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AFTER ACTION REPORT

80th Rcn Troops

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NARRATIVE ACCOUNT OF ACTION

The 80th Reconnaissance Troop completed landing onto French soil at 0900, 6 August 1944 and proceeded immediately by administrative conveyance to the 80th Division concentration area at San Jorces. After spending two days in tactical bivouac, the Troop received orders to move to a second Division concentration area in the vicinity of Montigny, but shortly before the 87 mile trip was completed orders were rescinded and the Troop was given its first combat mission of leading a reinforced combat team of the Division into Le Mans where a reported German Armored thrust had reached by that date. At 0700, 8 August 1944, the Troop completed the mission by contacting elements of the 90th Division one mile east of Le Mans where the German breakthrough had been halted during the night by the 90th Division and strong air support. From that point the Troop was ordered into reserve and set up tactical bivouac five miles east of Valgees.

On 9 August 1944, the Troop received its second combat mission of reconnoitering the area NW of St Jean and the second and third platoons reinforced by light tanks from the 702 Tank Bn moved out at 0600, 10 August 1944 on the mission. No enemy resistance was found in the area which had previously been cleared by advances of the 90th Division but the third platoon placed up a platoon of four friendly civilians at Perennes and both platoons did considerable road reconnaissance on the first day. Six more platoons, all Poles, were picked up by the third platoon before midnight of the 10th of August. The Troop area was extended eastward on 11 August 1944 and the Troop continued to reconnoiter in advance of elements of the Division during the day and also carrying out a secondary mission of reporting the advance of Division foot troops toward Ville Le Celliers, the Division objective. By midnight the mission was completed without difficulty because of no enemy contact, the smooth, rolling terrain, bridges intact, and no enemy minefields or blocks encountered.

The Troop area was again extended on 12 August 1944 to an area bounded by Mas, Champagnonville, Villaines, Douge-Clamion, Montreuil-le-Haut, St Martin de Cosmes, a strip 17 miles wide and 10 miles deep. During the reconnaissance of this area, the platoons encountered for the first time heavy minefields and evidences of German occupation but had no contact with the enemy and completed the mission by 0600 that date.

The Division continued its advance to the north the next day and the Troop again received the mission of area and road reconnaissance ahead of infantry elements. On 13 August 1944, with one platoon of tanks, infantry and engineers attached to each of the three reconnaissance platoons, the Troop moved northward from Ville Le Celliers on three routes toward a general east-west line running from Pre-Bo-Pall to Alencon. All three platoons moved without contact until 0930 when a second platoon, moving in the center zone, ran into a mine field, previously cleared by friendly engineers but re-mined during the night by the Germans. Two second platoon jeeps and one tank were knocked out by mines which were laid three deep in the approaches of a cross road at St Martin. Three men were lost and three others injured, not including several other casualties among men attached. Mine fields and blown bridges hampered the advance of all three platoons but by-passes and fords were found and all three platoons moved northward to the designated point before the march was ordered to halt at 1930. After running into sniper fire in the vicinity of Pre-Bo-Pall, the first platoon took two prisoners.

Again the mission changed on 14 August 1944 and the first platoon was ordered to conduct an area reconnaissance on a strip bounded by Pre-Bo-Pall,

Couptrain, Le Morps, and area approximately five miles wide and 10 miles long. Before a complete reconnaissance could be made, however, the mission again changed and all three platoons were sent to reconnoiter and secure a Division assembly area bounded by Bias, Jersy, Aron, Moulay, Montsur, Neui and Evron, a flat, wooded area 10 miles wide and 15 miles deep. The platoons successfully completed the mission on 15 August 1944 without casualty, and were relieved and moved into the Troop CP which was set up just northeast of Bias.

On 17 August 1944, the Troop moved out by administrative march to an area southwest of Mortres in advance of the Division which was moving northward to Argentan to close the southern arm of the Falaise trap on Von Kluge's 7th German Army, now caught in a pocket between British troops on the north and American troops in the south. The Troop outposted the Division sector as infantry moved into position and then two platoons set out on reconnaissance missions of terrain lying to the south of Argentan and the Orne River. Meanwhile, the first platoon moved westward to contact and maintain liaison with friendly elements on the left. After completing a thorough area and river reconnaissance and contacting friendly elements on the left, the platoons moved into reserve as the 413 and 417 attached Argentan and closed the trap on a considerable portion of the fleeing 7th German Army. On 18 August 1944, with the battle of Argentan in full swing, two CP's, overlooking the terrain to the northeast of the city, were established and two sneak patrols, with the mission of reconnoitering bridges and gun positions in the southern edge of the city, were sent out.

After the fall of Argentan on 20 August 1944, two platoons of the Troop contacted the attacking infantry regiments and maintained liaison between them and Division. The Troop assembled at Alenches on 22 August 1944 in Division Reserve.

After a four day rest period, most of which was taken up with maintenance of vehicles, organizational and personal equipment, the Troop was ordered to move by administrative march to the vicinity of Sens. Leaving Alenches at 0430, 26 August 1944, the Troop crossed the Division IP at Mortree at 0500 and proceeded on a 350-mile route through Carrouges, Couptrain, Javren, Villaines, Sille le Guillaume, Chantenay, Meseray, Jre, Leconnoy, Le Grand Lac, La Chatre, Montoire, Vendome, Moree, Orleans, Chateauf, Bellegarde, Montargis, and Sens. All four platoons closed in the Division concentration area 5 miles northwest of Sens at 2300 26 August 1944.

At 0600 27 August the Troop was given the mission of reconnoitering the area southwest to a line roughly sur Seine-Froyes and to locate and hold two bridge sites on the Seine River until relieved by Division infantry elements. Two platoons, the second and third, took over the mission with the first being held in reserve. By noon that day the platoons had reported all bridges in their respective zones blown. The second platoon, however, located a ponton bridge put up by adjacent units and both platoons used this means in crossing the Seine and continued northward on a similar mission to the Aube River. With the start of this maneuver on 27 August the Troop held the distinction of being lead element of the entire allied advance to the northeast.

Both platoons experienced some difficulty in locating a bridge across the Aube since the retreating Germans had blown every crossing in the Division sector but at 1030 28 August both platoons crossed at Arcis sur Aube and continued their road and bridge reconnaissance northwest toward Chalons sur Marne.

Although the entire area from the Seine to Chalons had never been cleared of enemy, the Troop encountered little difficulty other than blown bridges mentioned and consequently moved rapidly toward the objective. During the night of 28 August and morning of 29 August the two platoons were ordered to contact and maintain liaison with the 317th and 318th Infantry who were moving into Chalons to liberate it without much of a struggle on the 29th. The Troop took 12 prisoners during the day.

Some difficulty developed before the Marne River and a canal running parallel to it were crossed, but again the second platoon located a ponton in the 4th Armored Division zone and the first, second and headquarters platoons crossed. The third platoon, working on the extreme left, was forced to wait until Division engineers came up and put in a bridge in that sector before crossing. At that time they were the lead motorized element in the advance northward.

All three platoons proceeded from Chalons and went into position out-posting the Division area along a line Tours sur Marne, Veray, Suippes, and Le Fresnoy on 30th August. The third platoon made contact with a group of German riflemen one mile south of Mourleins and inflicted 40 casualties on the enemy without receiving much opposition. Around noon of the same day, the third wiped out 12 more Germans who had barricaded themselves in a house in the same vicinity. No casualties to our men resulted in either engagement. Throughout the day the first platoon captured and grounded three enemy planes in their sector and the third, holding down the most northerly outpost position, captured a German Army Camp of 50 large buildings, several artillery pieces and an ammunition dump. Two freight trains, containing parachutes and other miscellaneous equipment, were also captured by the first and headquarters platoon. Two men of the second platoon were injured before the mission had been completed, however, after two German tanks and a half-track, apparently hidden inside the outpost line, moved east through a post and fired several rounds into their position. Prisoners taken on the 30th included 7 taken by the second platoon and three by the first.

With the advance of the 3rd Army to the east, the platoon was given the mission on the 31st to move in advance of motorized Division infantry from Chalons along three routes leading eastward to St. Mihiel and Bar Le Due on the Meuse River, a distance of some 50 miles. The advance went uninterrupted until 0900 when the third platoon ran into a German ambush 2 miles N. of Nettancourt. By quick maneuvering the platoon got two sections out of the well-situated trap but nine men were missing after the action, all believed to have been captured or escaped into the surrounding woods. Three quarter-tons and one Armored Car were lost in the action.

Shortly after the third met enemy resistance, the second and first contacted hostile elements on a north-south line running through Nettancourt. Both escaped without damage and continued their advance after the Germans had pulled out of position and retreated to the east. One injury resulted east of Nettancourt when an Armored Car of a friendly unit pulled too close to one of our vehicles and set off a mine. The Troop completed its mission in the late afternoon with the first platoon clearing Bar Le Due, the second liberating Krise and the third taking Villers.