

L. W. Carlson
3rd Platoon K Co.
3rd Bn. 337th Inf.

A BATTLE EXPERIENCE

Place and Time - 10 Kilometers south of Rome - June 3, 1944.
Situation - 3rd Platoon, K Co. as point for Battalion, moving toward Highway 6.

The point was deployed in approach march moving west on a highway leading to highway 6. With 6 tanks (medium) supporting us, we moved down the highway - we encountered many houses along the road which we flushed - capturing 7 prisoners at one house. Arriving at the Highway 6 junction, we encountered Jerry machine gun and sniper opposition. Our point consisted of one (1) squad, 2 two squads in support. We deployed taking up positions in a firing line - aided by tank support we removed this enemy opposition. Again (point) we moved out and encountered two (2) German Mark IV tanks and one (1) half track. Word was passed to our tanks - who successfully engaged this enemy attack. Another friendly column (probably 338th Inf.) came up highway 6, making contact with our column.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Tank support right up with point.
2nd platoon of "K" Co. gave good support to our right flank.
Men covering those flushing out the houses.
Men bunching at appearance of enemy tanks.
Mortar support too far back to lend quick support to point.
Difficulty in recognizing Jerry tanks - (well camouflaged)

C. W. CARLSON
2nd Lt. 337th Inf.
Platoon Leader "K" Co.

COMBAT LESSONS

As leader of a weapons platoon in a rifle company during this campaign - I found that because of the rapid advancement of the units - there was little use for the mortars and light machine guns. However, the weapons platoon was, as a general rule, kept in advance of the support platoon, in order that this may be available when needed. Our targets were usually machine gun emplacements, and searching fire in advance of troops.

The light machine gun model M-1919 A4 has proven to be a lighter load and more easily carried in the attack. When the unit is to set up a defense I believe it necessary to have the tripod available firing - men should not be overloaded with ammunition or equipment. They will tire more easily and are apt to leave unnecessary equipment behind.

The mortar section was kept in tact during most of our campaign. Firing was directed by platoon leaders of rifle platoons in some cases - and in others by direct observation. When the section is subject to artillery fire and not in action - the weapons should be "out of action" and in a slit trench if possible. Initially our mortars were hit because they were left standing. Again - don't overload the men with ammunition. The weapons carrier should be as close as possible - but in most every case they were pretty far behind.

TERRANCE DONNELLY
2nd Lt. 357th Inf.
Platoon Leader, "K" Co.

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Co. "K" 337th Infantry
A.P.O. 85

"Notes taken on Battle Critique"

Capt. Banister:

As far as "K" Company is concerned we did not get into physical contact as much as other companies did.

Lt. Krueger:

Looked over 91st positions but once in position found that they did not have very many. Platoon changed position three times. Moved into position and dug in as reserve unit. Orders came through and the platoon moved out on line. We weren't sure of what was out there and did not move out at night. Moved early in the morning but out too far and did not know where other platoons and companies were located. Found "I" Co. 150 yds. to the rear and right. Used three houses as defensive positions. One M. G. was put on the left flank. The next day No. 2 M. G. came up and put it on the right flank. Mortar squad was attached to us. Area in front of positions was zeroed in by our mortars. Found that area was covered up to 50 yds. in front of positions. First night nobody was hurt but the men were jittery. Next night Pvt. Cohrs ran out believing the platoon surrounded. Thereafter no active action until relieved. A M. G. was set up to protect men disarming booby traps spotted Jerries and protected them. Moving about area was cut down to a minimum and therefore no mortar or arth. fire fell in our area. Confused about "I" Co. firing through area. Jerries tried to draw fire at night and evidently had a forward O. P. to direct arth. and mortar fire about 500 to 600 yds. in front of area (this was noted by first patrol). Found 1st Armored men were jittery about relieving us.

Sgt. Bishop:

Set up position but didn't know who was where and put security out around our positions. Set up O. P. s in the top windows of houses.

Lt. McDonald:

Had three squads out at night and 10 man support left in houses. B.A.R. and "L" Co. M. G. set up on left flank the night after moving up. Left and right of the bridge over irrigation ditch H. M. G. s fired same mission. Mortars were zeroed in on our forward area. Platoon in daytime stayed in back of houses and the irrigation ditch. Third day Jerry patrol was sighted by Pvt. Lucas and word was given and men moved into positions. Jerry kept to irrigation ditch and a Jerry medic waved a medical flag. As soon as firing ceased the Jerry patrol ran and fire was resumed.

Sgt. Johnson:

Moved out on Patrol and ran into Lt. Krueger and Sgt. Myeir who volunteered to come with patrol. Reconitered buildings; assigned objective and found nobody. Found some trenches to be booby trapped but none of them were recently occupied. All ambush patrols found no trouble at all.

Lt. Donnelly:

Mortar section and M. G.s were assigned to ea ch platoon. Advice given: Riflemen to cover crew served weapons especially when in action. Mortars not to fire unless actually sure of Jerry being in front especially at night.

Lt. Carlson:

My platoon took over Battalion gaurd an town guard. The first night some of the men reported seeing light signals being given to the enemy. Upon investigating found that the room used was deserted but that a large mirror was uncovered which reflected in the moonlight. A few nights later we were called upon to send out a patrol to the rea r of the company's position. As a Jerry patrol was reported to have gotten through. When off duty men rested to the right rear of Co.'s area and could be used as reserve. Used three 2 man posts and at night a roving patrol of three men in the town.

Pvt. Hampton: (50 cal. M. G.)

Built up positions and used indirect fire. Other 2 guns fired at 6900 yds.

Set up gun on top of hill fired 150 to 200 rds. and set up gun in another position used some procedure. On a single day 13 (50 cal. M. G.'s) fired a single mission.

Sgt. Ritter:

Added to watch out for 2 red flares and when spotting such flares to leave the area immediately because arth. fire would soon be faling in the area.

Lt. Purdon:

Aug. 16. "K" Company moved from assembly area. Joined the officers who were sent forward to reconitered out positions and pulled into a final assembly area about 1000 yds. behind our positions. At this area ammunition was issued and platoons oriented as much as possible. As darkness set in we began to move to positions, releiving elements of the 91st Div. The 1st platoon, in a reserve position, set up security posts around the Bat. C.P. and company C.P. The second platoon set up in reserve on the left rear, on the hill, SW of Cigoli. They set up local security and also operated a road block on the junction behing the Bn. C.P. An O.P. was set up overlooking the Arno. The third platoon also was to be in emergency reserve but they had as their main duty the control of the town of Cigoli, in which Facist activity had been reported. The Co. C.P. was set up forward of the town. Our LMG section was attached to "L" Co. and our Mortars were with our own second platoon.

Aug. 17. In the morning we moved the Co. C.P. back to the rear of the town. About 1000 we got word that one of our LMG squads (4 men) had been captured along with part of an "L" Co. platoon. That afternoon we prepared to move the 1st and 2nd platoons and the mortar section out to forward positions in the line. At 2030 we moved out and secured positions along the canal and to the right. During our movement out received mortar fire which split the company for a short time but we had no casualties. 3rd platoon took over Bn. guard.

Aug. 18. At the break of day we reorganized our positions. The second platoon moved to the left of the canal and set up in and around a group of houses. The mortars were set up to support the platoon. They were attached to the first platoon. The first platoon moved out to the right about 300 yds. and set up 3 squad strong points. The platoon had moved out about 250 yds. too far north to begin with so the area in front of its positions was all well known to the men. By nightfall our positions were well organized and a good communication system had been set up. That night a German patrol was operating forward at our second platoon and a few shots were exchanged but no casuaulti es resulted.

Aug. 19. Our remaining LMG was returned to us and set up in the 1st platoon positions. We also drew another LMG and organized another squad from the 1st platoon.

Aug. 20. A section of HMG from "M" Co. moved up to our 2nd platoon positions. We moved our company C.P. forward to the town of Catena.

Aug. 21. A combat patrol was sent out from the first platoon to clear houses in front of i s positions and check for mines. No opposition was encountered but mines were found in one area checked. Positions at houses were investigated.

Aug. 22. During the morning a German patrol of 11 men worked up close to the second platoon positions. Fire was held till they came in close and as a result a German Sgt. was killed and another seriously wounded. A German medic Pvt. put up a red cross. They came forward to get the wounded. In the mean time the Germans had withdrawn so the medic gave himself up. He did not want to go back to his lines.

Aug. 23; 24 Routine duty.

Aug. 25. A combat patrol was sent out from the second platoon to clear houses in front of its position. No opposition was encountered. The third platoon sent out a patrol to clean out a reported German patrol behind our forward positions but was unable to contact them even after an extensive search.

Aug. 26. A heavy enemy mortar and artillery concentration was put in on our ration point and all communication wires were cut but in the action we had no casualties.

Aug. 27. Routine duty.

Aug. 28. A screening patrol from the first platoon was sent out at dark to protect the movement of elements at the 1st Armored Inf. that moved up to relieve us. The change over was made without incident and the company organized again in an assembly area.

Misc. During our occupation of forward positions sporadic firing occurred at long ranges every night and artillery and mortar fire was called for on many occasions when enemy gun positions were sighted.

We had no casualties from enemy fire. However 8 men were injured by mines or by our own fire. A total of 4 men were captured.

June 20, 1944

Combat Lessons Learned Sabaudia:

After crossing the railroad tracks just out of Sabaudia, we were fired on by snipers. Being the Reserve Co. and not expecting strong resistance two squads of my platoon were ordered to envelop the position.

I went with the left squad and the Platoon Sgt. with the right. About 30 yards from Hwy. 6 in a grape vineyard we were fired on by Machine Pistols and more snipers. I was behind the Scouts and was pinned down. None of us able to move or return very little fire. We were too close to lay Mortar fire on their position. After a while the Enemy apparently thought they had us and we crawled back to some small buildings, which afforded us cover, and called for Mortar fire. The fire could not be observed from

the rear so I directed it from a vantage point which offered good observation by radio. After covering their position with Area Fire we were able to go through with very little trouble. My Riflemen picked off several as they withdrew from the Mortar fire.

My Right Squad was pinned down by Mortar and Machine Gun fire and was of no assistance.

Shortly after with two squads we took 40 prisoners, 2 A.T. Guns, and a carrier after a short fire fight.

From that action I found that the Platoon Leader should not be too close to the Scouts but near the center or rear of the leading squads. If I had been there I would have been able to direct the platoon and get assistance. As it was, I was pinned down and unable to move to control the squads.

In my opinion, Mortars should be set up with O. P.'s established as soon as any fire fight begins. If this is not done there is that delay while the

Guns are being set up; and O.P.s are more difficult to establish once the action has begun.

In dealing with snipers, the B.A.R. Team should set up the base of fire while a few Riflemen work into the position. This will either pin him down or make him give his position away to the assaulting Riflemen.

In moving toward the enemy it is best to avoid trails or roads as their Machine Pistols and Machine Guns are ~~sited~~ to cover them. A more difficult route is advisable with a few men on or near the trail or road and the bulk to be used against his flanks or rear, where he is most vulnerable, when his position has been determined.

Norman F. Kueger,
1st Lt Inf Co K.
1st Platoon Leader.

Battle Experiences and Lessons

On May 12, 1944 K Co moved to hill 69, which was a German strong point in their Gustav line. This hill was a very high knoll surrounded by flat land at the river valley, and there was no decent avenue of approach whatsoever. When we came over the brow of our LD we came under enemy observation and consequently we were shelled heavily by artillery. Though the company was badly hit, we kept moving forward as rapidly as possible during the short lulls in the shelling. I believe it was this movement forward that kept the company from being knocked out for there was a lag many times in the enemy artillery fire.

The lesson I learned from this experience was that if a unit is kept under control during a shelling and is kept on the move even during the briefest lulls that it will be safer and more men will be saved than if a unit scatters and tries to locate cover in an area that has been zeroed in on.

J. M. Purdon
1st Lt. Inf.

Battle Experiences and Lessons *W. Burdon*
1st Lt. 1st.

Hill # 66 was the second strong point in our sector at the German Gustav line. The 1st Bn, 337th Inf, moved through K Company and attacked 66 initially. Three officers and twelve men from K Company moved behind them to be used as support. When the hill was taken we moved in to fill the small gaps in the line as it was organized for a reverse slope defense. This sort of a defense was necessary as the forward slope was very gradual and the enemy had it completely covered with machine guns and artillery. These positions formed a salient in the enemy lines and it was our mission to hold while units on our left and right moved up to occupy hills on our flanks. The enemy continually threw small units at our line and it was necessary to have every one on the alert at all times.

The lessons I learned from this experience were that on reverse slope positions the fire is necessarily at short range and that automatic weapons were of great value for the enemy came in small units and all had to be knocked out on the spot. Also I learned that even these small unit counterattacks were usually preceded by artillery and mortar fire and that necessitated an alert of the unit that viewed the skyline after each shell burst. I also learned that a reverse slope defense is very