

### 3: THE VOSGES MOUNTAINS

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Our initial assignment was with VI Corps, Seventh Army, 6th Army Group, European Theater of Operations. We were now in the big show, destined to play a major role in freeing Europe and possibly the world of the Nazi yoke. We were to relieve the 180th Infantry Regiment of the veteran 45th Division, who at the time were on line at the foot of the Vosges Mountains facing Raon-l'Etape.

At St. Gorgon the weather continued to be miserable. For the five days we were there it rained heavily. Tentage was soaked through and sagged under the weight of the absorbed rain. However, we continued to operate efficiently and advantageously in preparation for our entrance into combat. Commanders, platoon leaders, and even squad leaders made daily trips to the front lines as part of a combat orientation. They became familiar with terrain, battle conditions, and disposition of friendly and enemy troops. Also during this time all of the equipment and clothing in excess of what we actually wore and needed was turned in and stored away. Later we found it beneficial and even necessary to discard even more equipment.

The night of 5 November the 1st Battalion boarded trucks and moved to a point about two miles northwest of the village of St. Remy, where it dismounted and continued on foot to relieve the 2d Battalion of the 157th Infantry, 45th Division.

Here in the rain and the cold at the edge of the Vosges Mountains the men looked up into the black, enemy-held hills and awaited the morning to launch their first attack. The weather was an indication of the cold and wet which were to plague the Regiment throughout the entire Vosges Mountain campaign.

The following morning the Battalion moved out to its first action, an enemy strongpoint about three thousand yards northeast of the bivouac area. The men moved silently and cautiously through the heavy woods. Meeting no resistance the battalion



*Raon-l'Etape*

returned to its positions, leaving Company A in defense of the reconnoitered territory.

On 6 November the 3d Battalion relieved the 3d Battalion of the 180th Infantry and took up positions to the left of the 1st Battalion along the same line in the vicinity of Ste. Barbe. The 1st Battalion continued patrolling to the east, its front, but only Company B made contact with the enemy as yet.

The following day Cannon Company and Antitank Company relieved respective units of the 180th Infantry, and our 2d Battalion prepared to relieve the 1st Battalion, 180th Infantry.

November 8 found all three of our battalions committed as the 2d Battalion took up positions about five kilometers southwest of Raon-l'Etape along the Rambervillers-Raon-l'Etape highway. The three battalions were now abreast of each other: 1st Battalion was on the right flank southeast of the highway; 2d Battalion was in the center; and 3d Battalion was on the left flank northwest of the highway. The Regiment was on a north-south line, facing east and Raon-l'Etape between Thierville and the vicinity of Etival. At 2000 this date all battalions were relieved from 45th Division control and Col. Nelson I. Fooks, Regimental commander, assumed command of the Regiment intact.