

Some names I remember. This picture was taken by the Signal Corps at the time of the fake machine gun show



- | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---|--------------|----|-------------------|
| 1 | Major Garretson | 4 | Lt. Grant | 8 | Lt. Cunningham |
| 2 | Lt. Debeque | 5 | Capt. Wilson | 9 | Lt. Holtzclaw |
| 3 | Lt. Smith | 6 | Lt. Burwell | 10 | Lt. Hallowell |
| | | 7 | Lt. Ellison | 11 | The Lt. I call |
| | | | | | St. th on page 44 |

See bottom of page 46

U. S. ARMY FIELD MESSAGE

TIME FILED	NO.	SENT BY	TIME	RECEIVED BY	TIME	CHECK
THESE SPACES FOR SIGNAL OPERATORS ONLY						

From: HAKE

At: P.C. I will be with E 320

Date: Oct 11 Hour: 4:00 No. _____

HOW SENT

To: A.D.C. 319th and Heyman

1. This battalion will attack at 7
 a.m. in the direction of Canal. Troop starts
 645 at 1000 yds from the canal. Troop
 will advance at rate of 100 yards
 in 12 minutes.

12th West Co. on a D Lt. Company from 1160 yds
 on left flank

32nd Co A Lt. Whistler on the
 on left flank

3. E Co 320 will be in the close up
 of front square some of the have a 120

Company No. 1 Company 1st Battalion 3rd U.S. Regt

Reference Map AYETTE involved sheet.

1. No. 2. Platoon A Coy, 21st American Inf. Bn will relieve Platoon of above Coy in the line on the night of 9th 10th
2. Two (2) guides of No. 2 Platoon will meet the incoming platoon at BLAIRVILLE DUMP (R. 2. 5. 1.) at 7th 9th inst. & furnish local and necessary base guides.
3. The transport lines will change in a guide (mounted) to new No. 2. Platoon's dumps at the BAC. du. 300 at 7 30th inst. The guide will contact the lumber to be used in the line of the new line with guide from the transport lines. The transport lines will be used on the night being used. The guide will be used to increase the transport lines.
4. The transport lines will be used in BLAIRVILLE. Dumps will be used in the line of the new line.
5. After the night of 9th 10th inst. the transport lines will be used in the line of the new line.
6. Lieut. F. A. Burns will be in command of the transport lines at 8 30 10 1919.

"What's a sub-commandant". The adjutant, like nearly everyone else in the battalion, had been a civilian a year earlier. We had learned a new vocabulary; eating was messing, the toilet, a latrine, and policing meant picking up cigarette butts, not hauling in drunks. Still every once in a while something new came up. But that never gave us pause, the first 2nd Lieutenant that came in sight was told to do the job. And that worked out all right; the 2nd Lieutenant, by virtue of his rank, was credited with a certain amount of ignorance and never felt embarrassed in asking questions.

The order to appoint a sub-commandant had been sent to us from a very august British headquarters. We were the 315th Machine Gun Bn., a part of the 80th Division. The division had been shipped to France in May 1917 without arms or equipment. The allies had stopped the German's last putsch a month or so earlier and prevented them from reaching the channel, but it had been done at a great cost in men. We were to form part of the reserve line if there was another breakthrough and while so doing receive further training and equipment from the British.

The order said the sub-commandant would report to a machine gun and gas school that had been organized by the British for instruction of the Americans. The school was at a farm called Haute Tangrie about fifteen kilometers north of Paris Plague. I reported to a major only a few years my senior.

"I am Lt. Cunningham, the sub-commandant, here, and will you tell me what a sub-commandant is?"

"Oh, it's a cushy job" he said. "You will be in command of the Americans who come to the school. You will indent for supplies, your office will be in the kitchen and you will sleep in one of the tents in the orchard".

It was a job proper for a Major but I got by with it during the six weeks life of the school. All the British officers were men who had known battle but most of the instruction was carried on by non-commissioned officers. It was here I began to notice a marked difference between our army and theirs; I might say between a democratic and imperial government. In our army, all the company grade officers were either National Guard or "ninety day wonders" like myself. We had to be familiar with the most minute details of training and transmit our knowledge to drafted men with no military background.

This was not long after the turn of the century and in Britain the social ideas of the nineteenth century still prevailed. Their officers were chosen from the Public School class and their job was to provide inspiration and leadership, and the record shows they did this magnificently. For the instruction of enlisted men they depended on non-commissioned officers. These were men of no small stature and I have seen them dressing down sub-alterns. They did it in guarded language, but pinned ears back nonetheless.

Among the British officers there was one I shall never forget. I don't remember his name, and shall have to refer to him as Major X. He was in his late thirties, or early forties, and has spent most of his life in the army in India. To me he was a character out of Kipling. He was not the active head of the school, but all the British officers, including the head of the school, paid obvious deference to him and he sat at the head of the table in the mess. He must have been a person of some wealth because he kept a polo pony at the school. He was very kind to me and tried to teach me to play polo. While I liked to ride, I was never very good at it and could not prevent the stick from coming in front of the pony and getting tangled with his forelegs. After several lessons I refused to go further. I was afraid I would break a cannon bone or otherwise ruin a good pony.

My tent under the trees in the orchard was very comfortable and one morning as I swung my feet to the grass at the sound of the bugle I saw the ground crack under the edge of the tent. Shortly another crack and then another, all in my direction. I was fascinated. Finally the mole hit some irregularity in the ground and surfaced and I realized I had lost a lot of valuable time. Should I shave and be late for breakfast, or forego shaving and be on time for breakfast? I decided the latter was the less of two evils.

Before World War 1 a safety razor cost \$5.00, then a day's pay for most men. The working day began at an earlier hour and it was the rule rather than the exception to see unshaven faces in the morning.

On my way to the mess hall I met a British officer about my age.

"Good morning Mr. Cunningham. Oh, I see you haven't shaved".

"Naw. Come on, let's eat".

Most of the officers were seated when we arrived at the mess hall and Major X was there. He greeted me with the usual "Good morning Mr. Cunningham". Then, with a sharp look, "oh, I see you haven't shaved".

Instead of explaining what had happened I took the air of injured innocence and told him it was my practice to shave at any time in the day I found most convenient, not necessarily in the morning.

"My word".

I felt like a heel and have since shaved in the morning, often with just a canteen of water. And I found that the shaven have some sort of psychological advantage over the unshaven.

When I was about to leave the school I asked the commandant to lend me the tent I had been using and he agreed. In our outfit Captains and Lieutenants slept in pup tents on the ground. This tent, big enough to hold three bunks, was a luxury. I promised to return it when we were ordered south, but there was no opportunity.

When I got back to the battalion the arms and transport had been issued - all British and quite different from American. The guns were carried in limbered wagons; the rear part with two guns, water and belted ammunition, and the limber with the spare ammunition. Each wagon was hauled by four mules with the drivers mounted on the near mules. I was given the job of training the company transport. All the riding horses had been assigned when I got back and I got the last pick. Horses, like people, have personalities and I hated this beast the first time I saw it, and I know it hated me. It had a Roman nose, showed the whites of its eyes and carried its ears flat back on the head. The first time I rode it it tried to throw me off against a tree.

One of the battalion officers, a Lt. Sherfy, a few years older than the rest of us, had been a cowboy in his early years and claimed there was not a horse he could not control. One day he borrowed my devil to ride to town. Both Sherfy and the horse landed in the hospital. I felt badly about Sherfy but I was glad to get that beast out of the company. The replacement was a tall black animal with a trot like a battering ram. But I liked it, and I think it liked me. At least, it would always put its ears forward when I came to the picket line.

It was while exercising the transport that I began to suspect something that later experience confirmed. That is that all the British are divided in two classes; Staff Captains and others. I got along with the "others"

beautifully but every time I encountered a Staff Captain we tangled. Riding along a road, everything going as it should, nobody else in sight; but let one of the teams become fractious and the following wagons begin closing up on it and sure enough a British Brigadier and his Staff Captain appear out of a side road. The Captain comes riding over and tells you the vehicles must be kept twenty paces apart. The fool sees you are in trouble but a fool must have his officious moments. You tell him you know that and the drivers know it so maybe he should explain it to the mules, after all they are English mules you know.

It seems every time I had a job to do on my own, one of these fellows would appear out of nowhere. They were as officious as Grand Dukes, but their bosses, the Brigadiers on the other hand were very approachable. I remember once complaining to a Brigadier and asking whether his Captain had a right to give me a strafing.

"Ho Ho, I suppose he has many"

"Has he ever had it from a Frenchman"

"Ho Ho, may be he has never needed it"

I spoke to our Battalion Commander about these happenings and he told me to tell the next one to go straight to Hell and he would stand back of me. Unfortunately this was late in our stay with the British and I never had the opportunity.

Someone in high command had very wisely decided it would be best to season us to combat by sending us in the lines in small detachments alongside experienced British troops. I was ordered to take our first platoon in and we were assigned to a company of the Coldstream Guards.

Darkness had fallen when we got out of the lorries and lined up back of the guide that had been sent for us. Our way led over open fields and through shallow ditches. The burnt earth smells of battle fields began to reach out to us and the flickers in the clouds on the horizon became points of light; Very Lights, bursting shells, Yellow Rockets, Red Rockets, Green rockets, nervous fingers on the triggers of machine guns and rifles. A glorious Fourth of July celebration all night and every night. Man is not a nocturnal animal and darkness is his enemy. We were going to play for keeps now. The targets would shoot back at us.

We expected to find the British as tense as we were. Instead we found them placidly going about the business of making themselves as comfortable as possible.

This trench system had been constructed before the last German offensive while it was then far back of the front. It was quite different from those jam packed ditches used in the beginning of the war. Defense was now in depth and the very front line trenches were thinly manned outposts, five hundred yards or more from the trenches designated as the main line of resistance.

There were no long straight lines, but rather a series of connected redoubts. You could never walk more than a few yards without making a right angle turn. They were wide enough to trap

a tank and deep enough to permit a man to walk upright without fear of being observed. A firing step cut in the forward wall brought a man's shoulders up to the parapet.

Off duty men were sheltered in dugouts that ranged from fox holes cut in the wall of the trench to rather elaborate affairs. Our sector was over some chalk caves and a twenty foot stairway led down to one that housed my platoon and some of the British. Life in the trenches must have been rough in the Winter, but this was Summer and it wasn't too bad. It was a lazy sort of existence. Two times in the day everyone was on the job. They were called "Stand-To". The first began with the first rays of light in the morning and lasted until sunup. The other began at sundown and lasted until darkness. At night you were not permitted to remove your shoes or any part of your clothing but in the daylight you could do much as you please within certain limits.

This was counted a "quiet" sector and in the light of future experience it was but it did not seem so to us at the time. There would be an occasional burst of machine gun fire and more frequent artillery fire. It was here we learned about the Doppler effect without ever having heard the phrase. A shell makes an angry rushing noise that can be heard for a few seconds before it arrives. If the pitch of this noise suddenly lowers, the shell has gone over your head to somewhere in the back area, and perhaps they are living too soft back there anyway. If the pitch changes gradually the shell is off to your flank and that too is the business of somebody else. But if the pitch does not change, lookout.

Hit the ground. A peculiar thing about high explosive shell is that you can often be quite close to it without being hit. There is a delayed detonation and the shell is allowed to penetrate the ground before going off. This creates a pattern of dispersion somewhat like an inverted cone.

A few months earlier the British had suffered tremendous losses and only prevented the Germans from reaching the coast by the most heroic effort. They had been in this thing four years and all conversation finally got around to the question of when it would end. Not How it would end, but When it would end.

The leader of the Coldstream Guard machine gun platoon, Lt. Connelly, had been left behind to check my indirect firing data and act as my guide and mentor. He was very helpful but, when the conversation was not about the business at hand he had one subject, his hope for a "blighty", a wound serious enough to take him back across the channel for recovery. I would suggest that such a wound might maim him for life, but he would sell for that too. There was no end to the war in sight. A wound was the only way out. Connelly was not alone in this. It was just that he had it worse than the others - much worse. One afternoon we visited the Infantry company commander for tea. (Yes, there was tea time in the English trenches when conditions permitted.) In the trench just outside the command post there was a bulletin board and the day before a shell had burst nearby and splattered the board with holes of various sizes. Some humorist had put a sign at the top of the board BLIGHTIES FOR SALE and a price mark under each hole. The big ones cost a pound and prices ranged down to a little splinter that would go for a sixpence.

After a day or so I too became a little bored and suggested we try an indirect controlled machine gun shoot handled like the artillery. Picardy is a gentle rolling country and about two hundred yards in front of our gun positions there was a small knoll that masked out view of the enemy positions in our sector, although we were under observation from enemy positions to the right. My plan was to calculate the initial target from the map and then move the fire about by telephone from direct observation on the knoll. Connelly said it could be done if he could persuade the artillery to run a telephone line to the gun position.

I suspect the British knew all along it would not work but they were bent on humoring the Americans. At any rate by the next afternoon everything was set up and we started for the Observation Post, "O Pip" it was called. We had gone but a short way when we ran into a little mud at the bottom of the trench. Connelly climbed out and walked on the ground. I didn't mind the mud.

The O-Pip was entered by a narrow trench that also held the telephone lines. Inside you found a large room manned by an Artillery Officer and two signalmen. There was a switchboard, tables, lights and maps. A gunnysack curtain

stretched the full length of the room about two feet from the wall that faced the enemy. When you stepped behind the curtain you saw the heart of the thing. At about the height of a man's eyes there was a three inch opening that ran the full length of the room. The German positions could be seen over a wide angle. A little later I got a chance to look at the O-Pip from the front and it was so artfully constructed there was nothing to distinguish it from the rest of the pock-marked terrain.

We were not allowed to use tracer ammunition because it damaged the gun barrels too much for indirect firing and I had to depend on the bullets kicking up enough dust to determine where they were going. This was a failure. I could see nothing of them. After a half dozen bursts the artillery officer suggested we had better stop or we would bring retaliation. I gave the order to cease firing and unload the guns. The experiment was over.

After leaving the O-Pip Connelly suggested we go down to the front lines. When we got to the foremost trench Connelly hopped out and stood on the parapet. I stood open mouthed looking up at him listening for the whine of a German bullet.

Nothing happened. Now this just was not as it should be. Everything I had read about the war led me to believe that if you put your head over the parapet you could expect to have your hair parted by a bullet. Connelly was exposed down to his feet and within easy rifle range of the German positions. After a few moments of further negligence on the part of the German army I stood up alongside, not quite so high.

Jutting out from the other German trenches there was a work that reached to within a hundred and fifty yards of where we stood. Connelly pointed to it and said

"You see that trench over there"

"Yes"

"Let's go over and see whether there is anyone in it".

"Why that, that" I stammered "is supposed to be a German trench, isn't it"?

"Yes, but I don't think there is anybody there".

We had not seen a British soldier on our trip down from the O-Pip and it is likely their trenches were as lightly held.

It is a gross understatement to say that I had no interest in finding out. After a moment of trying to think up some excuse that would not cause a loss of face, I agreed.

"Connelly, you know more about this than I do and if you want to go I will go with you", I managed.

Before the reader counts me a complete fool let him remember that youth, groping for a set of values, has an inordinate fear of the scorn of his companions and I was the first American officer this Irishman had met.

"RightO. But we should have something to fight with. You go around that way and see whether you can find any bombs and I'll go this way".

We had started out intending to go only as far as the O-Fip and were bareheaded and carried no sidearms. If I had found any grenades I would have buried them.

When I rejoined Connelly he was standing on the parapet again and, thank God, had found no grenades. He gazed at the German trench for a few moments and said regretfully, "It's getting close to Stand-To and we had better go back". Then he brightened and said "We will come down here tomorrow morning and go over".

My soul was troubled on the trip back. This thing was so senseless. Should I keep my word tomorrow or just tell this fellow he is nuts.

A trunk in our attic holds my most treasured trophy of the wars. It is a dirty yellow envelope. Printed in bold letters across the top are the words ON HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE. The upper left hand corner carries the word "Secret" and in a scrolled handwriting it is

addressed simply to "Lt. Cunningham, A.E.F.". Inside, still carrying a drop of wax from the candle I read it by that night, is a copy of an order sending the second platoon Co. A, 315th Machine Gun Bn. in to relieve the first platoon, my platoon.

Allah be praised. There would be no tomorrow morning in the trenches with Connelly. And I knew that Pud Holtzclaw, the leader of the second platoon would squash any crazy ideas with his ready laugh.

About a week later I was sitting at a table in an estaminet in the little town of Doullens when a British officer came in and sat down across the table from me. It was the Artillery officer from the O-Pip. This was how the conversation opened.

"Oh hellow there. Didn't I see you in the lines a few days ago"

"Yes"

"You were with the fellow Connelly, weren't you?"

"Yes"

"He is a bit of a damn fool. Isn't he".

About two weeks after this Lt. Alfriend and I were ordered to another school. Schools were run for all types of instruction and I have forgotten what this one was for because we never received the instruction.

We arrived in the afternoon and about 11:00 o'clock that night the school commandant came to our tent and told us our division was moving south in the morning. We were the only American officers in the class and were to meet our battalion at 7.15 hours the next morning - a lorry would pick us up at 5 hours

I awoke a few hours later and tried to feel for my watch and couldn't find it. Dick was stirring and I asked him what time it was. He said "My God, Kunny, my uniform is gone". I got up and mine was missing too. We got the commandant out of bed and he raised some soldiers to look for the uniforms. They were found in a field next to the tents along with a lot of British uniforms. Dick and I each had about five hundred francs and a watch. Dick's watch was gone but they left the francs. My francs were gone but they overlooked the watch. Five hundred francs were worth about a hundred dollars at that time.

This was an awkward end to my otherwise pleasant dealings with the British in WWI.

When I rejoined the battalion they were marching to a loading area. We moved by train via Paris to an area south of the St. Mihiel Salient.

At this point I should introduce to the reader some people we will meet later in the tale. Just before we started south to St. Mihiel Major Rothwell, the only Regular Army officer in the battalion, had been transferred to some job in division headquarters and Captain Garretson of the 314th Mg. Bn., a New York lawyer, had been promoted to Major and assigned to the command of our battalion. His big feet and long legs entitled him to the sobriquet of "Turkey Legs" in the ranks.

The most outstanding character was my company commander, 1st Lt. W.A.E. DeBeque. Thirty years old, he was like an uncle to the rest of us who averaged about twenty three. Educated in Mexico in the French language he spoke French like a native.

In civil life DeBeque was a hardware dealer in Carbondale, Colo. While in France he had the Carbondale weekly newspaper sent by mail. It was the only English newspaper we could lay our hands on, so we all read it, beginning at the mast head which we read aloud. "Carbondale, the home of health, wealth, happiness and prosperity, where the sun shines three hundred and sixty five days a year and thousands of opportunities await the ambitious". It would have made a Texan blush.

Then there was 1st Lt. Shartle, slow speaking, tall and handsome, the second in command of the company, from Philadelphia, if my memory is right.

The 2nd Lieutenants were Percival Hallowell (better call him "Dick"), lightly built he could not understand why I would never miss a meal. Taylor S. Holtzclaw from Hampton, Va., "Pud" to the rest of us, was a fat boy with an infectious laugh. We they called "Kunny" only because Cunningham had an extra syllable.

Lts. Sherfy and Alfriend you have met. They were officers from other companies in the battalion

St. Mihiel

The Meuse River flows in a northerly direction and enters the sea near the mouth of the Rhine. It has a broad valley in which there is a railroad line and shipping canal. At its headwater the railroad joins the Moselle river which flows into the Rhine. The capture of this transportation complex would determine the outcome of the war. At least, that is the way the Germans and French felt about it.

The City of Verdun lies on the Meuse River and a few kilometers north of the city there is a prominence that gained infamy by the name of Dead Man's Hill. It is now shown on French maps as Le Mort Homme. Its north slope is fertilized by the bones and blood of thousand and thousands of French and German soldiers who through the four years of the war tried to defend and take it. It was never taken.

Twenty miles south along the river there is a little town called St. Mihiel. The Germans held a salient that reached St. Mihiel and the French had never succeeded in driving them back. Now it was decided that the first step in defeating the Germans would be the recapture of this salient. It had a north-south arm of about ten miles and an east-west arm of about twenty five miles.

Up to this time the American troops had seen action only as part of British or French higher units. Now we were to function as an independent army. The American First Army was assigned the pivotal position, attacking north on the east half of the salient.

The job of the 80th Division was the Army reserve and this meant we would have nothing to do but rest for a day at least and after breakfast I wandered off to a nearby village to look it

over. I was gone for an hour or so and when I got back DeBeque greeted me with "Where the hell have you been. We have been looking all over for you."

"Down in the village. What's coming off here"?

"We and the 320th Inf. have been attached to the French Army. We are moving out by trucks. Your platoon is almost loaded. Better get your stuff in a hurry".

At this point I should explain how a well dressed 2nd Lt. of Machine Guns going into combat looks. Over my uniform, a trench coat with detachable linings, on top of my overseas cap, a steel helmet. Around my neck there was suspended a gas mask, binoculars, prismatic compass and map case. The web belt forms a harness with the pack on the back, and in the pack I carried a towel, soap, tooth brush, socks, mess kit, shaving kit, flash light, and sometimes a candy bar. The belt was adorned with a clinometer, a device for measuring the angle of elevation of the machine guns, a pistol, two clips of ammunition, a canteen, first aid kit and emergency ration.

In my hand I carried a walking stick. This is a very useful device for prodding around in the dark. We had picked up the habit from the British and nearly all the officers in our division carried one. It became a symbol of authority.

We got out of the trucks near a bridge over a marsh. The bridge was too lightly constructed to take the trucks, so the men walked across and I was placed in charge of the detail to unload the ammunition. When this was finished I crossed and found the men eating. Shartle came to me and said "We are expecting the Germans to attack right over that hill. You are attached to Co. A, 320th. Come over and meet the Captain".

The Captain said they were going to move out right away. The men had been fed and I put a sandwich in my pocket and walked over to my platoon and gave the order to fall in and prepare to advance. DeBeque saw this activity and asked me where I was going. I explained what Shartle and the rifle company commander had told me. DeBeque thought there was something fishy about the whole thing and decided we would march as a company.

The French had not provided us with maps and we didn't know where we were. Our orders were to move to a certain area, but the names of French villages meant nothing without a map. We could hear artillery fire at a great distance. What actually happened was that the Germans, learning of the heavy concentration of American troops at the base of the salient, decided the point was no longer defensible and had moved out the day before.

We marched about twelve miles that day, everyone, including the company commander, carrying an extra box of ammunition. I believe we were the only outfit that got where we were supposed to go and that was because DeBeque, speaking French like a native, inquired directions from every French soldier we met.

Toward evening we bivouaced near some German dugouts and one of our cooks made the first capture. He was exploring the dugouts when about twenty Germans jumped out at him with their arms in the air. He said he was scared speechless until he understood they wanted to surrender.

And that, for us, was the battle of St. Mihiel. The next day we returned to the First Army.

MEUSE - ARGONNE

The final battle of World War 1, of which the Meuse Argonne was the American sector, did not have the lasting effect on the affairs of men that did those of Creasey's FIFTEEN DECISIVE BATTLES, but from the standpoint of number of men engaged it was the greatest battle the world has known. We now began our preparation for that battle.

The French heroic defense of Dead Man's Hill had squeezed the area occupied by the Germans into a sort of salient. The line flexed through the years but roughly it ran from Verdun west to within about a hundred miles of Paris and then north through Amiens to the English Channel.

The Roman Legions lived off the country they occupied but a modern army consumes a tremendous amount of stuff and must have uninterrupted connection with its base of supplies. Fifty miles north of Verdun lies the town of Sedan, a large railroad complex with lines running east and west and north and south. If Sedan could be taken, a large part of the German army could not be supplied. An Allied advance far enough down the Meuse river to make Sedan untenable would force a German retirement. That was the mission of the American Army.

For about a week we marched in the night and bivouaced in the woods during daylight. Every effort was made to prevent the enemy from learning of this great concentration of force and apparently they did not until it was too late. About September 23rd we reached the final bivouac area about two kilometers south of the lines. Here we got our first issue of Colt pistols, filled with cosmoline of course. I had worked with Colt pistols

but there were only four or five others in the company who had handled them. We formed classes and with rags and cleaning oil got them in shape to be used. A sergeant was glad to trade his Colt for my Smith and Wesson revolver.

Pud Holtzclaw had been sent off to a school somewhere and missed the opening phases of the battle. In his place we had a new 2nd Lt., whose name I do not remember because he was not with us very long. We shall call him Jones, though that was not his name I am sure. The five of us were sitting in my tent when a man arrived with a message for DeBeque; the only thing unusual about this was that the man was not from our battalion, the normal channel of communication. In addition to being company commander, DeBeque had some sort of hush-hush job at Brigade, intelligence, counter intelligence, or his fluency with the French language. I never inquired.

DeBeque read the communication and, after the messenger had gone, said we were going to pull out of here and attack in the vicinity of Metz. Later, when the others had left and DeBeque and I were alone, I asked him what it meant. He said it meant nothing but to get the story around. The staff of the First Army can never be given enough credit for the secret assembly of so many troops in the area. If the Germans had known of it they could have reduced our effectiveness.

There was no sleep for anyone the night of September 25th. We would move into position. DeBeque had some job at Brigade and would rejoin us at the kick-off point. Shartle was to take the transport with the guns and ammunition aboard to the same place. I would march the company to a road junction, where we would

meet the 1st Bn., 320th Inf. The transport and the company moved on different roads.

That march will continue in my memory. We were alone on the road and there was none of the chatter you might expect on a short route march. Each of us lived with his own thoughts. I looked up at the Great Dipper, which seemed to shine especially bright that night, and wondered how many of us would again see the stars after this night. Some of us would not.

We had been marching for about an hour when out of the stillness I heard the hoof beats of a madly galloping horse in our rear. When it reached the head of the column, a voice said

"Is that you Kunny".

"Yes"

"Have you seen the transport".

"My God Shartle, you were to have the transport".

Shartle was almost in tears. "There were other transports on the road and the column got halted. I rode up front to see what was holding us and when I got back I couldn't find our transport."

Shartle was so emotionally upset that, even though he was my senior, I gave him orders. "You keep looking for the transport. I will keep my rendezvous with Major Holt and we will work it out someday."

As we approached the designated road junction I saw Major Holt's Bn. arriving too. I halted the company and double timed over to meet the Major and explain the situation. He told me to pull my company in front of the battalion and if our guns were not there when we arrived at the assembly point he would get

us the guns of the regimental machine gun company. Shartle later found the transport and when we arrived at the kick-off point the guns were there.

A deep, well lighted dugout had been assigned the company as a temporary command post and here we received our maps and battle orders. It might be well to explain to the reader how a great attack against fortified trenches was organized.

First, there is the Line of Departure, the line that delineates the front trenches of friendly troops. Roughly, perpendicular to this line, are the lines that mark the unit boundaries, divisions, regiments, etc., all marked on the map with conventional signs. These lines do not bisect hills, small woods or other tactical objectives; they are the problems of the troops on one flank or the other. It is very necessary to keep within the boundaries because otherwise you may become the victims of friendly fire.

Roughly paralleling the Line of Departure and several kilometers into the enemy position are two other lines. The nearest of these is called the Corps Objective, and second, the Army Objective. Divisions do not go beyond the Corps Objective without corps orders, and corps do not go beyond the Army Objective without army orders. The reason for this is that the infantry are now out of effective support of corps or army artillery and it is necessary to bring closer to the front units of supply, medical, prisoner collection, etc.

Our division, and I believe all the other eight divisions in the initial phase of the attack, were deployed in

great depth. One brigade in front of the other. In the attack brigade both regiments abreast. Within the regiment, one battalion in the assault, one in support and one in reserve.

Our company was supporting the assault battalion of the 320th Inf. This battalion was attacking with two companies in the assault and two in support. My platoon was to support the left assault company, and Dick Hallowel the right assault company. Jones was with the support companies.

The rest of the night was spent in studying the maps and figuring our magnetic azimuths, etc. At last H hour was approaching and we five shook hands and wished each other luck. It was the last time I saw Shartle or Jones. They were both hit before the day was done.

When I rejoined my platoon it was still dark but the starlight had given way to a dense fog. The fog was a blessing for the attacking force and it stayed with us for several hours. Visibility was scarcely one hundred feet. La Mort Homme was off to our right, but we could not see it.

The artillery, which had begun its preparation at 2:30 A.M., now reached its crescendo. Three thousand pieces of artillery supported the American First Army and there was never a single moment without the angry swish of a dozen projectiles overhead. Lower down and more intimate, the zing of machine gun bullets. The Ride of the Valkries played in steel and high explosives.

I lit a cigar and gave the order "Prepare to advance", which meant to pick up the machine guns, tripods, ammunition, etc. Then "follow me".

Two jobs were of immediate importance; first to keep the platoon within our own corridor, and second to prevent the men from bunching up. The rifle companies had kicked off about a hundred yards in advance of our position and were out of sight in the dense fog. The steel carried on my person made the compass readings unreliable and I had to try to recognize terrain features shown on the map and guide the heavily burdened soldiers to the best paths around obstacles.

Eons of man's ancestry have bred in him the instinct to group together in time of danger. Fighting with tooth and claw, or club and sword, was best done in compact groups. With the advent of explosive missiles it became imperative to spread out. We moved in four single file columns, called in military parlance, A Line of Squad Columns. If left to themselves, the columns would tend to merge and the rear close in on the front. The platoon sergeant and I had to constantly look out for this.

Twelve riflemen from the reserve battalion of the 320th had been assigned to our company as additional ammunition carriers. One of the four assigned to my platoon became a sort of self appointed body guard for me. We moved well in advance of the rest of the platoon and, when we found a German dugout, he would yell down "Come on out you Krauts". If there was no response, and there never was, he would release a grenade and toss it in the dugout.

After about an hour I saw Dick Hallowell's platoon on my right. We exchanged grins and said "Bon War". After all we had been in the Picardy Sector, the St. Mihiel and now an hour in what was certain to be one of the world's great battles and no one had been hurt. Maybe all the stuff about battles was just newspaper talk.

Later I seemed to be drawn to something that was happening on my right. I walked over and began to see dimly through the fog two German soldiers with their hands in the air and staring at something in front of them with fear and horror. There was something electrical about their fear. I seemed to charge through the fog. As I moved closer I saw what they were looking at; an American soldier advancing toward them with a gleaming white bayonet at the thrust.

How thin is the veneer of civilization? Few things bring up that question more than the psychosis that affects a people at war. I don't mean the soldier, but the folks back home. There was currently a "joke" that filled me with disgust. I have forgotten the punch line but two German soldiers are sent back under a sergeant and he returns a few minutes later with a warm pistol saying they tried to escape. It seemed hilariously funny to gentlemen who would never be in danger of taken prisoners of war.

Then there was the propaganda mill. One story was about a trainload of Belgian children, each with the right hand cut off. Shortly after WW 11, the author of that one, an Englishman, admitted it was pure fiction. Another tale generally believed was that the Germans in retreat chained their soldiers to the machine guns covering the retreat.

Hardly a day went by that I did not see some German machine gun nests silenced by our people. With most there was a dead soldier - none of them chained.

I reached the German soldiers a few steps in advance of the American soldier. We four were alone in the world; the fog surrounded us. The pistol in my holster was a more lethal weapon, but it was the bayonet that terrified them. I talked with the American for a few minutes, asked him what outfit he was with and saw he was quite collected. Then I told him to take the prisoners back to a certain road the Military Police were patrolling and they would pick them up. One could feel the relief of the poor skinny Germans.

When one is up all night the clock readings of the following day have no significance, so I don't know what time it was when the fog lifted, but shortly thereafter there was a call from the front for machine guns. I ran forward and met DeBeque. He pointed to a small prominence and said "The Germans have just retreated in a mass over that hill. Split your platoon. Send one section around to the right of those woods and take the other over the hill. You will find plenty targets."

I was near the top of the hill when a shell exploded at the rear of my section. I turned and saw a man drop. The ideal officer would have continued to the front looking for targets. I considered that for a second and decided to hell with it and double timed back to the man on the ground. He said "I'll be all right Lieutenant; just hit in the ass". I said "They see you over there and you will be picked up".

As I ran forward three shells hit at the front of my section. Two men were killed; another with his chest exposed was suffering horribly. My thought was what I would give to be able to let him have a dose of morphine. A fourth man had several wounds in his left arm and leg.

There were no targets, and the guns would be terribly exposed firing from the hill, so I sent the section back to the reverse slopes, keeping three men with me until they had moved the man with the arm and leg wounds to a fox hole right at the top of the hill and collected the first aid kits from the dead men.

I had been working with him for a few minutes when a face appeared over the top of the hill. It was Dick Hallowell. "Thank God, Kunny, I thought you were killed". The man began crying that he wanted to relieve himself. Dick, full of sympathy for the man said "You go right ahead". I said "Get the hell out of here Dick. How do you think I can wash my hands". There was one wound near the groin and I kept begging the man to hold off until I had it covered.

Later a machine gun began firing from a position right over the fox hole. I waited until the burst had ended and said "Get that gun off to the flank. I have a wounded man here and don't want to draw fire". After another burst, I yelled "this is Lt. Cunningham talking. Get that gun off to the side". Another burst and I was furious. The gun couldn't be more than three yards from me and I had talked while it was silent.

In front of the fox holes there was a shallow trench and I had been sitting at the bottom of this trench while patching the wounded man. I started to get up to raise hell with somebody

It was then that I noticed pieces of stone being knocked out of an outcropping over the foxhole. There was no gun above me. I was on the receiving end of the machine gun fire. There was a small parapet in the back of the trench and I was safe as long as I was sitting down. I sat down and continued my job. The enemy machine gunner quit before I was through and I lost no time in scampering out and over the hill.

The other section of my platoon had fared no better. They lost four men to artillery fire and one gun ruined by holes in the water jacket.

I had spent so much time with the wounded man, the first man who saw me when I got over the hill seemed surprised and asked me where I had been hit. I explained that the blood on my trench coat was from another man.

It was here I learned about Shartle and Jones. They had been hit in widely separated parts of the field, both a good distance from where we were. The news came by a telepathy known in the army as Latrine Rumors. Latrine Rumors covered all sorts of subjects and I had long since learned they are worthy of great credence.

Nothing that happened the rest of that day lays in my memory. Evening found us in a woods with the 1st. Bn. 320th where I begged enough food from their ration parties to feed our men. Our own kitchen detail had fallen down somehow. I was the only officer left with the company. For all I knew, the other two had been hit, but it turned out later DeBeque had some mysterious job with brigade and Hallowell had gone off to try to get the kitchen straightened out. They did not find and rejoin us until the afternoon of the next day.

I reorganized the company into two platoons, placed a sergeant in charge of each and then lay down to a sound, well needed sleep.

We were about with the first faint morning light. The day before we had great difficulty in keeping up with the rifle companies. Machine gun and tripods are carried on the shoulders of the men and frequent stops are necessary. Thinking we would continue the attack in the morning, I decided to get a running start on the riflemen by moving my company down to the forward edge of the woods. There was no sign of the enemy and in scouting around to find the best gun positions I found a German officers belt hanging on a post. Attached to it were field glasses and a luger pistol. I gave the pistol to a sergeant and still have the field glasses. About this time I found I was going around without a helmet. In going to sleep the night before I had tilted my helmet back to rest my head in it and, when I got up, forgot it. I borrowed a helmet from a dead man without any compunctions.

The sun had just cleared the hills on our right when the enemy opened up on the woods we were in with a machine gun barrage. They must have had a company of twelve guns in the show. We all scampered for whatever shelter the convolutions in the ground would offer. I found a miniature valley about two feet deep and four feet wide. Two men were in it, the second between the legs of the first. I sat down between the legs of the second and our runner between my legs.

There was no true edge to the woods. The field in front had laid fallow for the four years of the war and small new trees and scrub melted the woods into the

field. Though the noise of the bullets hitting the trees was very deceptive it didn't take us long to decide the fire was directed higher up on the hill than we were.

This had been going on for a minute or so when one of our guns on the right opened fire. I climbed out of my shallow protection, crawled over on my belly and pulled the gunners leg. "Stop firing" I ordered.

"Why not Lieutenant. They are firing at us."

"You will bring their fire down on us and I you alive when their infantry attacks".

It would be nice to be able to say my decision was solely tactical. It wasn't. I was terrified and the soldier had more courage than I. None the less it was a sound decision. I envisioned the enemy action as a preparation for counter attack and my eight guns would have made that expensive. The Germans certainly did not know we were there or they would have directed their fire lower down on us. We had no trenches. Our only defense was concealment. We had to pretend "there ain't nobody here but us chickens".

After an age of twenty minutes the fire stopped as suddenly as it began. The Germans had a neat way of doing business that was sometimes helpful to their enemies. British officers had told me they often knew the exact minute each day certain road junctions would be covered by fire.

The Germans did not counterattack but soon after the barrage there was some moving about among the infantry to our rear

I found a captain and asked him what was coming off.

"We are falling back".

"What are we to do".

"You will stay here"

"But I have all that is left of our company here. I expected you to attack. If we are overrun all the battalion machine guns are gone."

"You will stay here"

Nothing has done so much harm to the military profession as the Crimean War. It spawned the poem THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE; one stanza of which reads

Tis theirs to do or die
and not to reason why

For half a century this was the civilian concept of military duty and, as I was to learn, the military are not altogether free from the error. However, I am a rebel when I think I can get away with it.

In view of an impending attack this was a very bad tactical disposition. Nevertheless, to disobey a direct order in battle is a serious thing. I carefully considered the matter for about five minutes and made up my mind. If worse came to worse I could question the authority of the captain. We were attached to the battalion, not to his company.

I told the sergeant who was now leading the 2nd platoon to take his platoon and follow the infantry back and lay out a defensive position where they stopped. Then I repeated all the doctrinaire stuff about field of fire, mutual defense, etc., but, above all, to send me a runner as soon as he stopped. The rest of us would stay where we were.

The open ground to our front was about twice as wide and three times as long as a football field and was enclosed by woods with the exception of a hundred yard stretch on our left. The drainage line was fifty yards in front of our position and from there the ground rose gently to the woods at the end.

Nothing happened for about an hour and then out of the middle of the woods at the far end of the field there came a single German. This looked like the beginning of a line of scouts in the expected German attack and there was a racket of rifle bolts being shot home and machine guns cocked. But in a short space of time we found he was all alone and I called out "Don't fire. As long as he is running toward us let him come and stay concealed. If he turns to the woods on our right, shoot, but with rifles only. Unload the machine guns."

The man continued running toward us for about a hundred yards and then stopped and looked in our direction. He must have seen us for he turned sharply and started to run to the woods on the right. This was the signal for the rifles to open up on him. We had twelve rifles in the platoon but their fire did not stop him. He was more than half way to the woods when I grabbed a rifle from a man beside me and fired a single shot. The soldier dropped. The man, whose rifle I had used, said "Good shooting Lieutenant". I felt no elation. If he had reached the cover of the woods he might have got a message to their artillery and we would have been blasted. Still I half hoped he had decided to hit the ground and crawl for it. Later when I passed over the same ground I saw no body.

In an attack the battalion commander's staff usually included the commander of the attached machine gun company. About noon some infantrymen began moving down through the woods at our rear, obviously an attack. I saw Major Holt and told him I was the only officer with the company. Did he want me to go with him and turn the company over to a sergeant or send a sergeant and runner with him. He wanted me with him.

Major Holt was a civilian soldier like the rest of us. I think of him as a brave man. A battalion commander's position in an attack is normally in rear of the assault companies, but he must have figured the soldiers needed some inspiration because we of the command party followed right in back of the line of scouts and in front of the assault companies. We carried our pistols drawn and cocked. We met no live Germans but I saw how futile it would have been to try to answer the German machine gun fire earlier in the day. We would have fired into the woods near the edge. The German machine guns were on platforms in the tree tops.

Had the time between these events and this writing been a half year instead of nearly a half century there would still be as many blank spots in my memory. Not every hour of a great battle holds things that remain etched in the mind of the soldier. Much that happens is fogged over with great fatigue and a reduced awareness. My memory touches down next on the evening of that day.

DeBeque and Hallowell had now rejoined the company. We were on the reverse slope of a heavily wooded hill that overlooks a bend in the Meuse River. We had had our mess and darkness had fallen when DeBeque came to me and said I would

have to take my platoon to the forward slope. He also said there would be no friendly troops in front of us and we could fire on anything that moved about. A small consolation.

We entered the woods on the forward slope from a dirt road running over the hill. It was very dark and the ground was heavily underbrushed. The platoon was in single file and I, being the only one armed with a proper weapon for this purpose, a walking stick, lead the way. We would be in view of the enemy and no lights, not even cigarettes, would be permitted. About twenty yards down the slope I stumbled into a small trench. It was two feet wide and two feet deep and had apparently been dug to protect the communication wires we found at the bottom. A quick investigation showed it ran the full width of the hill. I decided this was it. It would be silly to have the men stumbling around making a lot of noise trying to find positions with a field of fire when you could not see ten feet ahead. We spaced the guns along the trench and there was some cover for the men by lying down head to feet in the trench.

We had scarcely settled ourselves when the Germans opened up with a spectacular. A hundred yards to the front shells began bursting in the air and floating down glowing phosphorus. The field at the bottom of the hill was lit up to what seemed to us the brightness of day. It was about two hundred yards square and at the far end abruptly fell away to a lower plane through which the Meuse River meandered, an insignificant stream at this point. We were thankful it was a hundred yards away because the glowing stuff reached the ground and would have caused terrible burns. After ten minutes or so it stopped. The Germans

must have felt satisfied there was no one in the field.

We were alone with our fears for an hour or so when we began hearing the rumbling noise of wagons or field artillery below us. We had been told there would be no friendly troops in front and, if the Germans had artillery or field trains down there, they would surely be covered by infantry. Were we actually behind the enemy lines? We speculated on this for a while when out of the still night came a loud voice

"Giddap there you god damn mules."

It was like a song of joy to us. Later, while on leave at Nice, I met an engineer and we began comparing notes. He had lost his way and almost delivered his detail to the Germans before discovering the error of his ways.

At the first glimmer of light I sent some men to search the woods and see whether there were any dugouts. One came running back and said he had found a dugout big enough for the whole platoon. I ran down to look and found it ideally situated. From the front entrance, the whole front could be seen.

The standard procedure in our army was to leave two men to operate each gun, but I decided on one man per gun. Whoever was left would have only the scant protection of a two foot trench and all the German machine guns I had seen were operated by one man. Now, whom to select? It would have been simple to tell the sergeant or corporals to leave one man at each gun. But that would not have been fair. These men live in closer association with each other than that between officers and men. Each man in a squad has a numbered position and, while each is trained to operate the gun, the normal operator is the No. 1 man. Something

seemed to say to me "who let the No. 1 men always be the sitting ducks", and I selected the No. 2 men. I didn't know where the ax would fall, we had been reorganized twice in the last two days. The rest of us moved rapidly to the dugout.

As soon as we had full daylight all hell broke loose. A battalion of the enemy artillery opened up on our hill. One battery was so close we could hear the firing at the gun site and follow the swish of the projectile until it exploded. I remember even trying to time the travel of the shells so we could work out where the battery was; not that it would have done much good if we had, we had no telephone communication with the rear and no runner could have got through that barrage. Shells hitting trees are more effective than shells digging up the ground and there were no old shell holes in our woods.

Below and in front of the machine guns we were in an excellent tactical position if the artillery fire presaged an attack. We could get out of the dugout and deploy before they could cross the field that lay between us and the river bank. Our dugout was in a commanding position and we could see a whole square mile of the enemy country across the river. This ground was deep in the enemy territory and had not been fought over since the Germans first took it four years earlier. Gentle rolling hills and lush fields bordered by robust hedges, it was beautiful in the autumn sun if it were not for those nasty people trying to exterminate us.

The barrage lasted for an hour and then stopped as suddenly as it began. We got out of the dugout and waited for a

short while to see whether there would be an infantry attack and then rushed back to see how the men at the guns had fared. Tree tops were broken and the woods looked something like a forest that had been swept by fire, but none of the four men at the guns had been hit.

It would be nice to be able to report I had always shown wisdom in issuing orders, but this was not so. My next order was a goof. We were short of water and, thinking I would get the four No. 2 men out of the woods in case the Germans put on another show, I ordered the No. 2 men to collect the canteens from their squads and take them back to the watering point. What I should have said is that the No. 2 men have the option of going. One of the No. 2 men said he would not go, that I had selected the No. 2 men instead of the No. 1 men to get him. Poor fellow - he had been through a lot and I felt sorry for him but I could not tolerate defiance of my orders. He went.

I was sitting down enjoying the bright sun when DeBeque came through the woods with a sergeant. His face was haggard. He had sent the platoon into the woods the night before over my protest that there would be no field of fire and the enemy could approach within grenade throwing distance before we could see them. Still, we both could understand Major Holt's point of view. In an attack it is the riflemen who take the casualties; in a defense, the machine gunners suffer. We had always been on the offensive and he wanted security for the battalion during the night and early morning without further drain on the riflemen. DeBeque had heard the barrage, but there was nothing he could do but pray.

"How many casualties have you got, Kunny".

I could not conceal my smugness. "None. When do we eat."

DeBeque's face brightened like the morning sun and he flopped down beside me. "You damned gourmand. When we get out of here I am going to get you the best French dinner money can buy."

Our Brigade was relieved that day by the reserve brigade of the 33rd Division that had fought on our right. The transport met us on the road between Gercourt and Cuisy and we were glad to be relieved of the burden of the guns and ammunition we had toted around for three days. We were on the road for just a few minutes when an enemy plane flew over trying to strafe us. He fired but was flying too low to do us any harm. If this seems paradoxical, it must be remembered this was a single seated biplane and the gun was aimed by aiming the plane. If this fellow had aimed the plane down, he would have crashed. He was flying so low that all our men armed with rifles opened up on him and I got in two shots with my pistol. I guess all we did was give him a scare for he flew off and didn't come back.

The machine gun battalion was at the head of the column and the whole brigade was strung out to our rear for the length of a mile or so. As we neared Cuisy I began to hear men shouting and yelling at the rear. There were no planes overhead and no artillery fire and neither would have brought that kind of reaction. After a bit I noticed the yelling began creeping up to the front of the column. When it came close I saw what it was. A large rabbit

was running up the shallow valley alongside the road. The men were shouting and throwing their tin hats to scare the little beast. The men of a French battery nearby stood in open mouthed amazement. Remember, our men were just leaving a battlefield where, during the past three days we had suffered nearly one-third casualties.

I leave the business of analyzing this incident to the doctors of psychology and sociology and kindred trades. For myself, I confess to pride at being a member of the 80th Division. In this and other so called "draft" divisions all but one out of a thousand had been civilians a year and half earlier and all but one out of a thousand were between the ages of twenty and thirty. Few armies in history had such units. The sad thing is that the record of their accomplishments does not further the interest of those who advocate long military training and there is no powerful organization to sing their glory. Of the nine divisions engaged in the initial phase of the Meuse Argonne battle; the phase that captured the German trench complex four years in the making and drove the enemy back five or six miles, only one, the 4th was a so called Regular Army division. The rest were civilian divisions, National Guard and National Army (draft) divisions. This is a fact that has never been brought out in any military writing I have read.

We passed through the village of Cuisy and moved up the road on the south side of the valley where we found our kitchen and baggage. The baggage trains of the whole brigade were there. Cuisy was in the corridor of the 4th division that had fought on our left. It was masked from observed artillery fire from the

front but could be seen from across the river two miles away on our right.

Two days earlier when most of us had run out of drinking water and all of us were thirsty, we ran across a ration dump. We didn't know whose it was, and didn't care. Property rights have a way of disappearing under those circumstances. We opened the cans of tomatoes and drank the juice. As a just punishment, I acquired a severe case of hives.

I had had the hives several times as a kid and knew I was in for a week of itching misery if I could not get rid of them. After we got things settled down I went to the medical tent to see the doctor.

"I've got the hives."

"How do you know you have. Let's see."

I exposed my belly. The welts were as big as dollars.

"You have the hives all right."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing you can do. They will go away."

I was disgusted and, while I was buttoning up my pants, he walked out of the tent. The medical sergeant, who had been a male nurse in civil life, said "Lieutenant, I can tell you what to do for that."

"Good. What?"

"I'll give you a weak phenol solution. You get a hot bath and apply it and I am sure you will get some relief."

"How am I to get a hot bath here."

"That is your problem. I am telling you what will help."

I thought it over. We had kidded Holtzclaw when, among the things he had bought to take overseas was a collapsible rubber wash tub. My own weakness had been a big supply of cheap cigars, tobies we called them in Pittsburgh. I hunted up my orderly and told him to pitch my tent and get Lt. Holtzclaw's orderly to break out the tub and fill it with hot water from the kitchen. After a delicious hot bath I applied the stuff the sergeant had given me and felt like a new man. I got dressed in clean clothes and went to the dugout where the rest of the officers were playing cards. It was stuffy and filled with cigarette smoke. I decided it was no place for a clean fellow like I was - I would sleep in the tent.

I slept the sleep of the just and the young. My tent was no more exposed than the animals on the nearby picket line. There was intermittent shelling of the village of Cuisy just below, but by that time we had come to accept that as the natural order of things, like the wind and the rain.

During the three days we stayed near Cuisy there were a number of air shows. Half mile to the east there was a captive balloon and every time an enemy plane appeared in the sky the observer would parachute to the ground and the balloon would be hauled down and he would go up again in the basket. We thought he was excessively timid until a plane came over and set fire to the balloon. The hydrogen in the balloon was a great ball of fire before the observer had quite reached the ground.

Then, there were dog fights, two airplanes locked in mortal combat. And "mortal" is not a figurative word. One of the

pilots always died. Airplanes were in their infancy, biplanes with the pilot on an exposed seat between the upper and lower plane. His single machine gun was synchronized to fire between the propeller blades and the only way he could aim the gun was to aim the plane; hence, it was necessary to get on the tail of the opposing plane. The planes would circle and do Immelman turns until one or the other got in position for the kill. It was almost impossible for one to break off and get away. The other would be on his tail as soon as he would fly in a straight line and there was no quarter in the battle for air superiority.

Fighter pilots were the real heroes of the war. Alongside them the Knights of the Round Table would be a bunch of bragging sissies. Nevertheless, to us ground mortals they seemed to be fighting a private war that had no relation to ours. I was once in a battalion headquarters while the commander said over the telephone "For Christs sake, get those airplanes out of here. They are firing on our own men."

While we were at Cuisy, the other brigade of the division, the 159th, had been engaged in the vicinity of Nantillois. Units from our brigade were drawn in piecemeal and after a few days took over the whole show.

My memory next strikes ground when we were in the neighborhood of some German trenches north of the town of Septsarges and the enemy opened up with a very heavy barrage. Back in Cuisy I had been assigned an assistant platoon leader, a newly commissioned graduate of the Officers Training School

in France. He wore an issue uniform and the only marks that pointed him out as an officer were the new gold bars on his shoulders. I have forgotten his name - he was with us only a short while. Let's call him Smith.

Smith and I were standing together when the barrage started and we both jumped into a nearby trench. At the bottom of the trench there was a foxhole big enough to take care of one man if he curled up. I put my head in. Smith put in his feet.

"Turn around and get your head in here, you damned fool."

"The hell with that. I'm not going through life without legs."

I didn't argue with him. Who shall say which of us was the wiser.

Some of the shell came quite close to the top of our trench but none got in. In an earlier chapter I have explained the inverted cone pattern of dispersion of the shell fragments. To get at us, a shell would almost have to land in the trench. As soon as the shelling stopped I checked and found no one in the platoon had been hit.

We were still in reserve but inching up to the front line. The next evening found us in the neighborhood of two well built German dugouts, each big enough for a platoon. One was occupied by a platoon of rifles under the command of Lt. Sergeant. The name struck me as odd and I have never forgotten it. An earth wall separated the two dugouts.

Late in the night I heard an excellent brand of loud

cussing from one of the men at the back of the dugout and laughter by some others. Earlier in the night the gas sentinel had given the gas alarm and we had all put on our masks. After ten minutes or so he had given the "All Clear" call and we had taken them off; that is, all except the cusser. He had slept with his on several hours and his clothes were all messed up with saliva.

The gas masks issued in WW1 were something you just slipped over your face and lived happily ever after. Not so those of WW1. Inside the mask there was a spring clasp you would work over your nose and pinch it, hard. Then there was a rubber device you put between the teeth with a flange over which the lips were stretched. The inhaled breath travelled over a canister of activated charcoal; the exhaled breath was diverted through a collapsible rubber flap. A messy thing at best.

Gas was not used in WW1. This was not for humanitarian reasons. Gas has little tactical value and is a nuisance to both sides. Its effects are unpredictable. One night when DeBeque, Alfriend and I were studying the route for next day's advance, we walked along a road which suddenly came under harrassing machine gun fire. We all jumped into the drainage ditch alongside the road. I felt I had stepped on someone and apologised. There was no answer. I felt a hand. It was just an arm loose at the shoulder. Then the Germans sent over some gas shells. Alfriend had to be evacuated and DeBeque's eyes were sore for several days, but it had no effect on me.

This unpredictable effect of gas posed some problems. All of us got a whiff of gas some time or other, but when a man reported he had been gassed, there wasn't much to do but send him to the rear. That is, at first there wasn't. But I began to suspect there were some malingerers and issued an order there would be no more evacuations unless the soldier was obviously sick. The gas cases stopped.

About mid-morning a man appeared at our dugout asking whether this was the 42nd division. Something about the fellow made me think he was a spy. I didn't know where the 42nd Division was but I knew it was not the next one on our right or left. His story was that he had been a gas case and the hospital had discharged him and ordered him to return to his outfit. How a man coming from the rear could get this far to the front without knowing he was in the wrong neighborhood puzzled me. He would have passed many people who could have told him he was on the wrong road. His uniform and equipment were immaculate, showing no signs of a long trek. The German army was much closer.

I sent him out with a detail to bury a nearby German soldier, who had evidently been dead for several days, and then went to the next dugout to see Lt. Sergeant. I told Sergeant of my suspicion and that I was going to turn the man over to him and suggested he send him back to their intelligence officer under guard, which he did.

The next morning an infantry battalion moved up past our shelter and through the woods to our front. We hoped we were not going to be in that attack but, an hour after the infantry had passed, we got our orders in the form of a field message.

The time lag created an awkward situation. I would much rather have followed right in back of the battalion because I did not know the direction of the attack and had no opportunity for reconnaissance. There was nothing to do but try to find the battalion.

We passed through a woods and on the far side there was an open field. I halted the platoon at the edge of the woods and walked about twenty yards into the field to see whether I could find any signs of our troops. A single rifle bullet sung within inches of my shoulder. I did what comes natural, flopped to the ground and crawled to a nearby shallow trench. Earlier the sniper had been more successful. There was a dead soldier in the trench. I got set and made a dash back to the shelter of the woods.

I had not gone into the field to be a sitting duck. The front was well forward and the shot came as a surprise. Everyone in the platoon had heard it and most had seen me fall but there was no unanimity about the direction from which it came. This called for a change of plans. To take the platoon across the field under the sniper's eye would be folly. To sweep the suspected locations with machine gun fire might mean hitting friendly troops. Any move now would have to be under the close cover of the few men in the platoon who were armed with rifles. I was discussing this with the sergeant and corporals when, from out of the woods on our left, came a single German soldier. He showed none of the fear and terror of the two prisoners I had seen in the fog on the first day of the battle, but came boldly toward us saying one word "Wasser". One of our men immediately pulled out his canteen and unscrewed the top and started to hand it to him. I stopped

him and motioned to the German to take out the cup that was on his belt and told our man to pour the water into the cup without the canteen touching the cup. The German looked sick and his face and mouth were covered with sores. This was probably the man who a few minutes earlier had tried to kill me, but strangely I felt no resentment toward him. The world was more civilized in those days and we counted military success, not in the number of enemy killed, but in the capture of tactical or strategical objectives. And now, fifty years later, I believe we are under the influence of some cosmic force stimulating that modicum of aggression that is innate in all creatures. The frustration-aggression theory, so dear to the do-gooders and politicians, is untenable and lends hostility moral sanction. The belligerents, whether they be the Red Guards of China, the citizens of our ghettos, or the hold-up artists, all live more abundant lives than they or their forbears ever did. But let's get back on the track at

FARM de la MADALINE

Farm de la Madaline had been a strong point well back of the German trench lines and its capture had been costly. We had now reached the Army Objective line and the attack would not continue until the heavy artillery, medical and supply installations had been moved forward. Fresh divisions would also replace the battered ones that had been engaged in the initial assault. In the meantime our tactical disposition would be for defense, where the machine guns play the star role.

Our company and one rifle company formed a liaison group with a similar setup from the division on our left. DeBeque had selected for company headquarters a well built German dugout close by the farm buildings.

There was some desultory firing on our right, but generally things were quiet with the Germans licking their wounds and showing no signs of aggression. About mid-morning I sauntered back to company headquarters to find out whether DeBeque had learned anything about our expected relief, something to which we were all looking forward. As I entered through one tunnel a company runner came through the other and put a message down on the desk saying he could not find the rifle company headquarters. I told DeBeque I thought I knew where the headquarters was and suggested he let me deliver it. This he was glad to do because the message was about a change in the gun locations and I could answer any questions the rifle company commander might raise.

I had walked only a short distance when I saw a shocking thing - a platoon of infantry marching on a road four abreast in a close column. Moving over the same ground I would have marched my platoon off the road in two widely separated single file columns each snaking a way past convenient shell holes. That wasn't just my idea, it was tactical teaching, and even had a name The Approach March. If a barrage opened up no one wanted six or eight men jumping for the same shell hole. All the men in the platoon had red diamonds sewn to the top of their left sleeves. It was the insignia of the 5th Division, the first division insignia I had seen. Had they been in charge of a sergeant

I would have stopped and tried to disperse them but there was a 1st Lt. and I gave him a snappy salute and passed on.

The infantry company commander was a soft spoken man with graying hair at the temples. After we had discussed the message I told him what I had seen on the way over.

"I know. I saw it too and tried to stop them. Lieutenant, in civil life I am a preacher and don't use this kind of language but", and his voice rose, "do you know what the sonofabitch said to me? He said "We are Regular Army. We know what we are doing."

About twelve hours after the relief of our division had been completed, the 5th Division broke. General Pershing pulled it out of the lines and fired (Oops the military word is "relieved") their Commanding General. The vacant sector was filled in with units from the divisions on the right and left.

The 5th Divisions redeemed itself later on. This was their first participation in the Meuse Argonne battle. They had had some trench warfare, but the only other drive they had been in, was that basket picnic called the St. Mihiel drive. They thought of their success there as due to their prowess rather than to the enemy's intention of getting out of that salient as quickly as possible. They learned humility the hard way.

Our company returned to Cuisy but I was left back to orient the relieving machine gunners. Several hours later I came back alone. In the field south of Madaline I got caught in an artillery barrage and had a severe case of what the British called the "Wind up", present day "Pushing the Panic Button"

Up to this time I had to look out for the safety of some fifty men as well as myself. Now I had only myself to worry about. What if I got wounded and had to lay there for hours or days. None knew where I was. These and other fear stricken thoughts raced through my mind. There was apparently only one battery working on this job and I had been in much worse barrages than this without experiencing any panic. By dashing from one shell hole to the next between bursts I got out of the field before the shelling stopped.

From Cuisy we moved south to Triacourt area to receive replacements for the casualties in men and equipment. For more than two weeks we had not been out of the range of the enemy's artillery and this was a relief. There was a minimum of fuss and feathers and a maximum of rest.

After a few days we were visited by a crew from the Signal Corps who had been ordered to take motion pictures of machine guns in action against the enemy, but decided to fake them. This was all right with us. I would certainly have chased any camera man who showed up at my machine gun nests.

Through a series of buck passing from division on down the order came to our company and my platoon to put on the show. In the picture DeBecue is sitting at a desk in a dugout and sands for me. I enter, study the map with him for a short minute, salute, walk out and lead my platoon through some woods and start firing dummy ammunition. The Signal Corps officer objected to my carrying a cane until I explained that is what we did in action.

Later at the mess that evening DeBeque said "Yes in the movie Kunny gives me a salute and walks out, but in real life I tell him to take his platoon up on that hill and he yells "What!!!, why we'll all get killed." And after I have argued him into it he backs away shaking his fist in my face and threatening what he will do to me if I don't get water and ammunition up to him." The truth is somewhere between the picture and DeBeque's slanderous remarks.

A year or so after the war was over a department store in Pittsburgh advertised a display of official Signal Corps pictures taken in action. Sure enough, some stills from our picture were in it. I bought several. These pictures were fakes but at least the soldiers in them were real. They had seen some of their friends die within the preceding weeks. Some of the pictures purporting to be combat scenes I have since seen have been ludicrous. If a picture shows everyone looking intently to the front, nobody scratching his neck or tying his shoes or looking around to see where Bill Jones got to with that water detail, it's staged. And don't be fooled by soldiers running through smoke bombs. If they were artillery shells, the soldiers would be hugging the ground. And ask yourself what kind of armorplate the camera man was wearing if this was the real business.

November 1st, and we are back in the lines. There is no question now that the enemy has suffered a decisive defeat and is fighting a heavy rear guard action. While our division captured more ground in this than in any other drive I remember little of it because our company was never with an assault battalion. One incident I do remember.

Turkey Legs had decided a reconnaissance would be necessary for the stint we were to do the next day. All the company and platoon commanders were to be in it. He wisely decreed that no officer would be closer than twenty yards to any other, front, back or sideways (distance and interval in military parlance).

My position in that formation was on the right flank and I passed right by a battery of field artillery going into position. One of the FA officers called to me and asked whether I could orient him. I said "sure" and within about a minute had pointed out identifying ground featured and shown him exactly where he was on the map. He said "you are the first infantryman I have met who knew where he was." Then he saw the red and blue piping on my cap and said "Oh, I see you are a machine gunner."

He was partly right. I have known some officers, including regulars, who could not read a map and boasted about it. They were "practical" soldiers who would lose status if listed among the scribes. Bragging about the things you can't do was more prevalent around the turn of the century, but now, with the advance of science, the "practical" man is finding it hard to maintain his superiority.

Returning from our reconnaissance we were caught in a barrage. There were plenty of shell holes and due to our wide dispersion we each found one to nestle in. Barrages never seemed to trickle out, they just stopped, and when this one stopped we got out of our holes and continued the march. My trail again led past

the battery I had oriented.

The artillerymen said "we saw that barrage from here and thought you would all be killed. Was anyone hit".

"No. It was just artillery. Big noise and all that sort of stuff", I kidded them.

By November 3rd we had driven some six or seven miles into the enemy position to the vicinity of Buzancy and the attack was taken over by the 159th Brigade. We trailed the 159th to a few miles north of the town of Bar when the 1st Division leapfrogged the 80th and continued the attack in our sector. We now began to suspect that not only the battle but the war had been won. The enemy were retreating so fast that logistics became as much of a problem as fighting.

While laying north of Bar I contracted dysentery. I have read that in the Spanish American War there were more casualties from disease than from enemy action. This was not so in WW1. Elaborate precautions were taken, immunizing against disease, washing mess kits and covering waste matter. During combat there is no opportunity to dig latrine trenches, but I'll venture a bet this was the first army in which a roll of toilet paper was part of a squads equipment. These white flowers were all over the place. We called them the Lillies of France. Unfortunately, they were often at the bottom of a shell hole where you had to jump for cover. We had a salty expression about what no gentleman would do

I was very weak and they talked of sending me to a hospital but I begged them not to. After a few days in the hospital I would be sent to another outfit. That is the objection I gave but my more earnest reason I kept to myself. How would one explain to friend; hospitalized on account of loose bowels. Few would believe it was after the fighting was over.

I prevailed upon the medical officer to try to fix me up where I was and he gave me something that did the job.

We were still at Bar when the false armistice came. Among my souvenirs are papers that are priceless to me, but of scant interest to others. I have often wished I had grabbed the field message that announced the false armistice. It read:

1. Armistice in effect as of 11 hours today.
2. Nothing but chlorinated water will be used for drinking purposes.

It was pleasant there at Bar in the warm autumn sun. Our baggage train had been brought up and we could sleep in our bedding rolls. The strain of battle was gone. The heavy artillery was even out of our hearing. Still, three or four times a day we heard a single gun fire one shell. We could hear the firing at the gun site, the swish through the air and the explosion of the projectile. In their retreat the Germans had left a lot of artillery, and later latrine rumors had it that the Germans dressed in American uniforms would come out of hiding, fire the piece and then disappear. They were shot when found. If this was true, and I believe it was, their execution was justified. Only savages kill for killing sake. Soldiers kill as a means to other ends.

It would be nice to end this tale with a grand finale, but that would be fiction. We were on a march to the south when the real armistice came. I don't remember where we were but several of us were sleeping in an elaborate German shelter when someone came in and said we should go down to the village, they were dancing in the street, drinking wine and blowing horns. One of us rolled over and said "When do we eat."