest.

Graze shots on a crest are erratic and will either as a rule pass harmlessly over the heads of troops seeking cover, or in case of burst, they will either burst on the near side of the crest or after they have passed over the heads of the line. This is due to the fact that the skyline of a crest is never absolutely symmetrical and even if it were the variations in width make it a poor aiming point or point of graze in case the battery is firing from the map.

It seems therefore that this battalion might have been in better

~~positional~~ ~~near~~ ~~the~~ ~~crest~~ ~~from~~ ~~both~~ ~~the~~ ~~artillery~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~machine~~ ~~guns~~



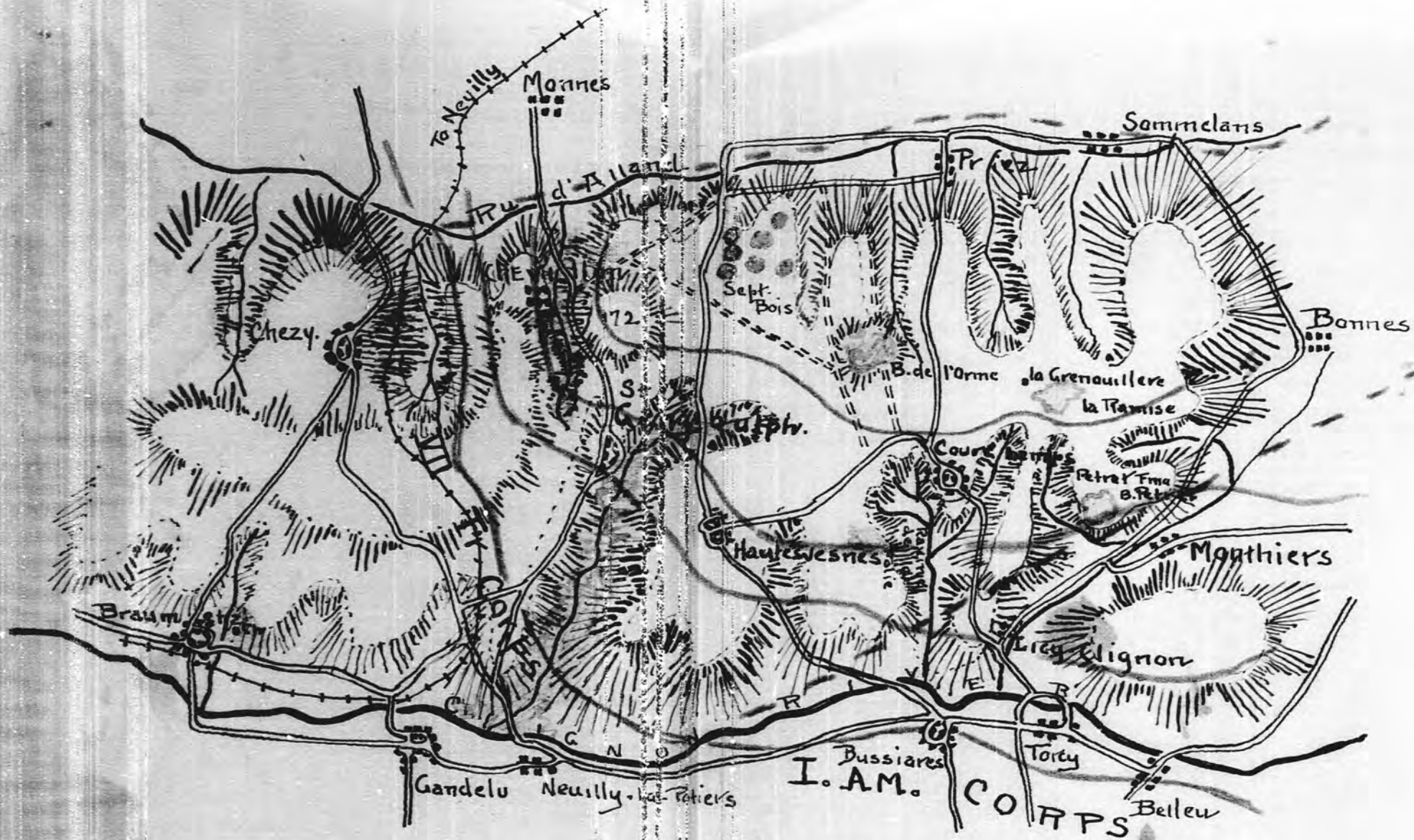
in Bois de l'Orme.

LESSONS.

1. Expect to sacrifice methodical attack to dash when employing troops in action for the first time.

2. Do not mix units of two nationalities in one sub-sector. If they have to be mixed within the Brigade, assign each sub-sector to a regiment of the same nationality. Do not even have troops of one nationality support those of another unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

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Sector of Advance  
 58<sup>th</sup> Infantry  
 Attached to 16<sup>th</sup> Ar. Div.  
 July-18<sup>th</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> 1918  
 2-5  
 Schmitt

