

MOVE ALONG Aug,  
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THINGS I HAVE LEARNED:

1. The Situation - Many men claim that they do not know the situation and many times they are justified. Platoon, squad and company <sup>commanders</sup> must tell each man what his squad, platoon and company is to do. Once this has been done and the man knows his objective, the units on his right and left and his part in the plan, the cry "I don't know what the situation is," becomes a fallacy. When the action begins and progresses, the individual man is not only a part of the situation, he is the situation. No one knows more of what is happening around him than he does.
2. Cover and Concealment - Much time has been spent in training problems criticizing that "so and so did not take advantage of cover and concealment". It is my view, having seen men react in combat, that the American soldier has a fine instinct for just what cover is. I have observed men with less than eight weeks of hasty training find cover with just the whine of a shell or the crack of a shot for a prod. The difficulty which then faces the small unit leader, even among seasoned troops, is to get them out of the cover and moving again. This is particularly important in view of the favorite German tactic used against attacking troops: the Germans sought to pin down the attacker with small arms fire and then pound the sitting ducks with mortar, artillery and sniper fire. The only solution we found was to push through the fire, take our casualties and close in and destroy the enemy and his weapons.
3. TRENCH FOOT : On the western front last winter (in 1944) it suddenly became apparent that there was such a thing as Trenchfoot. In my opinion Trenchfoot was a disease of ignorance. We were unprepared for it and only discovered it when cases started filling up the aid station. I believe that training in the care of the doughboy's feet under the most difficult conditions is as important as instruction in malarial control and the venereal diseases. We helped solve the problem by hastily issuing overshoes (which should have been foreseen earlier) and a clean pair of socks to each man with the rations. We were in a static situation and the men were paired off to rub each others feet vigorously for ten minutes to restore circulation. Emphasis should be placed on the severe consequences of trenchfoot to discourage some soldiers who would gladly suffer trenchfoot to escape the hardships, dangers and attendant discomforts of combat.
4. REPLACEMENTS (Reinforcements) - It has been my experience that in quantity, reinforcements were usually available on short notice. However in the case of specially trained replacements there was a drastic shortage. When a mortar gunner becomes a casualty, an ex-mess sergeant can't fill his shoes. An officer trained as a rifle platoon leader is seldom a successful communications officer. In the interest of greater efficiency and less casualties it is necessary that a man know his job before reaching the battlefield, rather than try to learn it while under fire.
5. WHEN THE STAFF PLANS - The time elements in most plans is usually the weakest factor in the plan. Staff officers must give the troops who are to execute it the time necessary to prepare themselves. If adequate time is available for reconnaissance, the mission is usually accomplished with less casualties and much more coordination among the smaller units. The company commander and his platoon leaders must have time to make their plans and issue their orders. They are the ones who will do the job. The mission is dropped in their laps and from then on it's their baby. The execution of the mission will be no better than the preparations (prior) they are able to make.

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6. THE INFANTRY-TANK TEAM - The problems which arise in infantry-tank cooperation are largely confined to the tank commander and the infantry platoon leader. There must be a clearer understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the tank by the infantryman and a similar understanding by the tanker. Our main difficulties, on the infantryman's side, was to make the tanker realize that to effectively support infantry he must take risks. Many times when the tank was called on to eliminate a machine gun which was sweeping an open field, the tanker refused, fearing an antitank gun. Then, too, the infantry often expected the tank to do jobs which could have been handled by their own weapons. The tank company usually attached to the infantry regiment should be as much a part of the outfit as any rifle company. Communications between the tanks and doughboys must be improved (we used the EE-8 phone clamped on the rear of the tank, but it was not too satisfactory). It is an accepted fact that tanks need continuous maintenance, but it is not wise, from a morale standpoint, to pull tanks out of the line without replacement (them) from the tank reserve. The presence of our tanks makes the doughboy feel better. But he becomes a little apprehensive when he sees a tank withdrawn. "After all," he reasons, "that guy has three inches of armor. All I've got is this O.D. shirt. If its too hot for him, what the hell am I doing here?"

7. VILLAGE FIGHTING - The most successful method we used in taking a village or town was to plaster it with fuze delay and WP shells. 81-mm mortars were used to fire on streets and open areas. Most European houses are built with walls two and even four feet thick. However, almost all houses were roofed with tile and a fuze delay shell usually penetrated the roof and attic before detonating, raising hell with any Germans occupying the place. After a suitable amount of shelling and when a few houses were blazing merrily, we moved in. In nearly every instance where such preparations were made, the Germans garrisoning the town were badly disorganized and driven into the cellars making them easy meat for grenades and bazookas.

8. HEAVY WEAPONS -INFANTRY BN - In many cases the Hvy Wpns Co of the Inf Bn failed to carry out the mission for which it was designed. Its function is to provide fire support to the rifle companies. Too often, as a result of hasty planning, the company was merely attached by platoon to the rifle companies. The favorite method was to attach the HMG platoons to the attacking companies. The 81-mm mortars were handed over to the reserve company and the Bn CO had neatly disposed of his heavy weapons. The result was that there was no coordinated fire support for that Bn. The HMG platoons faithfully trailed in the wake of the leading Cos, taking their casualties and almost never setting up to fire. The guns were dead weight and the gunners patient pack horses. Seldom did the HMGs fire overhead. Most of their fire was direct from the midst of the riflemen. It rarely took long for an enemy S.P. Gun or mortar to write finis to a gun and crew. The greatest reason, in my opinion, was a failure to grasp the fact that these weapons have long range. Placing the weapons too close tied them up in a fire fight along with the riflemen, when at a longer range they could have had a definite influence in the fighting by knocking out or neutralizing enemy weapons which were harassing the attacking companies. Too little thought was given to selection of positions prior to the attack and a plan of supporting fires. The Bn CO committed them and that was that. The Bn Co must realize that his Hvy Wpns Co is a very valuable asset - not a step-child.

9. BATTLEFIELD SALVAGE - The American Army is blessed with what seems to be an unlimited supply of equipment. However, there are times when certain items cannot be had at any price. To meet these occasions our Bn formed a salvage team under the direction of the Bn S-4. Their transport consisted of a 3/4 ton truck unwittingly donated by an adjacent AAA outfit. The men came from those replacements who were too old or unfit for line combat duty. They were briefed on the route the Bn would take either on the march or in the attack. First priority for recovery were automatic weapons, ammunition and bazookas and mortars. Next was

clothing, steel helmets, etc. These items were returned to the service company field train where the weapons were cleaned and repaired and sent up again to the Bn S4. The worth of this little team was clearly demonstrated a dozen times when urgently needed weapons were returned to action less than 24 hours after their loss. The amount of clothing and equipment salvaged through these means gave the Bn S-4 a handy backlog and averted what would have been long delays in replacement through normal supply channels.