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NARRATIVE ACCOUNT OF ACTION

The 80th Division was still occupying a defensive position along the west bank of the Seille River on 1 November 1944 and the 80th Reconnaissance Troop was in Division reserve with all four platoons and the Troop trains set up in tactical bivouac near Morey, France. One section of the 3rd Platoon, however, was still carrying on liaison duties with the 44th Armored Infantry Regiment on the Division's right flank, a mission assigned them in late September. The Troop was also operating, on a 24-hour-day basis, the Division observation post on Mont St Jean, the dominating terrain feature of the area.

This situation existed from the beginning of the period through 4 November 1944. In addition to vehicular maintenance the Troop conducted technical training and completed several smaller missions within the Troop area.

By the 5th of November the Troop was busy with last-minute preparations for the great 3rd Army Offensive to the East which was scheduled to open on the 8th. Assigned the mission of supplementing signal communication within the Division during the attack, the 1st Platoon pulled out on the 5th to set up one of its three sections with each of the three Infantry Regiments within the Division. The remaining two sections of the 3rd Platoon, given a liaison mission with the 4th Armored Division during the big push, moved to that unit's command post near Nancy on the same date. Arrangements were completed on the 7th when the Troop CP moved to Division Headquarters at Ville au Val and as units of the Division, 4th and 6th Armored jumped off on the 8th of November, everything was in a state of preparedness.

Communication within the Division was speeded up considerably through the 1st Platoon's radios and as units of the 80th moved rapidly forward no trouble was experienced. The attack proceeded as planned and by the 9th of November the Division had established several bridgeheads over the swollen Seille River. As the 6th Armored Division began their movement to get in front of the infantry elements the 2nd Platoon was directed to report their progress and serve as traffic control near the bridge and trestle at Port Sur Seille.

Five towns were seized by Division troops in their onslaught toward the east on the 9th and progress toward Delme Ridge, the outstanding terrain obstacle in the path of attacking troops, was considerable. By the 10th the greater portion of the height was taken. Meanwhile there was no change in the Troop dispositions until the 11th of November when the 3rd Platoon was relieved of its liaison mission with the 4th Armored Division which had passed through the infantry and advanced well beyond Chateau Salins. The 2nd Platoon was also relieved of its traffic control duties as the entire 80th had now passed east of the Seille River.

The Division took up the pursuit on the 12th as the German resistance in the immediate area was evidently overrun. Several bridges were seized intact by our Infantry and the little Nied River, turned into a torrent by the steady rains of the period, was crossed at several points. The 1st Platoon experienced some trouble in moving with the Infantry since off-the-road movement was impossible but they nevertheless continued to efficiently carry

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out their communication mission with the three Regiments.

On the 13th the Troop received the mission of patrolling the north flank of the Division in the vicinity of Vittoncourt and Voimhaut in addition to the infantry liaison duties. The Germans were continuing their delaying actions, using towns as strong points, and both the 2nd and 3rd Platoons developed enemy positions in and around Chanville shortly after they had left on their mission at 1200.

Through the following day both platoons continued their patrolling activities. The 2nd reported the road leading into Chanville cratered and impassible, the first instance encountered of this type of obstacle. Blown by dynamite in the middle of the road bed the crater formed a very effective block since cross-country movement to bypass it was impossible. The crater ranged from 10 to 15 feet in depth and as broad as the road. Approaches were mined. The 3rd Platoon killed one German and scattered several others in the vicinity of the crater in a small engagement. Throughout the day, however, they received heavy artillery and nebelwerfer fire but sustained no injuries to personnel.

By the 15th of November the 3rd Army's strategy was evident as elements to the north of the Division were closing in on the fortress city of Metz in an enveloping movement. The 80th, protecting the rear and right flank of the XII Corps, halted in position south of the Foret De Remilly and engaged the Troop in patrolling the north flank. On the 16th a section of the 2nd Platoon established contact with the 5th Division's reconnaissance unit and coordinated patrolling activities. The 1st Platoon was relieved of its task with the infantry on the same date and moved to Vittoncourt to establish an OP covering terrain to the north.

Aggressive patrolling was continued through the 19th of November when the 2nd Platoon undertook a route reconnaissance through Voimhaut Chanville and Arriance but encountered no resistance. The following day the 1st and 2nd were directed to reconnoiter the entire Foret De Remilly and they elected to work dismounted because of the heavily-forested terrain and condition of roads. Movement was extremely slow because of the numerous craters, mines and other obstacles located. One platoon of Company B, 305th Engineers, attached to the two platoons, aided considerably and by nightfall the 2nd Platoon had determined Hemilly, on the northeast edge of the woods, clear of enemy and had set up an OP looking into Guinglange. The 1st Platoon worked into Hemilly without contacting a single enemy. Meanwhile the 3rd Platoon, still at Vittoncourt, sent one section into Chanville and found it un-occupied by enemy forces. Their missions completed, all three platoons moved back to Vittoncourt during the night and prepared to move in advance of the Division the next day.

The Division opened a reconnaissance in force the following day, moving north and northeast through Faulquemont and Pont Pierre. All three platoons were assigned reconnaissance missions but ran into trouble shortly after they had moved out. The planned bridge across the Nied-Allmand River at Pont Pierre had not been completed on schedule because of heavy enemy fire concentrated in that area and the platoons were forced to proceed to Faulquemont to cross. The

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1st Platoon moved to the northwest of Faulquemont and soon ran into a mortar barrage but managed to bypass it and work through the day, despite numerous enemy contacts and bad road conditions, to a point north of the Forêt De Steinbesch. Here they discovered a road block covered by enemy fire and received another shelling. The 2nd and 3rd, working over low terrain, were unable to advance very far to the east and northeast because of the soggy terrain and cratered roads.

All three platoons continued their reconnaissance on the 22nd of November, working to the vicinity of Bamberstroff. The Germans were set up in the old Maginot line fortifications and the platoons were forced to use dismounted patrols to develop enemy positions. Much information concerning the emplacements was reported and the Division continued to enlarge their bridgehead across the Nied-Allenand prior to an assault upon the forts.

These advance patrols continued to operate the next day and each platoon located many enemy positions in the vicinity of Hallering and Marange, evidently strong points in the enemy defensive set-up. No casualties were sustained by troop personnel, however, even though in the late afternoon the 1st Platoon was attacked by a strong enemy patrol armed with automatic weapons. In the skirmish that followed the platoon killed four enemy and took seven prisoners, two of them badly wounded.

As the Division readjusted their positions in preparation for an assault on the Maginot, the Troop continued its reconnaissance on the following day with both mounted and dismounted patrols. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons, working in the same vicinity, trapped an enemy patrol of 12 men, held back their fire until the patrol was barely 15 yards away and then opened up. The patrol was wiped out completely. It later developed, by the capture of a German battalion commander, that this patrol had been sent out to scout American positions in order that enemy defenses could be prepared to meet the inevitable attack that was coming later.

The Troop was relieved of its reconnaissance mission late on the 24th of November as Division troops took all their objectives within the Maginot Line. Later during the night each platoon was directed to destroy a junction box of the Maginot's communication system. The mission was completed but one man, Sgt. Herbert L. Marshall, lost his life as a result of the explosion.

Through the 25th of November the platoons were shifted to the Division's right flank as the 80th turned eastward in its assault. The 2nd contacted friendly infantry at Pont Pierre and started a reconnaissance to the east. The 3rd moved to Guessling-Hemering to contact elements of the 6th Armored coming up from the south but were unable to maneuver because of a flooded region in that vicinity. The 1st Platoon moved into Folschviller, but only after a maximum engineer cooperation in the clearing of mines and craters. Before the day's end the 2nd and 3rd had sent patrols toward Lelling, a small town heavily defended by German troops. Shortly after dark the 1st Platoon in Folschviller underwent a concentrated artillery bombardment and two men, Pfc Robert L. Weaver and Pfc Clarence W. Elwood, were injured by shrapnel.

Resistance evidently broke suddenly the next day as the 1st

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Platoon, working on the main road from St Avoird to Sarreguemines, soon determined. Before evening they had advanced eight miles to Seinghouse in what was determined to be a local breakthrough. Infantry elements moved in quickly to secure the breach and before 2000 hours on the 27th, Company D of the 702nd Tank Battalion was attached to the Troop to add strength to the advance units. The 2nd Platoon worked into LaChambre but not before they had encountered a heavy enemy tank and knocked it out with well-aimed 37mm gun fire. The tank commander was killed with the first blast from the 37mm and succeeding shots disabled the vehicle causing the remainder of the crew to flee. The 3rd Platoon which had taken over the 2nd's mission of protecting the Division's right flank earlier in the day, had been relieved and by nightfall had completed another mission of reconnaissance to the east through the wooded terrain southeast of LaChambre.

As a direct result of the 1st Platoon's splendid advance of the day previous, the Division chalked up an eight-mile gain on the 28th of November. All three platoons of the Troop were engaged in the vicinity of Farbersviller and attempted to bypass the town but met heavier resistance on each maneuver. At Henriville heavy anti-tank and artillery fire was encountered and entrance into the town was impossible due to many dug-in positions held by the Germans on the nearby high ground. At Puttelange, to the south, it was the same story. But the three platoons, by developing these strong points, established the enemy lines facing the Division.

On the 29th the 3rd Platoon moved toward Betting les St Avoird and before dark they had liberated the town. Patrols also determined many enemy positions along the road and railroad north of the village. An attempt to enter Farbersviller by the 1st Platoon was again to no avail since the superior forces surrounding the town drove them back with heavy concentrations of fire. An attempt to bypass the town again failed due to considerable enemy forces in the vicinity of Puttelange who held fields of fire and observation throughout the area. The 2nd Platoon spent the day patrolling near Henriville and observing an important road junction leading into the Division zone from that village.

Both the 1st and 3rd Platoons were relieved on the 29th and assembled at LaChambre. The 2nd continued their patrolling around Henriville as the period closed.

Bad weather conditions, limited visibility, muddy terrain, and the extensive use of demolitions and craters by the enemy hampered the movement of the platoons throughout the period. An epidemic of flat tires also plagued the Troop after they hit the area east of Faulquemont causing much concern with drivers. It was believed the fleeing Germans had sprayed all road beds in that area with nails and the act proved its nuisance value.

The period closed with the 1st and 3rd Platoons in reserve at the Troop CP in LaChambre and the 2nd Platoon still engaged in their mission at Henriville.