

HEADQUARTERS 905TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO #80, U. S. Army

9 January 1945

SUBJECT: The Story of the 905th Field Artillery Battalion

TO : I & E Office, Headquarters 80th Infantry Division, APO 80, U.S. Army
Attention: Capt. Robert D. Hanson, I & E Officer

Submitted without heading is the attached story of the 905th Field Artillery Battalion. I have endeavoured to give you a sketch of one battery in action, the story of an officer and an enlisted man in combat, and the operation most severely testing the combat efficiency of the Battalion.

If the details in the attached story are insufficient, please advise me immediately so that steps may be taken to supply the missing items. If a more expansive summary of the Battalion is desired I shall be glad to supply you with more information.

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By ED NARA Date 9-23-00

Commanded by Lt Col JOHN W. BROWNING of San Antonio, Texas, the 905th Field Artillery Battalion followed the regular pattern of combat team training since its activation at Camp Forrest, Tennessee in July 1942. Landing in France about the time of the break-through at St. Lo, the Battalion has maintained direct support of the 319th Infantry Regiment.

As the enemy withdrew across the plains of France, the Battalion made rapid motor marches to maintain contact. As the Infantry met prepared enemy defensive positions, artillery support grew more and more effective. The forward observer became the "man of the hour". The following operation of "C" Battery illustrates Battalion activity during this period. The mission of the 3rd Battalion, 319th Infantry was to take Toul and establish a bridgehead across the Moselle River. With Toul in their hands, the Infantry called for an artillery preparation across the river on the town of Don Martin. The battery was credited with knocking out six enemy machine guns. At H hour the Infantry made a boat crossing without a casualty. Two battery forward observers crossed with the initial wave and supported the advancing infantry elements. The action was completed in five hours, and "C" Battery received the Infantry's highest praise, "Finest artillery support we've ever had!"

On 16 September when mud and rain made operations difficult in the Moselle River valley, 1st Lt EDGAR C. WILSON, of Knoxville, Tennessee was serving as an artillery forward observer with "B" Company, 319th Infantry. The village of Loisy, five miles below Pont-a-Mousson, was occupied by the company. Wilson, with his crew, went forward with the 2d platoon to better his observation. Through the mist the enemy counter-attacked with one company of infantry and five Mk IV tanks. American tanks coming up from the platoon's left rear were disabled by enemy direct fire. When the platoon leader became a casualty, Wilson assumed temporary command and strengthened the platoon front. During the entire operation the forward observer was subject to the crossfire from machine guns, small arms, mortars, and tanks. Despite this Lt. Wilson effectively adjusted artillery fire upon the enemy. The counter-attack ended with two blackened enemy tanks and half a company of enemy dead in front of the platoon.

Not all the heroic action took place on the front lines. On 5 January in Merzig, Luxembourg, enemy artillery struck a parked ammunition truck setting fire to the wooden cases. Sgt Reo J. Davis of Warsaw, Ohio, a chief of section in the Battalion ammunition train, raced from his nearby quarters, climbed on the truck, and extinguished the flames before they could ignite the ammunition. Other ammunition trucks were parked within a 150 yard radius. Davis by his action saved many rounds of much needed ammunition.

Shifting with other Third Army units from the Lorraine region to the right flank of the Bastogne pocket, the 905th Field Artillery Battalion took up its assigned task of driving, with its supported infantry, a wedge into the counter-attacking German forces. As the 319th Infantry took up defensive positions in the vicinity of Heiderscheid, Tadler, and Ringel in Eastern Luxembourg, the enemy counter-attacked vigorously. 105mm brass and ammunition boxes piled high in the battery positions. Gunners and cannoneers toiled night and day. The forward observers maintained their ceaseless vigil over the front lines. Enemy counter-attacks came regularly supported by tanks, half-tracks, and infantry heavily armed with automatic weapons. Radio channels were crammed with fire missions. The 2d Battalion occupied the town of Heiderscheid on the high ground overlooking the Sure River. The enemy counter-attacked with tanks and encircled the town before being beaten off by artillery-infantry fire which ringed the town. At Ringel where the terrain is an artilleryman's nightmare, the enemy stubbornly counter-attacked from three sides.

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