

JOURNAL

(July 1-31, 1944)

See After/After Action Report for July,
1944, 746th Tank Battalion.

REPORT NO. 1074 OF JULY 1944.

The period opened on 1 July with the Battalion relieved from the 9th Infantry Division and placed under VII Corps control. The Battalion moved to an area near S11-225 201193 for the purpose of reorganizing, refitting and rest. On 1 July, six assault guns (105 mm) were drawn and issued, three to the assault gun platoon, and one to each company. On 5 July the Battalion was attached to the 63rd Infantry Division and moved to the vicinity of S12-114, relieving a Battalion of the 66th Armored Regiment. From 5 July to 10 July, Battalion supported the 63rd Infantry Division's drive S to H141 and slightly beyond. This period was characterized by heavy tank losses on our part. Coordination with and follow-up by the infantry was very poor because of conflicting orders, not knowing where infantry troops were, and infantry troops being unsecured. Battalion supported the 63rd Infantry Division's advance to S11-111, and on 15 July, was relieved from attachment to the 63rd Infantry Division, and reverted to VII Corps Control. On 16 July Battalion was attached to 9th Infantry Division, and Battalion assembled for reorganization and maintenance. On 17 July, CP and combat echelons joined 9th Infantry Division in vicinity of S11-111. Battalion supported 9th Infantry Division's advance S of H1-111 and S11-111 until 25 July. An intense and heavy concentration of bombs from heavy and medium bombers dropped on enemy installations and positions on 25 July, followed by twenty (20) minutes of heavy artillery barrage. The infantry and tanks advanced behind the artillery barrage, but met up with stiff enemy resistance. One officer KIA from allied bombing. The Battalion moved forward with the 9th Infantry Division to H1-111, L1-111, and L1-111 and on 27 July moved to rest area near S11-111 for refitting, reorganization and maintenance and remained at that location until 31 July, 1944, the end of the period.

Carmine G. Nipper
Carmine G. Nipper
Lt. Col., Cavalry,
Commanding 760th Tn. Bn.

RESTRICTED

DAMAGE, but met up with STIFF ENEMY RESISTANCE. ONE OFFICER SWA FROM ALLIED DOMAINS. THE BATTALION MOVED FORWARD WITH THE 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION TO POTLEY, LA JAMINIERE, AND LAISLEY AND ON 29 July MOVED TO REST AREA THREE MILES SE OF NAIENNE FOR REFITTING, REORGANIZATION AND MAINTENANCE. AND REMAINED AT THAT LOCATION UNTIL 31 July 1944, THE END OF THE PERIOD.

CLARENCE G. HAPTEL

LT. COL. CAVALEY

COMMANDING 746 TR. BN.

By Boylan/NEll NARA, Date 8/17/87.

Headquarters Company

CO- Captain Thomas J. Moshall, Jr.
Reconnaissance Platoon-1st Lt. Loutz H. Gage
Mortar Platoon- 2nd Lt. Robert M. Foley
Assault Gun Platoon-2nd Lt. Houston Payne
Maint. Officer- 2nd Lt. John D. Phillips

Following a three hour mid-night conference on the night of 4-5 July, the battalion CO on 5 July moved the battalion to an assembly area vicinity 372836, 1-1/2 miles WSW of CARENTAN. From there, in the afternoon of the 5th, Companies A, B and C, each with one platoon from Company D attached, moved to join the regiments of the 83rd Infantry Division, relieving a battalion of the 66th Armored Regiment.

Headquarters Company remained in the CP area, there being no occasion to employ the Assault Gun Platoon, Mortar Platoon, Reconnaissance Platoon, or the Tank Section of Battalion Headquarters.

The fluctuations of battle, the critical combat periods, and the intense and severe enemy attacks and defense were such during the period of attachment to the 83rd that the Battalion CO, Lt. Col. HUPFER, was compelled to spend many hours a day and night at either the divisional CP in the capacity of a special and at that time very hard worked staff officer, or assisting company commanders in their operations with the Infantry Regimental Commanders.

The employment of the tanks in a profitable and successful manner at a time when green infantry needed encouragement and strong reinforcement, was the chief concern of the battalion CO, especially as the tank commitment in this situation tended toward expenditure of armor without maximum results, particularly in localized areas where normal infantry advance was retarded by extremely heavy opposition.

During the period tank unit commanders of all grades moved forward a step in the chain of command, so to speak, in that company commanders were compelled, by the very nature of the enemy attack and resistance, to operate from infantry platoon or company CP levels, while S-3, Battalion Executive Officer, and frequently Battalion CO operated from Infantry Battalion CP levels to maintain contact and control of tank platoons attached to infantry battalions.

The battalion CP maintained its position WSW of CARENTAN from 5 July through 8 July, moving its advance elements on 9 July to new locations at (378808), closing at 2100. In this new location and in subsequent locations the CP installations were not what one would naturally consider even relatively free from activity. The very heavy shelling of our entire forward and rear areas coupled with the enemy infiltration through the frequently disorganized front lines, brought the "front" to the "rear" and frequently vice versa. During the entire period 5-15 July it was not uncommon for troops or commanders to experience as much and at times more difficulty in moving from the rear to the front or front to rear as in fighting forward to new positions.

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87

Some, but very little, progress having been made by 11 July and severe tank losses having occurred in extremely heavy fighting, the battalion moved its forward CP to vicinity SAINTENY (350778), where it was subjected to front line conditions of A-1 priority. The bulk of the CP was left at (372836), the CO, Ex O., and S-3 only making the move to the advance position, from which more control and assistance could be effected.

On the 13th the main CP moved to (371797), the advance CP remaining at SAINTENY until the 15th, when it joined the entire battalion at (371797) upon release from the 83rd Infantry Division.

Reorganization of the battalion was urgently necessary because of the heavy vehicular and personnel losses sustained during the operations with the 83rd Division. Competent reinforcements of personnel not being available, Lt. Col. HUPFER decided to disorganize Company D to reinforce the medium companies A, B and C. This process was commenced during the refitting period of 15-16 July, and continued through the operations with the 9th Infantry Division 17-28 July.

Company A-1st Platoon Company D

CO-Captain LOVEAIRE A. HEDGES,
1st Platoon-2nd Lt. Clyde C. TANNER,
2nd Platoon-2nd Lt. HUGH J. M. JONES,
3rd Platoon-2nd Lt. WILLIAM W. WOODS (5 July-8 July),
2nd Lt. JOSEPH F. CAMPBELL (9-25 July),
Sgt. Robert D. Gezon (25-31 July),
MO- 1st Lt. HENRY D. WALDING.
1st Platoon Company D-2nd Lt. COY O. PARKER.

Following the rehabilitation of 1-4 July, the Battalion moved on 5 July to positions SW of CARENTAN, the company taking an assembly position at 360837. Being attached to the 329th Regiment of the 83rd Infantry Division, the Co CO moved to Regimental HQ at 380818 to discuss plans for the tank employment.

The atmosphere of the Infantry Regimental Headquarters was one of doubt and anxiety, probably fostered by a lack of accurate information as to the location of its units and serious concern with the enemy troops opposing. It was later brought out that the German 6th Paratroop Division, one of its crack units, was given the mission of retaking CARENTAN and splitting the American V and VII Corps. The fighting which occurred throughout the course of Company A attachment to the 329th attests to the determination with which the enemy Division undertook its mission.

After reconnaissance to forward positions by the Company CO, a plan was developed for the 2nd and 3rd platoons to support I and K Companies of the 329th after relief of elements of the 66th Armored Regiment then attached to the 329th. The platoons were brought forward by radio to 366810 where guides from the 66th lead them forward.

Following the second platoon along the very narrow approach trail, the Company CO met the infantry regimental CO moving forward on foot toward the front. Because of the proximity of by-passed and infiltrating enemy groups, the covering the area with SA fire,

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87.

the regimental CO ordered the 3rd platoon to accompany the support infantry battalion in mop up operations following in the wake of the assault battalion. With this in view, the 3rd platoon was sent back to the vicinity of support battalion CP at 367807 where it made plans to accompany the support battalion.

Disorganization in the infantry elements was apparent in that it took several hours for the support battalion to organize and launch its mop up. After it moved off it went forward approximately 500 yards before darkness. In the meanwhile the company commander with the 1st platoon of Company D, remained at the battalion support CP and moved with it in the wake of the support battalion. SA backwash from the skirmishes of the support battalion forced its CP to return to its original location. The tank company commander with the 1st Platoon, Company D remained in the vicinity of 363803 as a screen for the battalion CP against infiltrating enemy forces. The threat did not materialize and the light tanks moved back to the company assembly positions vicinity of the infantry support battalion CP. Very poor communications with the assault battalion apparently forced the decision of the support battalion CP to remain that position over night.

At dark the 2nd platoon had succeeded in pushing the assault infantry to positions along a line 355798 to 358796.

The platoon was ordered to return to assembly for servicing and to remain the night. During the process of returning communication between the assault and support infantry battalions was effected and requests made to bring forward water and ammunition. The infantry support battalion CO and the tank company CO agreed that upon return of the 2nd platoon, supplies would be carried forward by the medium tanks, the lights being considered at that time too vulnerable for the job. It was well after dark when the 2nd platoon reached assembly positions, carrying with it several infantry wounded. Supplies were loaded and platoon made ready to move forward when a decision was made to move it forward with the support infantry battalion CP, the line of communication being somewhat questionable. At approximately 1200 the unit moved off but before they were well underway radio communication from the assault battalion indicated they were surrounded and advised against bringing any vehicles, tanks or otherwise, into their position, it being felt that the support battalion could infiltrate with success, but that heavier vehicles would disclose the avenue of support and bring heavier artillery fires. This decision having been made, the 2nd platoon with the Company CO and the first platoon of lights, returned to the company assembly and completed establishment of a night bivouac at approximately 0230 after having completed plans for the movement of the tanks with the supplies to the assault positions at dawn. Meanwhile the 3rd platoon with the bulk of the support battalion troops was in position between the tank company assembly area and the assault battalions, the plan being to have them join the movement at dawn. At dawn on 6 July the tanks and a part of the Infantry battalion CP, which had not moved forward the past night, made ready to move. A final check by telephone from the tank company CO to the infantry regiment CP disclosed that the support battalion CP had been

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87.

successful in reaching its troops but that because of the unknown condition of the supply route to the assault battalion an ammunition train wished to join the tank elements before they moved out. The delay in movement for this purpose was approved by the infantry regimental S-3. The regimental CO and the ammunition supply train, of which he evidently knew nothing, arrived simultaneously at the company assembly. The infantry Colonel was in a great state concerning the failure of the tank elements to move off at dawn and was not pacified by requested explanations concerning the accompanying ammunition train. At approximately 0700 the tank elements moved off, picked up the 3rd platoon en route and joined the assault battalion along a line 353794 to 396792 which it had gained in its morning attack. The line held was in a sunken road with the MSR across country but quite unstable due to the number of infiltrating enemy groups which harassed and cut it continuously. The 3rd platoon was placed in an orchard at the crossroad at 355793 for the purpose of meeting an armored attack from the SE or NE. The 2nd platoon was placed in a mobile reserve position immediately in its rear. The 1st platoon, Company B, was held in immediate reserve with a mission of keeping open the cross country MSR.

At approximately 0200 the company commander returned to the company rear SW of CARENTAN and brought forward the 1st platoon and some maintenance elements for repairs needed by the 3rd platoon. The MSR was a very sensitive route and every trip across it meant the transportation of wounded as medical and evacuation facilities were not available. The 1st platoon was brought forward and relieved the 2nd which returned to the base near CARENTAN.

The left flank infantry elements having failed to come abreast the day of the 6th, the 329th and the tanks remained in defensive positions throughout the day and night of the 6th. Late in the afternoon of the 6th, the Mortar Platoon under Lt. Foley was attached to the Company and reported at the front line positions for its first offensive action of the campaign. Throughout the night of the 6th very heavy shelling was sustained and 4 enemy counter attacks repulsed. Personnel in the infantry suffered heavy losses. During the night plans were made for the tanks to shift to the left flank battalion to support it and bring it abreast.

At 0530 on the morning of the 7th a liaison officer from the left flank battalion appeared at the assault battalion CP with detailed plans for the transfer of the tanks. This officer, together with Captain Hedges and liaison Corporal Dill, moved on foot to RJ357794 to contact the battalion CO of the unit to be supported. Contact was made during the taking of the RJ; the battalion CO, then at a Company CP was pinned down by Mortar and MG fire against the side of a building with his entire forward staff. Plans for the transfer of the tanks were worked out while in a prone position. At the completion thereof, Captain Hedges and Corporal Dill made their way back to the tank platoon only to find the third platoon under severe artillery shelling with one tank all ready burning and the others in process of shifting positions. Pfc. Gustafson had been killed in the bow gunner seat while T/& Hinte had succeeded in getting out of the drivers hatch with a badly shattered arm. No other PERSONNEL

By Boylas/NEll NARA, Date 8/17/87.

were sustained. Lieutenants Woods, Jones of the medium platoons, and Parker of the light tank platoon were assembled in the vicinity of the orchard to discuss plans for the transfer of the tank support, when the liaison officer again appeared, urging prompt movement. The plans were changed to permit the tanks to come up from the rear of the infantry and the column moved off across country, third platoon leading followed by the second and then the light tank platoon followed by the mortar platoon. Contact with the group was effected under very heavy shelling and with strong opposition from mortars and automatic weapons. By 1100 the tanks had supported the infantry to positions from 352786 to 354784. During this attack the infantry was greatly disorganized and the advance was made possible only by actions of the tanks and of the tank company commander who directed the attack while moving forward on foot with the tanks.

During the balance of the 7th the tanks held this foremost position repulsing counter attacks during the night of the 7th and suffering personnel and vehicluar casualties.

Meanwhile Lt. Tanner's first platoon had jumped off on the morning of the 7th on the right flank simultaneously with the jump off of the 2nd and 3rd platoons and 1st platoon of Company D on the left flank initially supported by a 50 round concentration from Lt. Foley's mortars. In view of the artillery support available the opportunity to further employ the mortar platoon was not present and it was returned to battalion control in the afternoon of the 7th after suffering heavy casualties.

All through the night of the 7th the anxiety of the infantry elements was evident. Between counter attacks a variety of rumors drifted down the line of fox holes such as "get your equipment together" or "we are moving out" or other expressions entirely without foundation and evidently fostered by someone anxious to be relieved of the tension. At about 0300 elements of friendly troops through someones order began to pull away from the left flank positions. The lieutenant commanding the platoon of infantry was stopped by the infantry captain then commanding the battalion and Captain Hedges at the battalion CP dug out. To alleviate the nervousness of the troops, they were taken back and shown the positions of the 2nd and 3rd platoon of tanks in their own perimeter line.

On the morning of the 8th orders were received to withdraw 1000 yards to permit bombing of enemy positions at SAINTENY and vicinity. The move was accomplished at 0815, the tank elements being the last to leave the positions. The bombing was ineffective because at the sound of the planes, enemy infantry moved forward very close to the lines held by our troops for the bombing and suffered little damage, consequently when the attack again jumped off, the previous positions were occupied

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87.

by the enemy and our troops were forced to fight all day to regain their former positions. During the ensuing attack the tanks were held as a mobile reserve against armored threat. At the close of day, tanks after having been serviced, moved to the company assembly positions at 367807 where they remained during the night of the 8th and the day of the 9th. Liaison with the 329th Infantry Regiment was being maintained. During the move to the company assembly Lieutenant Woods tank slipped into a large crater closing the turret hatch on his left hand. He was evacuated to the Battalion Aid Station.

On 10 July the tanks again jumped off, the 2nd platoon supporting the 3rd battalion on the left, the 1st platoon plus 1st platoon Company D supporting the 2nd battalion on the right in a drive toward SAINTENY. Both battalions jumping off from the 784 E.W. grid between 345 and 354 N.S. lines. Resistance was extremely heavy from artillery, AT guns, mortars and automatic weapons. At approximately noon Lt. Jones' second platoon of 4 tanks was completely wiped out at 352773 by concealed AT guns. Many personnel casualties were also sustained. Lt. Jones had sensed the situation and asked for protection from the infantry of his left flank. Lt. Jones' plan to employ a section of tanks in covering that flank was refused on the ground that the infantry mortars would do so. As a result the tanks were employed in a wide but shallow wedge formation against enemy positions in the hedgerows. The AT guns destroyed the platoon from its left flank. After the loss of his platoon Lt. Jones made his way to the infantry regimental CP 600 yards to the rear to contact the company CO.

Meanwhile the 1st platoon under Lt. Tanner and Lt. Parker's platoon of light tanks had advanced into and through SAINTENY TO positions at 341772 at close of darkness after suffering severe casualties. Two tanks remained in the medium platoon while fortunately Lt. Parker's commitment was such that he sustained no losses. The light tank platoon was pulled back to the regimental area for the night while Lt. Tanner and his two tanks remained holding the SAINTENY perimeter through the night of the 10th and the day of the 11th.

The third platoon was not committed during the 10th in lieu of Lt. Jones but was held in regimental reserve and at that constituted the only mobile armored reserve in the Division.

On the 11th, while the 1st platoon was engaged in the SAINTENY sector, the remaining 3rd platoon of the company was pooled with the 3rd platoon of Company B, under S/Sgt. Bechard and moved to attack positions at 369774 to prepare for an attack that jumped off at 2100. Captain Hedges commanded this composite force. The LD was a RJ at 368772. Lt. Campbell with the 3rd platoon, Company A, jumped off on the right flank while Sgt. Bechard attacked on the left. The attack went well until 2115 when Sgt. Bechard's tank and one other were knocked out by AT guns, and the left flank attack repulsed. Lt. Campbell on the right flank met no AT guns and succeeded in enveloping

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87.

the right flank for a distance of 200 yards inflicting some casualties on bazooka teams. The entire attack however, was repulsed, the infantry being stopped by heavy losses. The platoons remained in position during the night of the 11th and prepared for an assault on the 12th. On the morning of the 12th Captain Pay of Company B together with one platoon relieved Captain Hedges of Company A and the 3rd platoon thereof, in time to prepare for the morning attack. The 3rd platoon of A was sent back to company assembly at 354781 while Captain Hedges remained until noon with Captain Pay to assist in the attack. The attack jumped off at 0900 but was repulsed with heavy losses, 4 of the B Company tanks being knocked out and serious personnel casualties sustained. Armored assault of the position was abandoned by noon of the 12th when Captain Hedges returned to company assembly position to reorganize Company A for attack on the 13th.

Infantry bazooka teams later found 8 dug-in tanks which were subsequently destroyed.

Prior to dawn on the 13th the company CO moved the 1st and 2nd platoons to assistance of the 3rd battalion, 331st Inf. Regiment, then being heavily attacked by enemy tanks and infantry in the vicinity of 350758. On the afternoon of the 13th Captain Hedges and Lt. Jones left this position and reconnoitered tank routes to the 2nd battalion positions along the road from 351750 to 353747. Leaving the 1st platoon in position with the 1st battalion, the company CO took the 2nd platoon along to the 2nd battalion late in the afternoon of the 13th in preparation for attacks running SW along the road from AUXAIS 3575. During the evening the attack was postponed, the CO and the 2nd platoon remaining with the 2nd battalion during the night of the 13th. On the morning of the 14th after reconnaissance to forward areas the platoon hopped off and supported infantry to positions at 344743 when at 1500 the company CO was notified that the tanks were released from attachment to the 329th. 2nd platoon was moved back and joined the 1st platoon in mobile reserve positions at 352762 until 2215 when it moved to company bivouac area at 348778 for bivouac on the night of the 14th.

At noon on the 15th the company joined the battalion in a bivouac at 372797 where it remained throughout the 15th and 16th undergoing much needed reorganization and refitting with the balance of the tank battalion.

From 5 July through 14 July with the 83rd Division and the 329th and 331st Regiments thereof the company engaged in the most bitter fighting and sustained the heaviest losses in vehicles and personnel in the campaign. During that period enemy resistance was such that a SW advance of only 5000 yards was accomplished.

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87.Company B-2nd Plat., Company D Attached

CO- Captain Asher K. Pay
1st Platoon- Lt. Charles Coats (1-25 July)
 Lt. Charles G. Beatty (25-31 July)
2nd Platoon- Lt. Frank Kogut (1-9 July)
 Lt. Elvis E. Jones (17-31 July)
3rd Platoon- Lt. Jack Cleary (1-10 July)
 Lt. James P. Alford (11-31 July)
Maintenance Officer: Wm. H. Carter, 2nd Lt.

Following the battalion assembly in its area WSW of CARENTAN in the morning of 5 July, Captain Pay went forward to the 331st Infantry Regiment of the 83rd Division to orient himself and secure the tank mission.

As in the case of Company A, Captain Pay found confusion and uncertainty at the regimental CP, induced by the battle inexperience of the infantry troops. His recommendations as to employment were accepted and at 1600 his tanks were in the line, two platoons supporting two battalions of the infantry regiment, which was deployed to the divisions right flank, west of the CARENTAN-PERIERS road.

With the two platoons plus the 2nd platoon of Company D attached, Company B jumped off from 361810 in support of the infantry, but were unable to advance beyond the sunken road just ahead. Heavy opposition from SP and artillery prevented a further attack from being launched during the night of the 5th. Coordination with the infantry was poor, due to conflicting orders and infantry "greenness".

On 6 June the 331st Regiment was withdrawn from the right flank, together with Company B, which assembled vicinity 350827 for the remainder of the day in division reserve. The company, still in divisional reserve on the 7th, shifted to new positions at 369797, center and rear of the infantry division effort, the 331st Regiment having been recommitted in the center of the division, with the 329th on the right flank and the 330th on the left.

By 8 July the 331st had failed to keep abreast of the 329th, with Company A on its right flank; Company B was recommitted to help it forward in an attempt to ease the 329th's situation, it being dangerously exposed as a salient. (See report of Company A).

Although strongly opposed, the company was able to push the 331st forward slightly to positions SE of CULOT, but not sufficiently to erase the 329th salient. Greater gains were made on the 9th and 10th July to bring the 1st and 2nd platoons to positions at 352777, 1000 yards east of SAINTENY by the close of the 10th.

On the 11th of July very heavy opposition had bogged down attacks of the 3rd battalion 329th Infantry. Tank support in the new sector was needed badly to break the resistance.

By

Boylan/Neil

NARA, Date

8/17/87

Although both A and B companies had suffered heavily on the 10th, the remnants, one platoon from each company, were consolidated under Captain Hedges, Company A, on the evening of the 11th to support the drive. Captain Hedges went to the battalion CP at 369774 to receive orders, while Major Yeatts, battalion executive officer, brought the tanks up from the lines of A and B Companies. The original jump off, set for 2000, was moved back to 2100 to allow for orientation of the tank crews. No time was allowed for reconnaissance of the area. (See Company A section for details of the action).

Following the repulse of Company B's attack on the morning of the 12th, the remnants of the company were placed in division reserve for the balance of the 12th and 13th. The severe losses in men and materiel had produced a low morale among the remainder of the troops; the rest on the 12th and 13th was needed to reorganize the company and rebuild the confidence of the men.

The 14th brought further commitment of the company on the right flank of the division near the CARENTAN-PERIERS road. The assault was able to reach positions at 338764. The attack was resumed on the 15th and the enemy driven to 338755 by noon, when the company was withdrawn and joined the battalion in bivouac at 371797.

Company C (less one platoon)
Attached 3rd Platoon-Company D.

CO- 1st Lt. Augustus S. Hydrick
1st Platoon-1st Lt. James R. Shields
2nd Platoon-2nd Lt. Harry M. Butler
3rd Platoon-2nd Lt. Joseph E. Chapman
MO 1st Lt. Lawrence S. Deptula.
3rd Platoon, Company D- Lt. Charles G. Beatty.

During the afternoon of July 5, the company joined with the battalion in a road march to assembly area 1 1/2 miles West of CARENTAN (372836) and was attached to the 330th Infantry Regiment of the 83rd Infantry Division.

Prior to the march to CARENTAN, 1st Lt. Hydrick had received instructions that Company C would be held in reserve, but shortly after arriving at the battalion assembly area those orders were rescinded and the company CO was instructed to proceed at once to join the 330th Infantry Regiment of the 83rd Div. On the evening of July 5th the company plus one platoon of Company D moved to an assembly position North of the regimental CP (312810).

The CO reported to the regimental commander at the CP (381808) and found the entire staff in a confused and unsettled state. The front line was vague and the arrival of tanks came as a complete surprise to the infantry. Following a brief talk the tanks were attached to the 3rd battalion, at that time under direct division control. At approximately 2230 hours a counter attack on the regimental right flank was reported to be getting

under way. The light tank platoon was ordered into the line and given a mission of holding until a proposed attack to the North by the regiment could get underway. The line of departure for the attack was set at RJ370800 and a fire fight had to be fought to gain the LD. The attack finally jumped and late that night the objective, 700 yards away, was gained. The tanks pulled back to their assembly area for servicing and chow, but the enemy counter attacked and our infantry lost their ground. The tanks were ordered forward and after a fight to regain the objective, were ordered to remain in the line all night to hold the ground for the infantry. Battle discipline was poor in the infantry and officer control vague and weak. The infantry battalion reverted to regimental control this same night.

On the morning of July 6th the 3rd battalion and three platoons of medium tanks jumped from the LD (372794), the first night's objective, but found the main road they were to have followed mined. Two tanks were lost here, one of them being Lt. Shields of the 1st platoon. The order was given to bypass the road and the attack swung to the right down a narrow road 373789, down and through hedgerows and woods. Very light resistance was met and the tank CO suggested the attack keep moving but the regimental CO suggested differently and ordered it stopped at 372784.

July 7th the tanks and infantry jumped again and advanced to a position at 374773. The regimental CO requested the tanks remain on the line, but the tank CO's orders were to move back for servicing and reorganization each night. He reported to Lt. Col. Hupfer at his CP and received orders to stay on the line because the infantry seemed helpless without tank support. With a promise from the regimental CO that the Infantry would not pull out on the tanks, the CO remained in perimeter defense. All night enemy tanks moved about the area and were heard preparing for a counter attack and early on the morning of the 8th they counter attacked. The infantry gave way almost immediately, but the tanks held fast until it was evident for safety sake they must withdraw to a new line (374764) with the infantry. Heavy anti-tank and MG fire was encountered in the withdrawal and the infantry suffered heavy casualties. Seeing that the infantry could not be depended upon for protection, the CO ordered a withdrawal to an assembly point at 373782. Lt. Hydrick then returned to the forward regimental CP for a conference. A radio call informed him that his company was under machine gun and tank fire and completely pinned down. His request for infantry was denied so he mustered some doughs (stragglers) together and worked his way to the position. The makeshift infantry platoon flanked the guns and after a brief battle the MG's were quieted. One tank was found knocked out. The company was then reorganized and held until the infantry under direct command of the regimental CO stabilized and established a new line at 374776.

A plan was devised for July 9th to regain all the lost and move on to the regimental objective but the terrain was found to be unsuited for tank maneuver and an alternate plan was decided on.

Before the attack could get under way the enemy made a new counter attack and the day was spent holding the line (374776) for the infantry. The infantry was forced to withdraw to the tank defense line and the rest of the night the tanks kept up a near outpost alert while the doughboys reorganized their lines and defenses.

On the 10th a new attack was planned and the 2nd platoon supporting the 330th regiments 2nd battalion moved up to the previous days line. The 3rd platoon with the 3rd Battalion attempted to move around the left flank in the attack but was stopped by terrain difficulty and the infantry pinned down by enemy tank fire. Lt. Hydrick, receiving a report of enemy on the la Lande road at RG376767, planned an enveloping attack. He sent out one section of tanks around to his right while he moved his down the road on the left. His tank was hit twice and knocked out and he sustained an arm wound which forced his evacuation. The tanks and infantry were withdrawn once again and the rest of the day spent in reorganization and setting up a line of defense along 386777. An attack plan was formed for the following morning. Lt. Shields assumed command of the company.

The morning of July 11th the 2nd and 3rd platoons with their respective infantry battalions jumped from a LD at 374775 and forced an advance against intense resistance to a position at 377768. A severe fire fight at this position was encountered and both platoons were lost in action and the infantry was routed. The objective which was the final regimental objective was not reached. Three tanks burned, 1 tank in tank trap, one tank hit and disabled.

On July 12th the 1st platoon of Company C was ordered to a road block position 2 miles East of SAINTENY 363780. The other platoons were in the process of refitting and reorganization.

On July 13 the second platoon joined the 1st in road block positions while the third remained in the area for final servicing.

On July 14th the 3rd platoon moved out to a road block position at 362768 2 miles East of SAINTENY. No other action was seen by Company C on the 12, 13 and 14th of July.

On the 15th of July Lt. Shields and the Company reassembled and moved to a battalion bivouac and rest area at 371797 and remained at this area refitting, resting and reorganizing through the 16th of the month. The company was released from the 83rd Division at 1400 16th of July. Lt. Shields made a reconnaissance and contacted the CO of the 39th Infantry Regiment in preparation for assignment to that regiment.

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87

Company D

CO-1st Lt. Eugene M. McDonough
 1st Platoon- Lt. Coy O. Parker (1-17-July)
 Lt. Anthony A. Demetriou (17-25)
 Lt. Thomas J. Hayden (26-31 July)
 2nd Platoon- Lt. Elvis E. Jones (1-17 July)
 Lt. Keith E. McLean (26-31 July)
 3rd Platoon- Lt. Charles G. Beatty
 Maintenance Officer- Herbert F. Stackhouse

At the battalion assembly area WSW of CARENTAN on 5 July the light tank company was attached to the medium companies, one platoon to each of A, B and C.

The tactical doctrine dictating this was flank protection for the medium company as it advanced with the infantry from one hedgerow to another.

In application the theory proved futile and the light platoons were committed principally in three roles:

1. To keep open the cross country route of communication which during this period was frequently cut by counter attacks and infiltrating bodies of enemy troops.
2. To protect infantry and regimental and infantry battalion CP's.
3. As tactical reserves.

Operation of the Company during Phase II are discussed under the medium companies.

Service Company

CO- Captain Raymond E. Carlson
 Bn. Maintenance Officer- Wm. P. Kennedy, Captain.
 Bn. Transportation Officer- 2nd Lt. James T. Hill.
 Co. Maintenance Officer- 2nd Lt. Adrian W. Buckingham.

The battalion assembly area WSW of CARENTAN was used by Service Company as an operating base from 5 July to 15 July, when it moved to the battalion bivouac at (371797).

During this phase operations of the company were particularly hazardous due to the strength of enemy resistance and his frequent counter attacks. The company operated from its base to the Utah beachhead and forward to the tank company CP's. Re-supply and vehicle evacuation were continuous throughout the period. Very great expenditure of ammunition during the phase taxed the re-supply facilities to the fullest.

The heavy vehicular losses placed an additional strain on the Battalion Maintenance Section. Evacuation of tanks and vehicles was accomplished under fire even in rear areas because of the continuous and heavy shelling to which the entire battalion

was subjected.

Truck drivers, mechanics, cooks, all personnel of the service echelons, were utilized to the fullest.

Phase III
(16 through 28 July)

On the 16th the battalion was attached to the Ninth Infantry Division. The battalion CO was able to secure a 24 hour delay in order to complete the company reorganization. The battalion was committed to the lines on the 17th, the medium companies A, B and C joining the 47th, 60th and 39th Infantry Regiments respectively.

Company D was not committed, but became instead a training and local replacement pool for the medium tank personnel.

Battalion Headquarters and Headquarters
Company

Headquarters Company's Assault Gun Platoon and Mortar Platoon were not committed, there being no opportunity for their employment. To assist the operation of the medium companies, the Headquarters Company Reconnaissance Platoon was attached to the medium companies and one squad with 1/4 ton truck to each company. Actual reconnaissance was limited; the missions of the reconnaissance squads were chiefly liaison between tank platoons and the command commanding officer.

On the night of the 17th the advance battalion CP had moved to (439740), the bulk of the CP installation remaining at (371797). On the 18th the advance CP moved just east of the "Bois due Hommet" at (424733). This large wooded area was then in use by elements of the 3rd Armored Division, waiting for our seizure of sufficient ground and road nets to facilitate the impending breakthrough.

From this position the advance CP supervised operations of the battalion through the 25th, or the first day of the breakthrough, after which it moved to the vicinity of "Hell's Crossroads", at (403704). The crossroads in question (402709) was the center of vehicular traffic to and from the front during this period. As a consequence it was subjected to constant and heavy enemy interdiction and barrage shell fire.

Headquarters Company, Company D, Service Company, and the remainder of Battalion Headquarters joined the advance CP at this new location on the 27th, moving from their position at (412757) from which they had operated since the 19th.

On the 29th the entire group moved out to a refitting area at (400600) SE of MARIGNY, the line companies joining the column en route.

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87Company A

On the afternoon of the 17th the company left the battalion bivouac at (371797) and marched by way of Tribenhau (3974) to make contact with the 47th Regiment of the 9th Division, along a line 418701-433699. The company base of supplies was established at 428728 near the 47th Regimental CP. The platoons moved directly to their respective infantry battalions from the route march.

The platoons had little activity on the 17th. On the 18th the first and third platoons supported the first and third battalions of the 47th toward the PERIERS-ST. LO main highway against very stubborn resistance.

By the close of the 18th, the first platoon had reached positions at 423683 with the third platoon 400 yards on its left flank, and abreast. The 1st battalion with its first platoon tanks was then placed in reserve, the tank platoons taking road block positions in an area at 422692.

On the 17th the third platoon reached a position at 425677 after which it was placed in mobile reserve at 430693 which it did until the 23rd when it shifted to the 1st platoon reserve positions in order to simplify the movement of the vehicles. During the evening of the 18th, Tech. Sergeant Saffield and T/4 Young were SWA and evacuated as a result of mortar fire and while working on the 3rd platoon tanks.

Meanwhile the 2nd platoon on the 18th and 19th occupied reserve positions at 409695. From the 20th to the 24th the platoon alternated positions in holding front line positions with the second battalion, 47th, which during the last three days of the phase was the only infantry battalion of the regiment committed to the line. Repeated counter attacks from enemy positions just south of the PERIERS-ST. LO road, resulted in personnel and vehicular losses.

On the 21st of July two tanks were knocked out by AT fire. As a replacement for one of them the 105MM assault gun was placed in the defensive position only to be knocked out by artillery, seriously wounding the commander, Sergeant C.S. Jones. The gun started to burn in the interior. Pfc M.M. Martin, loader, jumped back in the tank, then under heavy enemy fire, and threw out the burning equipment, waste, etc., thus saving the vehicle which was evacuated under its own power after dark.

The effort of the Division in this phase was to secure suitable ground from which an armored attack could be launched. Road nets were essential and the enemy's stubborn hold on the PERIERS-ST. LO road indicated only too well his knowledge of our needs. Therefore the great air attack of July 25th on the enemy position followed by artillery and combined tank-infantry assaults was planned by all units during the time of the 20th to 24th, days which were wet and cloudy giving the Air Corps no assistance and further hampering the movement on ground.

By Kox/AN/NEll NARA, Date 8/17/87.

Also from the 20 to 24th a new device was developed and installed on the final drives of tanks to permit them to plow through hedgerows without the need of their TNT or dozer tanks. These devices were known as "Clippers" or "hedge cutters", consisting of sharp, pointed 8" angle irons welded to the tank. These clippers when made of suitable steel would not bend or break and later proved invulnerable. The ones initially installed on the company tanks, however, were of inferior metal, many of them lasted only a day and all of them were gone within 3 days. However, they served their purpose and achieved surprise as well as effective penetration of the hedge rows as long as they lasted.

The breakthrough was expected to carry the regimental CT's far inland and the matter of supply of the platoons appeared difficult. The company CO arranged for additional basic loads of ammunition as well as increased stocks of gasoline and oil to be carried with the infantry battalion trains. One additional truck from the tank battalion Service Company was obtained to supplement the transport. The organic transport of the T.D. platoons also serve to carry some tank supplies.

All details were completed by the close of the 23rd. Thereafter, weather was the only consideration. On the 24th the weather looked favorable and the air attack started at 1300 but had to be called off, due to the sudden appearance of clouds. Two waves of planes passed over the company positions and turned back after jettisoning their bombs.

In the late morning of the 25th the weather cleared and the air attack commenced. 2700 planes, the majority of them 4 engine bombers participated. Flying at medium altitude of 7500 feet, the high level bombers went over in waves of 24 to 36 using the PERIERS- ST. LO road supplemented by artillery, smoke and their own smoke markers as a bomb line.

Some of the sticks fell short, were behind the lines of withdrawn troops, and a considerable number of tank men and infantry troops were wounded or killed.

In the 3rd platoon position, 2nd Lt. Campbell, platoon leader, was SWA by the short bombs and died of his wounds. S/Sgt. Gezon, platoon sergeant, took over the platoon during the air attack. Artillery and mortar fires were placed on the previously occupied troop positions to prevent the enemy from hugging our lines and escaping the bombardment. Following the air attack a 20 minute artillery concentration was laid down as our troops pushed off. In spite of the bombing the enemy to our immediate front put up stiff resistance. The company in support of the 47th succeeded in reaching positions at 395660 by the close of the day. The 60th infantry on the right of the main road to MARIGNY was having serious trouble. The 3rd platoon under Sgt. Gezon was temporarily attached to the 60th Infantry and pushed on the night of the 25th south and west to position at 386662, vicinity of MONTREUIL.

On the 26th the 3rd platoon continued to support the 60th,

By Boylan, Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87

West to 373668 West of LOZON. The 1st and 2nd platoons made little headway against stiff opposition and with the 1st and 2nd battalions were infiltrated back to positions near the PERIERS- ST. LO road at 387677 and 391682, respectively, the 1st platoon blocking the road from PERIERS.

The change in the right sector was made to permit room for the operation of the Armored Division through to MARIGNY and the road nets to the South thereof.

The 1st and 2nd platoons remained in position through the 27th and 28th alert to receive notice to relieve the 60th Infantry. On the 27th the 3rd platoon was relieved of the 60th and took assembly positions at 390663 and remained through the 28th.

During the nights of the 27th and 28th, the usual enemy air activity was present in the sector except that his presence was felt a bit more. AP bombs dropped in the 47th Regimental CP area, riddled the tank company CO's jeep tires, CP fly and shelter half. All personnel, however, were at least two feet under ground and escaped injury.

Company B

Following his reconnaissance on the 16th, Captain Pay on the 17th moved his company to join the 60th Infantry Regiment, of the 9th Infantry Division, then operating on the division right flank west of the CARENTAN- MARIGNY highway.

By the close of the 17th the platoons had joined the infantry battalions vicinity (400695). The following day the company moved to the MLR and established the tanks as pill-boxes to provide covering fire for the advance of the infantry. This proved successful and by the close of the 18th the tanks had moved forward to the position with the infantry vicinity (403687). The same tactics were employed on the 19th to assist the infantry to advance positions vicinity (400680), against heavy resistance.

The 20th found the company in defensive positions as for the 19th. No offensive action was undertaken, but a strong enemy counter attack on the 20th was repulsed.

As in the case of Company A, the period 20-24 July was devoted to preparation for the breakthrough. Company B's tanks were pulled out a few at a time and taken to Battalion Maintenance for the installation of "hedge clippers" which were to play an important part in the ensuing attacks.

On the 25th, following the great air bombardment described in the Company A account, Company B jumped off in support of the 60th Infantry and against heavy resistance in spite of the bombing, broke across the PERIERS- ST. LO road on a wide front of approximately 800 yards to take LE MESNIL-EURY and ground flanking it on the 25th and 26th. (See map attached).

By Boylan, Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87

On the 27th the company supported the 60th Infantry in a drive toward the high ground to the west in the direction of PERIERS, taking LOZON and reaching positions along a N-S grid line 375. (See map).

On the 28th the Company was relieved from the lines and went into a company bivouac at (401672), there remaining on alert for attachment to the 3rd Armored Division. This alert was discontinued by the close of the 28th and the company prepared to move with the battalion to a refitting area.

C Company

July 17th Company C with other combat echelons moved to join the 9th Infantry Division in the vicinity of Tribenhou at 1830 this date.

On July 18 Company C joined the 39th Infantry Regiment and the platoons moved out with the infantry into position. The 1st platoon took up a defensive position 1000 yards W of AMIGNY at approximately 428678. The 2nd platoon was given road block missions 3 miles SW of ESGLANDES at 420668. No action was seen. The 3rd platoon was in regimental reserve at ESGLANDES.

July 19th the 1st platoon jumped off in an attack from 430680 and advanced 200 yards against the enemy. The 2nd platoon remained in position at road block 3 miles SW of ESGLANDES. The 3rd platoon remains in regimental reserve at ESGLANDES.

July 20th the 1st platoon moved to a more advantageous position for defense against possible counter attack by enemy armor. The 1st platoon was relieved by 1300 by the 3rd platoon and moved to ESGLANDES to bivouac. The 3rd platoon then took over the same defensive positions. The 2nd platoon is still holding road block at 420668.

July 21st the 3rd platoon and the 3rd battalion, 39th regiment, move up to position formerly held by the 2nd platoon and establish road blocks 3 miles S of ESGLANDES. No action was seen by the platoon on this date.

July 22 and 23 all positions are static with the platoons in defensive positions with their battalions. No action anywhere in zone during this period of time. Time spent on alerts, maintenance and resting while in position.

July 24 the platoons and infantry pulled back to a previously established safety zone in anticipation of mass bombings at 1300. Adverse weather conditions forced air activity out and the units held their positions for the day.

On July 25th the mass concentration of bombs from medium and heavy bombers began at 1030 and was followed by a very intense concentration of artillery fire for twenty minutes. During this time Company C remained at the jump off position with the 39th Infantry Regiment. The platoons were with their battalions and in position at 422672 to 434668.

A "H" hour the company jumped with battalions and platoons abreast into the "breakthrough" area. The 3rd platoon under Lt. Parker attempted to cross the Terrete river but found it

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87.

impassable so he swung back to the right of the river and proceeded across country. The 1st and 2nd platoons turned SE down the PERIERS- ST. LO road and then turned right and across country. The 1st and 2nd platoons were on the left flank of the Division Zone. All platoons met heavy resistance in the attack but fought through to the town and moved SW of la Chapelle in Juger (408648). Here they skirted to the left of the town and moved SW to approximately 387646. At this point they set up a defense position for the night in anticipation of possible counter attacks. Heavy shelling was received during the attack and thenight.

26 July found the 1st platoon jumping off in a new attack at 0500 and drove to a new position approximately 1000 yards No of POTIGNY. Here they set up a defensive position. The 2nd and 3rd platoons followed the advance and as their battalions took the ground S and SW they set up sections as road blocks. The second platoon moved with the 3rd battalion to a position 1/2 mile SW of LA JAMINIERE and set up road blocks 348628 as defense for that locality.

The 3rd platoon moved to a point NW of MARIGNY on the MARIGNY- CARENTAN road and set up a road block (386620) in support of the infantry. The 2nd and 3rd platoons patrolled S to the MARIGNY- ST SAUVIEUR-LENDELIN road to cut enemy communication, but with only one section while the remaining section held the road blocks.

On the 27th of July the platoons held their respective defense and road block positions but sent out patrols of sections on the main roads, to sever communications and guard against possible enemy armored counter attacks. No heavy fighting was encountered or counter attacks made on the positions.

The platoons moved to an assembly area for C and A Companies on July 28. There they reorganized for the contemplated battalion march to a rest area. The company assembly was 3/4 mile NE of POTIGNY (390645). C Company relieved from 39th Regiment this date and reverted to battalion control.

Service Company

Again during this phase of July all elements of Service Company were taxed heavily.

Supply

The transportation platoon was heavily involved in the transport of supplies of all classes from army dumps at the beachheads to the using companies at the front. Although the expending combat companies were relatively close together, the tremendous expenditure of ammunition and gas caused by the heavy operations kept the supply echelons continually busy under intermittent shelling which interdicted routes of communication.

Maintenance and Evacuation

The July 1-4 refit was not all that could be desired, and as a consequence the July operations took a heavy mechanical toll which drew heavily on the facilities of both company and

By Boylan/Neil NARA, Date 8/17/87.

battalion maintenance. Tanks and vehicles were repeatedly repaired under fire. The installation of the "hedge clippers" required considerable ingenuity to maintain their secrecy and to accomplish their fitting without weakening appreciably the tank defense in the lines during the period 21-24 July.

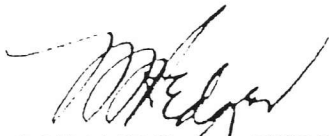
Phase IV.
(29 through 21 July)

Although the battalion remained attached to the 9th Infantry Division it moved on 29 July to a refitting area SE of MARIGNY vicinity (400600).

In this assembly area tanks and wheeled vehicles were repaired to the extent of existing facilities; ordnance checks were conducted and repairs made, and individual clothing and equipment shortages reported and partially corrected.

The Battalion secured a film projector and motion pictures were shown in the loft of a barn.

On the 31st the battalion was placed on a 3 hour alert to rejoin the 9th Infantry Division. The alert did not materialize until 1 August.


LOVEAIRE A. HEDGES,
Major, Cavalry,
Unit Historian.