

M. G. Co., 132ND INFANTRY, January 30, 1919.

From: COMMANDING OFFICER, Machine Gun Co., 132nd Infantry.

To: COMMANDING OFFICER, 132nd Infantry.

Subject: Report on Action of the Machine Gun Company, 132nd Infantry, while Holding Salient in Bois de FAYS from October 6th to 12th, 1918.

On the night of October 6-7, 1918, this Company relieved the Machine Gun Company, 59th Infantry, as per verbal order of the Commanding Officer, Third Battalion, 132nd Infantry. This salient being in the form of a horseshoe, I directed Lieut. Henry S. Dutch and the Second Platoon to take their position at the apex of the horseshoe, in support of the Companies "L" and "M", 132nd Infantry. I then ordered Lieut. Williams, in command of the First Platoon, to place one section on the right flank in support of Company "I" and another section in support of Company "K" on the left flank. I retained the Headquarters Platoon and the Third Platoon at my P.C. at the junction of two paths, which gave me access to all positions, I, in that manner, being able to keep in close touch with my guns by means of runners. I was also enabled to maintain a general supervision over all ration carrying details coming to the rear. This position, although being the best from a strategical point of view, was subjected to an intermittent artillery fire from Briculles on the right flank, consisting of minenwerfer fire, artillery fire from a battery located to the right of the Bois de Forêt, and from a battery located near Cunel, to our left front. I instructed all men to dig in to afford head cover.

On the afternoon of October 7th, I was advised by runner that the enemy was attacking on our right front, occupied by Company "M", who asked for machine gun support. I instructed Sergeant Dean to go forward with one gun and crew, reporting on his arrival to Lieut. Yagle. Received another report by runner that the enemy was attacking in force. I immediately ordered "Stand By Reserve Guns." The minenwerfers on the right flank then opened, making the position of the machine guns in the right flank untenable, one shell mortally wounding Private Scalzetti. Upon consultation with the Commanding Officer, Company "I", we decided to withdraw the troops to a better position in the Wood, leaving an observation post and keeping in touch with Company "M" by means of connecting files. We were advised that the American artillery would bombard the woods to our left front. The bombardment being in the nature of a searching and traversing fire, I was advised by Lieut. Williams that it would be necessary to withdraw the first section of his platoon from its position. I, on the contrary, decided to allow it to remain. It was subsequently cut off from all communication for about two hours. The section suffered only one casualty, Private Powers being slightly wounded in the left hand. The enemy then opened a terrific bombardment, causing a number of casualties in the infantry companies. The nature of the terrain to our rear precluded any possibility of establishing a First Aid Station in our immediate vicinity. I then suggested to the Battalion Commander that a detachment of the Hospital Corps be sent up to our position to establish an Advanced First Aid Post. These men came up that night. During the entire day of the 8th wounded kept coming in.

On the morning of October 9th, the 39th Infantry and a part of the 11th Machine Gun Battalion, advanced through our lines and were held up by machine gun and artillery fire in the Bois de Malau-mont, near the Fond de Cunel. In the afternoon a second battalion advanced to their support. Enemy aeroplanes were overhead during the entire day observing the positions of our troops and bringing down artillery fire, Privates Schieve, Reeves and Ogren of this Company being killed. I instructed Lieut. Dutch to change his position from the left to the right flank (heavy fire coming from that direction) to locate enemy machine guns. On reconnaissance, Lieut. Dutch reported that a Company of the 11th Machine Gun Battalion had taken up a position in that vicinity and that he had returned to his old position and was awaiting orders. I dispatched a runner to his position, advising him to remain but to keep clear of a number of barracks that had been occupied by the Germans. This runner was unable to get through. I later dispatched another runner who succeeded in delivering the message. The source of the machine gun fire was almost impossible to locate on account of the thick woods. Later, one of the gunners of the second platoon caught the flash of a Boche machine gun, and, returning the fire, silenced it.

On the evening of the 9th, we again put over an artillery barrage which was answered in kind by the enemy so that it was impossible to communicate with Sergeant Dean and his section with Company "M". It created havoc with the ration parties and practically destroyed the trenches now occupied by us and formerly by the Boche, so that nothing was left but shell holes. The gunner and No. 4 of this section were killed. This evening, about 6:00 o'clock, "M" Company and the Machine Gun Section went across the valley in support of the First Battalion of the 39th Infantry. They were subjected to gas, a number of men were incapacitated and sent back. They reached their objective about 10:00 P. M., dug in, the Machine Gun Section mounting its gun and awaiting daylight. The Battalion Commander ordered the one pounders forward to join Company "M".

Verbal report of Sergeant Dean:—

"At dawn the following day (October 10th), the Boche located some supporting one pounders crossing the valley towards us. The Boche opened with minenwerfers and whizzbangs. We attacked through a dense woods which had formerly been occupied by the Boche and which contained a large number of buildings badly torn by shell fire. Our attack carried us through up to the edge of the wood and across an open space. The Boche opened on us with machine guns from the opposite woods and inflicted several losses upon the Infantry. We crossed the open space and were forced to go into some trenches for cover. Upon entering the wood, we split up and began hunting snipers. We drove the Boche out of the fortified machine gun positions on the crest. An hour and a half after our occupation of these woods, the Boche returned our fire with utmost vigor, using all the artillery at his command. We located ourselves in a small gully at the edge of the Wood. That evening the artillery fire was considerably reduced but on the morning of the 11th, at about 10:00 o'clock, the Boche barrage came down. Our iron rations had given out and for that day and the two days following, nothing edible was found excepting a few slabs of German bacon. No water was available, the wounded being given a sort of substitute for coffee left by the Germans. At about 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon of the 11th, the Boche opened with a barrage, immediately following it with an infantry attack. Our gun was at the extreme right of the line with an interval between it and the 47th Infantry. The Boche came in behind us and opened fire on the Infantry. My No. 2 man was severely wounded. We turned our gun about and opened fire, cutting off their escape. They broke and run. We inflicted a number of casualties. Shortly after a small patrol came up the gully on our right. We being unseen by them, allowed them to advance to within thirty yards. The patrol was annihilated by machine gun and pistol fire. About 7:30 P. M., the same night, they again came on us, this time from the front. We opened fire, forcing them to retire.

At about midnight, 11th-12th, about fifty men of the Infantry were sent down and I connected them up with the 47th Infantry. We were relieved the following morning at about 8:30 by the 61st Infantry of the Fifth Division. I came out of the line with a Corporal and two men."

On the afternoon of October 10th, the enemy succeeded in getting the exact range of the reserve Machine Gun Platoon, 132nd Infantry. The casualties multiplied rapidly due to his alternating high velocity shells with gas. Lieut. Williams having asked permission to assist at the First Aid Station, it being overwhelmed by the number of wounded coming in, I granted him permission to do so. He, assisted by the men of Headquarters Platoon and such men of the Third Platoon as could be spared, now resolved themselves into litter-bearing parties and assisted in first aid at the Dressing Station. The Dressing Station was blown up by shell fire about 2:00 P. M., the First Aid men moving into the woods to the right and rear of their former position. Lieut. Williams, Sergeant Milloy and Privates Seal and Hazlett lost their lives while giving first aid. The Hospital men were tireless in the performance of their duties, barely stopping for food and drink.

At this time I went over to report to Major Bullington and, while in conversation with him, a high velocity shell exploded near us, killing two men and wounding me in the jaw and right thigh. We used our first aid pouches for temporary relief, and upon my arrival at the cross roads I called for Lieut. Williams to take command. I then learned of his death. I sent a runner to Lieut. Dutch's position telling him to come to the rear and take command, at the same time dispatching a runner to Lieut. Dorman, my Second in Command, at the picket line, telling him to come up and relieve Lieut. Dutch. I then proceeded to the First Aid Station and was ordered to the rear.

Verbal report of Lieut. Henry S. Dutch, Commanding Second Platoon:—

"On the evening of October 10th, I was notified by the First Sergeant to come to Company P. C. to take command. Upon reaching there I was informed that the Captain and Lieut. Moriarity had been wounded and had gone to the rear, that Lieut. Williams had been killed, thereby leaving me the only officer in the line with the Company. The gas at this place was very thick and, I, therefore, asked permission of Captain Wise, who was Acting Battalion Commander (Major Bullington having gone to the rear for orders) to move the Company P. C. up to the position of my Platoon, where the gas was less thick. Company Headquarters at this time consisted of the First Sergeant and one runner, the remainder having been either killed, wounded or gassed. Upon inquiry, I ascertained that the other two platoons had been reduced to about five men each by casualties. As their guns were in support positions, the front line having advanced, I ordered the few men who were left to stay in their fox holes so as to reduce the possibility of more casualties. The following two days and nights, our positions were heavily shelled, killing two men, wounding several, and putting one of my guns out of action. The evening of October 11th, I received orders to report to the Battalion Headquarters where I met Lieut. Dorman, who had received word of the Captain's injury and had come up to take command of the Company. The following morning we were relieved and went back to Septsarges, proceeding the next day to Hill 281."

Strength of Company on taking positions, 165 men. (This includes Transport and Kitchen.) Fighting men 130. Total casualties 105.

H. R. CHADWICK,
Captain, 132nd Infantry,
Comd'g. M. G. Co.