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Auth: CG 35th Inf Div

Initials *RH*

Date *13 Oct 44*

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HEADQUARTERS 216TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION
APO 35 U S Army

OPD
ETO

1 October 1944

Sep 44

SUBJECT: Action Against Enemy, Reports After/After Action Reports. KHR/jw

TO : The Adjutant General, Washington, D C. (THRU: The Commanding General, 35th Infantry Division, APO 35 U S Army. ATTENTION: G-2 Historical Section, Rear Echelon)

In compliance with provisions of paragraph 10, change 3, 9 March 1943, to AR 345-105, 18 November 1943, the following Report After/After Action Report is submitted.

UNIT HISTORY 216TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

The month of September 1944, was outstanding in events shaping the Historical Record of the 216th Field Artillery Battalion. Generally the events covered the swift movement of the Battalion throughout the month, playing its part in the great offensive of the 3rd United States Army. Future military historians will no doubt point with pride to the bold, determined and unequalled offensive spirit of this army.

On September 1st 1944 the Battalion was in position in the vicinity of Villers-Entrodos and prepared to deliver interdiction fires along the road running north from Bar-Sur-Seine, in direct support of the 320th Infantry Regiment. The enemy main supply route in this area had thus been cut, further hampering hasty withdrawal.

The occupation of Villers-Entrodos was effected by the reconnaissance parties of the Battalion when in their haste to be in a position to deliver supporting fire, pushed on beyond the front lines and over routes and into areas not expected to be cleared by the Infantry. Thus Artillery personnel witnesses the reactions of the French villagers' upon the arrival of the first troops of the United States Army. An item of worthy note and causing some immediate concern was the people of this village in their outburst of enthusiasm, punched a hole in the church steeple and a long fishing pole with the French National flag attached was thrust through the opening; whereupon they began to ring the church bell in celebration. All of which seemed like a challenge to the enemy to come back and fight, and not run out of the town as they had several minutes prior to our entrance.

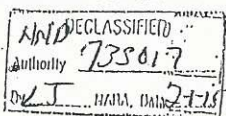
Positions were taken up by the Battalion in the area 2 kilometers north of Brienne Le Chateau with a mission of covering with artillery fire, any and all approaches to the city from the east, southeast and south. The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 320th Infantry Regiment were

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deployed across these routes. The Third Battalion remained in the last position until it was relieved by other troops. The 802nd Field Artillery Battalion of the 182nd Group was left with it, acting as direct support. All of the operations were under the direction of the Combat Team Commander and a part of a task force under the title "Task Force Sebree", and commanded by Brigadier General Sebree, the assistant Division Commander, of the 35th Infantry Division. This task force was organized to ensure greater efficiency and speed in routing the enemy from this area, thereby clearing the way for the balance of the division.

During operations in the vicinity of Brienne Le Chateau the task force set up its headquarters in the city and a component part of the Division Artillery staff immediately set up to coordinate the fires of all artillery in the area. Any attempt by the enemy to counter attack in order to re-take the city would have met very determined resistance and no doubt would have suffered heavy casualties. We were waiting, the enemy however, continued its withdrawal to the East.

On Sunday 3 September 1944 the Battalion displaced by Combat Team, a distance of forty-one miles and took up positions on the high ground just west of the River Marne in the vicinity of Joinville (Coord O.69-87.3), with a mission like that at Brienne Le Chateau, to cover all the approaches to the city from the east as well as protection cover for the existing bridges on the river.

Not since coming to France had the Battalion remained in position for so long a period of time as it did in these positions. There were no expenditures of ammunition. The Battalion for the next seven days, however, remaining on the alert, enjoyed their first hot baths and motion picture shows at Joinville. This was their first diversion of any kind since entering combat.

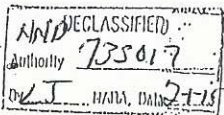
The advance elements of the 3rd United States Army during the week of 3 September to 10 September 1944 began closing in on Nancy, the third largest city in France. Intelligence reports indicated the enemy planned to resist in this area and to divert any attempt by our troops to cross the Moselle River.

The division having been relieved of its mission, that of protecting the right flank of the Corps and Army, was given a new mission of establishing several crossings south of Nancy.

The 137th Infantry Regiment was to establish a bridgehead in the vicinity of Crevechamps. The 320th Infantry Regiment in reserve, the 216th Field Artillery Battalion to reinforce the fires of the 219th Field Artillery Battalion, the direct support battalion. The Battalion took up positions a short distance south of the town of Benney, near the Foret de Benney, the infantry objective. The objective also included the high ground

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just west of the Moselle River and Canal System.

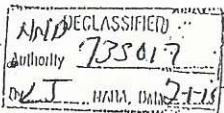
Intelligence reports as well as our own front line reports disclosed a very determined effort on the part of the enemy to prevent our capture of the approaches to the river. The west bank, in our sector was cleared during the afternoon of 10 September 1944. This battalion under the leadership of its Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth H Reed, was quick to seize the opportunity to establish battery forward observation posts on this high and very commanding piece of terrain. Thus began one of the outstanding periods of combat for this battalion. Three battery observation posts were selected by Lt Col Reed and under very heavy enemy artillery fire, and were all established by dawn 11 September 1944. Every post was complete with observing equipment, wire and radio communications, and had been prepared for all around security. Every detail was planned; every man and officer knew what he was to do. Plans were made to insure uninterrupted wire communication with each of these posts. All posts were manned during the hours of darkness; and at the first light of day began a continuous flow of intelligence vital to the 137th Infantry Regiment; continuous fire missions going back to the Battalion Fire Direction Center on a maze of targets. These observation posts were apparently spotted by enemy artillery observers, and enemy artillery persistently attempted to dislodge the observers from their positions. Early in the morning Lt Col Reed in making a routine inspection, went as far as the post established by Battery C; saw what was happening and refused to leave for over four hours and assisted the personnel there to adjust fire on numerous targets. By noon the enemy was definitely pushed back and the bridgehead established. The Infantry had begun to cross the river and canal in strength. These battery observation posts maintained a surveillance for the next two days in the event of a counter-attack, to retake the lost ground.

During the 11, 12, and the morning of 13 September 1944, many artillery concentrations were fired in reinforcing the fires of the 219th Field Artillery Battalion and fire was interrupted only long enough for the Battalion to displace over the river and canal, to positions in the vicinity of St Mard (Coord 94.50-90.30 15 g) the actual crossing was made over a temporary bridge at Neuville-Sur-Moselle.

The 320th Infantry was given the objectives of taking the ground on the east bank of the Meurthe River, 13 September we were released from reinforcing the fires of the 219th Field Artillery Battalion. The mission now was, close direct support of the 320th Infantry Regiment.

The operation of the 320th Infantry was to follow up the Moselle River crossing, accomplished by the 137th Infantry Regiment. Bridges established during this action were the only ones available to the 35th Infantry Division. The terrain between the Moselle and the Meurthe was particularly adapted to

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defense. The aggressive action of the Combat team thus prevented the enemy from digging in and defending. Hence the operations was one of the continual forward movement.

On September 14, 1944, the battalion displaced to new positions near Charmois (coord 00.15-94.30, 15 g), to give continuous support to the Infantry, who were entering the town of Rosieres, and on the south bank of the Meurthe. Crossing of the river by use of assault boats, at a point just south of the city. The entire operations was very successful and accomplished complete surprise. New positions were occupied by the battalion near the scene of the river crossing. According to intelligence reports it was now plain, that this combat team had scored a major success in establishing the crossing. This was later verified when the Corps Commander paid a visit to the Regimental Command Post, and stated, "Your mission is to hold this bridgehead; this is only one in the Corps". However, we did not dig in as orders were soon issued to push on and effect another crossing of the canal at Dombasle, and at Sommerville. The crossings were accomplished during a night operation, September 16 and 17. Very strong opposition was encountered from the high ground north of the canal.

This resistance was overcome by heavy concentrations of artillery from our battalion and reinforcing battalions; from positions in plain view of the enemy, who still possessed some of the high ground.

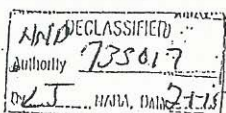
The enemy was accredited with some degree of cunning when front lines were reporting heavy machine gun fire from the canal, but not coming from the high ground. Further search indicated a large steel crane at a factory in Dombasle, partially hidden from view by heavy fog. When this structure was subjected to small arms fire, the harassing ceased. Reports later indicated the enemy had emplaced machine guns out on the end of this structure.

On Sunday September 17 Battalion displaced to new positions in the vicinity of Harracourt (coord 98.70-07.70 15 g) during this displacement the Meurthe River was crossed at Dombasle.

All operations now were in coordination with attacking armor, and it was expected that much ground would be gained in our sector, as we had crossed two rivers and two canals in record time. No doubt the enemy was confused. What should have taken several weeks or perhaps months, was accomplished in a matter of days. These operations were a threat to Nancy, a very important hedge-hog defense point in the Nazi line.

The positions occupied at Harracourt were close to the front lines at the time. However, before wire communications and survey was completed an order was issued to displace forward. Thus during the night of September 17th and 18th new positions were occupied in the vicinity of Remmerville.

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French intelligence reports indicated the enemy was counter attacking from the east towards our bridgehead at Dombasle; also the French people in that vicinity were hastily removing their flags; this report proved untrue.

During the time the battalion was in position at Remmerville, orders had been received that the combat team would assemble in their areas and that other operations were planned.

The 320th Infantry assembled in its assigned area and disposed itself as well as the terrain would permit, as the enemy held most of the high ground around the outer perimeter.

Lt Col Reed issued orders for all personnel to be on the alert for possible counter attacks on our infantry and for the first time fired many defensive fires and interdictions in the daytime.

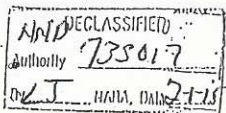
On September 20th, 1944 this battalion together with the 320th Infantry Regiment was assigned to the 4th Armored Division. Whereupon the entire combat team displaced by motor to the vicinity of Juvrecourt in Alsace Lorraine (coord 13.8-16.4 1/100,000).

This was a new experience for the battalion and caused high excitement, when positions were occupied and prepared for firing in all directions. This proved to be excellent prior planning. Missions were fired in the next few days at every point of the compass. The past training and devotion to duty of all personnel won high praise from high ranking officers of the Armored Division. one statement made by an officer of the Battalion is worthy of being preserved in the Historical Records, "When you work with this outfit you rush in and surround the enemy from the middle."

Another item worthy of note occurred early one morning when the wire crews were out repairing a wire line, and being approached by wire crews from the 4th Armored "Say you boys repaired all my lines. How come? No one has ever done that before". This is typical of many things that occurred while serving with this Division, and when detached every man felt he had accomplished his mission, and learned a lot. The Battalion knew it left a good name for itself, and for the Division. We did not become aware of the fact until later, we were in the middle of the greatest tank battle of this war. The battlefield was littered with wrecked and burnt out German Tanks.

The battalion during the operation gave very effective support in locating enemy forces by use of the air OP's (Cub Planes); in one phase the

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Liaison Pilot and air observer discovered a group of 35 tanks. This set off a battle of great magnitude. Everything in the division was concentrated upon them, and we received a subsequent report "mission accomplished", which to the layman means a job well done.

The battalion during all the time it was away from the Division maintained daily contact dispatching officers who could give the complete story of its activities with the 35th Division Artillery.

On Wednesday September 27, the battalion was back in the division, and reinforcing the fires of the 161st Field Artillery Battalion from positions in the vicinity of Bey-Sur-Seille. The 320th Infantry Regiment less one Battalion attached to the 137th Infantry, was in Corps Reserve.

These operations were of a defensive nature. The division was covering a very wide front and extending into the enemy lines. The enemy were counter attacking with all forces at their command.

During the afternoon of September 29 the Battalion was relieved from its reinforcing mission, and placed in direct support of the 320th Infantry. The infantry was committed in the middle of the Division Sector and no change of position was necessary. Three Artillery Battalions were assigned to reinforce the fires of the Battalion, 127th Field Artillery Battalion, 802nd Field Artillery Battalion, and 255th Field Artillery Battalion.

As the month ended there was no change in positions.

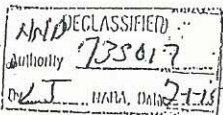
The official Division History credits the 216th Field Artillery Battalion with firing the first round of artillery in World War II for the 35th Infantry Division and to preserve for possible historical use the following description is here in after set out:

Battery B 216th Field Artillery Battalion
 Section #2
 Gun # M2-A1, 16096
 Tube # 2-U-1091-C
 Carriage # M2-2 #5497

During the month of September 1944 the battalion expended 7826 rounds of 105mm Howitzer ammunition, and a total expenditure of 33,969 rounds for the entire period of combat.

Up to and including September 30, 1944 the officers and enlisted men of the 216th Field Artillery have received the following decorations:

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- 4 Air Medals
- 2 Air Medals, Oak Leaf Cluster
- 15 Bronze Star Medals
- 1 Bronze Star, Oak Leaf Cluster
- 11 Purple Hearts

Also at this date there are fifty recommendations for various decorations which have been submitted for approval.

A Survey of the personnel in this battalion reveals that forty-six out of the forty-eight are represented. The district of Columbia and the territory of Hawaii are also represented.

The states leading in representation are as follows:

Kansas	97
Georgia	90
Alabama	74
New York	30

For the Commanding Officer:

Maurice R. Hubbard
MAURICE R HUBBARD

Maj, FA
Executive

Incls

Unit Journal with supporting papers.

*not rec'd 28 Nov 44
Combat Analysis Mktg
only Rpts after/after Actn Rpts*

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1st Ind

HGC/mla

(1 Oct 44)

HQ 35TH INF DIV, APO 35, U S Army, 12 Oct 44

TO: Commanding General, XII Corps, APO 312, U S Army

Forwarded in compliance with paragraph 2, letter Headquarters Third U. S. Army, AG 314.7 (GTMCF), subject: Action Against Enemy, Reports After, dated 24 September 1944.

For the Commanding General:

Richard G. Chadwick
RICHARD G. CHADWICK
Lt. Col., A. G. D.
Adjutant General

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