

15. INTO THE LINE – NOVEMBER 5, 1944

The next day, November 5, we began our final preparations for combat. We were ordered to turn our leather boots and leggings into the supply section. Then we were issued a pair of ShoePacs, two pairs of heavy wool socks and two pairs of heavy woolen inserts, which fit in the bottom of the ShoePacs. These boots were made to wear in wet conditions. The boot or lower section was made of rubber; the upper four inches of was leather. We were trained to wear one pair of the wool socks and wool inserts daily, and each morning change to the dry second pair of socks and inserts. We draped the wet inserts over our shoulders, under our outer shirt. The wet socks were draped over the belt that held up our inner pair of trousers. Both dried (hopefully) from our body heat during the day. This system was an attempt to reduce casualties from trench foot, but it left us without arch support.

After we completed dressing in layers of wool clothing and ShoePacs for the cold, wet weather, we separated our equipment into two piles: our duffel bag and gas mask which would be left at a central location and the rest which we would carry with us. This latter group consisted of our pack, rifle, carbine, or pistol, plus a few personal items. Owen and I each carried an M-1 rifle and a .45-caliber pistol. I checked the pouches lining my cartridge belt, noting that each contained a clip of rifle ammunition. Then I checked the items attached to the cartridge belt (two spare clips of .45-caliber ammunition, a full canteen of water, a trench knife, and a first aid bandage kit with 8 Sulfa tablets) and then clipped the belt around my waist. Then we checked each other. The rest of men in my squad carried their .30-caliber carbines and ammunition. Our sergeant ordered us to leave our Machine Gun in the rear supply area. We would be going to a “quiet” area of the line.

That afternoon we marched across an old, low stone bridge spanning the Meurthe River in Baccarat to take our positions on the line. We were told that it had been one of the quickest debarkations-to-front line moves on record. If you feel a sense of urgency in these movements, you are right. I’m not sure that we, the green, untested combat troops felt that way but we understood we were needed somewhere and right now. The 7th US Army commanders needed us because the 3rd, 36th and 45th Infantry Divisions were worn out from the fighting since they landed in Southern France. The 45th Division had been in combat for more than 80 days. Our 2nd Battalion took over a sector from the 45th Division. Officers and men from the 45th lectured us about German mines, booby-trapped houses, artillery fire and what to do and say if captured, while we stood in the chilling, soaking rain.

After those briefings a rumor started to catch my attention: If you were captured and became a Prisoner of War (POW) you should expect the German front line troops to order all Americans POWs to drop their pants and underclothing to determine whether any were circumcised. All Jewish male babies were circumcised at birth and a circumcision was proof, to the Germans, that you were Jewish. If the German soldiers determined that you were circumcised, as I was, they would kill you on the spot – or later at a quiet spot in the woods. I wondered whether my best course of action, if captured, would be to run and take the consequences. I was unable to come to a definite answer.

S/Sgt. Bassett lead the 1st and 2nd Squads up a steep slope, into the mountains through the stands of small and large diameter trees. In the deep woods we came to a log and dirt covered 8-man dugout. My squad was ordered to occupy the structure. The weather was the worst you

could imagine – cold rain that turned to snow – plump snowflakes filled with moisture. Tall pine trees with thick limbs and crowns, covered by wet snow, populated the dark forest around us. The snow cover deadened every sound and I was scared. Where were the Germans hiding?

We were on the line but we did not know where the line was. Hopefully, somebody higher in rank did. Every 30 minutes or so an artillery shell would explode in the area, tree branches and snow would fall, each of us would jump 6 inches. Then I had to pee. I picked up my rifle and squeezed through the low dugout opening into the forest. As I walked away from the dugout, I slung the rifle across my back so that both hands would be free. While I was taking care of my bladder problem, a shell exploded near-by. I turned and ran back to the dugout. The rifle across my back jammed across the opening and I bounced back outside with all the breath knocked out of me, and seeing stars. I was sure shrapnel had hit me. My sergeant yelled at me to take the rifle from my back and get in the dugout. Life's little adventures!

My concerns increased as darkness fell. The woods quiet, empty and still. We were miserable from our situation and at the same time scared stiff. During my hour-long turn on guard duty, in the darkness, I was positive that I saw a German patrol silently moving through the forest. I could hear their shoes crack small twigs and crunch in the patches of snow. At first light those shadowy German soldiers were identified to be trees. Trees move if you look at them long enough in the night! In the light of the day we decided that the cracking sound was from water drops falling from the trees and hitting the dead leaves on the ground.

German patrols moving around that night caused several casualties. Our rifle companies sent out patrols and took a few prisoners. We began to distinguish the sounds of our rifle fire, our machine gun fire and our artillery from the German weapons. The daytime woods became friendlier, but I never felt at ease at night. Too many trees and bushes moved around in my imagination. Owen and I were constantly scared those first few nights.

On November 7, 1944 the 2nd Battalion was ordered to move forward and make contact with the Germans. Patrols from the rifle companies were sent out to probe and bring back prisoners. They did get into some firefights and the battalion took more casualties. Our officers were setting us into position to attack toward Raon-l'Etape, an important road and communication center. The heavily fortified town was located south on the Meurthe River with high ground around it, which allowed the Germans a commanding view of the terrain for miles.

Most of us did not know the history of this area but for hundreds of years these rugged, steep wooded mountains had stopped military operations. The German army was unable to take the area in their sweep through France in 1940. *Keith E. Bonn* presents a detailed account of the history, topography and previous warfare in the Vosges Mountains. His referenced book also gives a detailed analysis of the military operations in October 1944 – January 1945.

16. FIRST ATTACK

Many people visualize the line as fought in World War I where soldiers fought nearly shoulder to shoulder with their fellow infantrymen, much of the time in trenches. Where we fought in France and Germany the front was more fluid and was seldom a well-defined line

with troops close together. Some maps show it as the line of contact (LP). Perhaps the German defenders closed up into a sort of a line in places. When we attacked the result was many small groups of troops going forward not as a wave but as fingers.

What did an attack formation look like? Let's look at the organization and an attack from a battalion level: the 2nd Battalion, 397th Infantry Regiment. There were 35 officers and 836 enlisted Men assigned. It was organized into four companies, three rifle companies (E, F and G) and a heavy weapons company (H). A rifle company at full strength was assigned 193 men organized into a Headquarters section (HQ) and four platoons: three rifle platoons and a weapons platoon. Each rifle platoon at full strength was assigned 45 men organized into four squads. The weapons platoon was assigned 35 men organized into two air-cooled (Light) machine squads and three 60-mm mortar squads.

The Battalion Heavy Weapons company at full strength was assigned 178 men organized into three platoons - two heavy machine gun platoons and one 81-mm mortar platoon. Each machine gun platoon was assigned 42 men organized into 4 squads or 2 sections; each squad manned a water-cooled (Heavy) .30-caliber machine gun. The 81-mm mortar platoon was assigned 60 men organized into 6 squads, each with an 81-mm mortar.

In a battalion attack, two platoons of the two lead rifle companies (for example, E & F) would spread out over several hundred yards. Their scouts were out in front to draw fire and expose the German positions. The company commander would hold the third rifle platoon close behind in reserve. One or more of the light machine gun squads and a 60-mm mortar squad would be attached to the attacking platoons. A section of heavy machine guns (2 squads each with a machine gun) from Company H, would be trailing close behind the attacking riflemen. Most of the time we were either on or near the line providing fire ahead of the riflemen or crouched down just behind them in the woods. The 81-mm mortars from the 3rd Platoon, Company H would have been setup in a rear area to support the attack. Forward observers for the 81-mm mortar platoon would accompany the rifle companies. They were in contact with the mortars through wire telephone lines laid on the ground. American artillery may have fired on the German positions prior to the attack. At other times the riflemen may have moved forward without prior artillery action.

When the scouts and attacking squads moved ahead, the German defenders might begin to fire at them with their rifles, machine pistols, machine guns and small mortars. As the firefight progressed, German infantrymen would call for heavier machine guns and mortars to assist in areas where penetration might occur. In addition, German artillery would fire to saturate the area in the American line and behind, where reserve units would move up toward the fight.

After a few days of moving forward, without a serious engagement, we were pulled out of the line and returned to houses in Baccarat. What a joy to sleep on a dry, stone floor, under a roof. On the 11th of November we received orders to move out as a part of a major attack. We cleaned our weapons and ate a hot meal at noon. Later we separated our equipment into what we would carry and packed the rest away in the company stores. In the late afternoon dusk Owen Lindsey and I lifted the tripod and machine gun on our shoulders and again walked across the stone bridge crossing the Meurthe River, with the rest of the battalion. I recall feeling I was walking through a transparent wall - from one world into another. This time we

did not return to Baccarat.

For a picture of the dense forest covering the Vosges Mountains go to the web page menu and click on “Photos”. Then scroll down to the heading, “Attack on the German Winter Line, November 1944”, then scroll down to the second heading, “Mid November 1944: 397th Infantry Advances through the High Vosges”, then click on the second star.

At our elevation it was raining, higher up in the Vosges Mountains it was snowing. We moved off the road, into the tree-covered hills and reached the assembly area in the dark. We were now in complete darkness – no lights allowed. Owen and I were completely exhausted, cold and soaking wet. Our cooks fed us another hot meal - sometime you should eat a meal in the dark woods – Owen & I discussed what we were eating. We concluded we were not sure. I finished all of it. We cleaned our mess kits in tubs of boiling water. Then we dug a shallow trench in the soggy ground and lay down nested like two spoons and slept for a couple of hours wrapped in our tent, covered by our raincoat. I was miserable!

The next morning we ate cold K-rations. Orders came to move up to the line of departure, about three miles east of Baccarat. I picked up the tripod, Owen picked up the gun, we checked our ammunition bearers and followed our sergeant through the woods toward our objective, the town named Raon-l'Etape.

For a large-scale map of this attack go to the web page menu and click on “Historical Overview”. Then scroll down to the bottom of the narrative and at the left click on “Next”. This will bring up the map: “Breaching the Vosges Winter Lines, 12 – 19 November 1944”. Note the location of US Army Infantry Divisions and their objectives.

We moved forward at 8 AM on November 12, with F and G companies abreast and E Company in reserve. Two heavy machine guns were attached to each of the leading rifle companies. Only our officers and sergeants knew exactly where we were or what direction we were headed. Ahead of us the battle had started. We were climbing, with our 40-50 pound heavy machine gun loads through the slippery forest undergrowth on grades of 15 to 25 percent; some grades were near 30 percent. German artillery tried to find us. We were becoming exhausted. Troops were being hit; our Platoon Leader was killed. Our Platoon Sergeant, T/Sgt. Raymond Koons was assigned as Platoon Leader; he was commissioned and commanded the 1st Platoon through the rest of the war.

Captain Maiale wrote “about 8:15 AM I received a phone call from Regimental Headquarters stating there was no enemy in front of the battalion for a half mile. I told the Battalion Commander that the leading elements of the Battalion probably were past that point. As I walked forward I saw a trail in front of me, and like a “damned fool” walked out in the middle of the trail, oriented my map and identified the trail as the new line. I then crossed the trail, into the ditch beyond. At that instant three German mortar shells landed in the middle of the trail. A machine gun burst raked up the trail where I had stood”.

Then the Germans sprung their trap. They had allowed the leading American riflemen to come toward them and then opened fire on the leading companies with rifles and mortars. Our training for this situation was attack by running like hell forward or retreat rapidly. Company F attacked forward, up the slope shooting at everything that moved. By 9 AM the battalion

had captured or killed all the Germans at this strong point. We continued to move forward, causing German casualties and taking some in return.

The 2nd Battalion had the assignment of protecting the left flank of our regiment. The 399th Infantry Regiment was supposed to keep in contact with our left flank, but shortly they lost contact, thus exposing our left flank. We kept walking through the dark, rugged forest, just following the man in front of us. I passed my first dead German soldier. Our footprints made slippery trails in the wet mud, which soon turned into gooey mud. The high hills and wet conditions caused problems with our radio communication equipment. The Germans knew their old positions and continued to pound us with mortar and artillery fire, causing a number of injuries and deaths.

Artillery is the most horrible death-dealing instrument of modern war. More men have been wounded, maimed or killed by artillery than by any other means since the advent of gunpowder. When you are being pummeled by artillery there is nothing you can do to strike back. All you can do is lie there and listen to the shrieking, screaming shells coming in and the loud explosions they make when they hit. Your throat dries up and your lungs burn as you breathe in the burnt powder dust and acid smoke caused by the blasts. You instinctively hug the ground as hot ragged steel fragments and splinters of shrapnel tear into trees, stone walls and human bodies. Written by an unknown Infantryman.

Finally, about 3 PM, as daylight began to fade, we were ordered to dig in – deep because of the German artillery. Owen and I set up the machine gun and began to dig our foxhole. We used our raincoats to keep warm. The cooks brought up a warm meal. After eating guards were stationed and the rest of us fell asleep. Each unit, however small, had somebody on guard duty every minute of the night.

Snow began to fall during the night, bringing us additional misery. There were no roads or trails in this rough country and our jeeps had to be left behind. The machine gun tripod and machine gun, as well as our belts of ammunition became very heavy in the slippery mountains.

On November 13, a few minutes after we began to attack down a hill, the Germans fired another barrage at the hilltop and a couple of men were killed and three were wounded. The mortar platoon leader was wounded. Pfc. Marshall Moran, a very close friend from Oakland, CA, who served as the 1st Gunner, 1st Squad, in my platoon, was severely injured in the leg by shrapnel. He continued to aid the advance until participation proved impossible. Several days later he was evacuated, by that time his leg was infected with gangrene. During a recent telephone conversation he mentioned that the examining Doctor commented that during WWI his leg would have been immediately amputated. However, the new drug Penicillin, discovered in the early 1940's, would cure the infection and save his leg. Moran spent months in a hospital and later returned to Company H.

Pfc. Marshall Moran was later awarded the Silver Star Medal for "Gallantry in Action" after being wounded.

The battalion advanced down into a valley in front of a hill numbered 431 - hills were named for their metric elevation. There the entire battalion was pinned down by German artillery

fire. We assumed that we had run into another German strong point. The shelling continued into and all around us. We were boxed in. The Battalion Commander ordered the battalion to move 400 yards to the right. *Captain Maiale* recounts, “we did this and laughed as the Krauts dumped about a hundred thousand dollars worth of artillery in the area where we had just been”. We were making progress, but losing men every hour.

The battalion resumed the attack up the hill and moved over the flat top of the hill only to confront a smaller hill a hundred yards away. This was the true Hill 431. We were stopped in our tracks with machine gun and mortar fire. Captain Maiale called to our 81-mm mortars to place fire on the German positions. The officers soon realized that we needed artillery from regiment, or division, to destroy those positions. We were ordered to dig in for the night. We soon came under sniper fire. The red crosses on the armband and helmet of our medical troops drew their fire. Two medics from Company E were killed. Company E infantrymen went out to find the snipers. Three snipers were found and their bodies were riddled. The Germans continued to fire on us with artillery, mortar and machine guns. We could not move without drawing fire.

Then it started to rain again, and continued all night. We could not get warm or dry. The nearest Jeep trail was so far away that most of our wounded could not be moved. We sent out patrols to probe the German positions, but found no weak spots.

On November 14th we attacked through the woods again but could not make significant progress. We returned to our previous positions and called again for artillery fire. Division Artillery did not believe our reported position was correct and held their fire.

17. BATTALION COMMANDER INJURED

Our Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Quinn and my Company Executive Officer, Lieutenant Laudone were advancing up a tree-covered hill when an 88-mm shell exploded between them. Neither was hit with shrapnel. Later Quinn developed violent headaches and became unable to lead the battalion.

We began to experience problems with the new ShoePacs. They had no arch support and we were carrying heavy loads. Our leather combat boots had given foot and ankle support; ShoePacs were constructed of soft, flexible leather and rubber. They were fabricated to be waterproof, however, rain and melting snow ran down our raincoats, on to our pants legs, soaking them and then inside the ShoePacs. Most of the time we were walking in a puddle of water. Rather than take the time to remove the ShoePacs, many of us decided to sit down on the ground and raise our legs up to allow the water to drain. Then we had to contend with cold, wet feet and the ensuing blisters. Bummer! When time and artillery fire permitted, I removed my ShoePacs and inspected my feet. I followed instructions: Every evening inspect your feet for the first indication of trench foot, (ice spots, black spots) rub your feet until circulation returns and change socks and liners. I could see the frozen spots and feel the beginning of Trench Foot, as did many other men.

Our sergeants watched our water consumption. The supply people were not always able to bring enough water up to us in these hills. We picked up a ball of snow and chewed some of it to melt in our mouth. Others would dip their canteens into running streams and then drop in a

couple of Halizone water purification tablets. Each of us carried a small bottle of the tablets. Many times I wondered what was in the water just upstream. To my knowledge none of us became sick from the water when we used the Halizone tablets.

We stayed in our positions, under fire, through the rest of the day, digging deeper for more protection. We were soaked through to our skin; our holes were half full of water and the cold rain continued. We did not sleep much that night.

On the next day, November 15th there was no change in our situation. Lieutenant Colonel Quinn was moved to the rear for medical attention and Major Zebrowitz took command. In the afternoon the 1st Battalion, 399th moved into our area to help us. Then division artillery was finally satisfied with our position. Some of the forward troops were moved back, closer to our position. At 4 PM our artillery began to pound the German position on Hill 431 with every weapon they had including some 240-mm and 8-inch guns from the Corps area. This type of barrage was called "Time on Target" or TOT. All artillery weapons were fired, according to their distance from the target, so that all shells would hit the ground simultaneously. Trees flew through the air and the earth shook for a twenty-minute period. Then the 1st Battalion, 399th Infantry walked in and took the hill. They found many dead Germans and two shell shocked, but alive German soldiers. We slept better in our wet foxholes that night, even though the cold rain began to change to snow during the night.

18. WOUNDED BY ARTILLERY FIRE

The next day, November 16th, we moved out shortly after dawn. Many of us began to discard the equipment that we carried into battle. First to go was the full field pack; it was too heavy to carry while climbing around the wooded Vosges Mountains. In the morning our shelterhaves (pup tents) were covered with snow and our blankets were soaked from the continuous rains. We soon discarded them. Some GIs discarded mess kits because we were eating mostly K rations. I kept a tablespoon and stuck it in one of my ShoePacs. All of us kept our canteen and cup, raincoat and some personal items like writing paper and a pencil. We were learning how to travel light.

The 2nd Battalion, 397th Infantry followed the 1st Battalion, 399th Infantry across Hill 431, now a snow covered hilltop. The dense forest had been destroyed. We walked past a destroyed machine gun position. Dead German soldiers were scattered around on the ground in various positions. The dead German bodies sickened many of the men. The sight of German bodies did not seem to affect me; I had worked around both dead and injured people. We walked over the hilltop and started down the other side of the hill. Suddenly light showed through the trees and we came upon a wet, asphalt-paved road crossing in front of us; most of the snow had melted from the road surface. Our battalion turned to the right and followed the road. The plan was for the 2nd Battalion to move to a line abreast of our 3rd Battalion and at 1 PM, attack south and take the last hill overlooking the town of Raon-l'Etape.

For a detailed map of this attack go to the web page menu and click on "The 100th in Combat". Then click on the first map "Attack on the German Winter Line, 12-20, Nov. 1944. Note the direction our regiment attacked. The asphalt-paved road between Baccarat, Bertichamps and Raon L-Tape is shown on this map.

We moved along the road in almost complete silence. The only sounds were those of our creaking harnesses, the light metallic clanking of machine guns, mortars base plates and bazookas being shifted on shoulders. I could hear the soft shuffling of ShoePacs on the blacktop road punctuated by the rattle of an occasional pebble being kicked off the road. My feet began to hurt, both heels and toes felt numb and frozen. The sensation was similar to walking on wooden heels and toes, but I felt good to be moving forward again, moving against the Germans, out of the wooded mountains, on a paved road.

Our sergeants hurried us along. We were walking as fast as possible considering the loads we carried. Our company was divided along both sides of the road with five yards between each of us. I was on the right side of the road; the mountain slope, filled with tall trees, rose on my right. I began to fall behind because my toes and heels had lost feeling. My section leader, S/Sgt. Bassett pulled out of line, waited for me and asked if he could relieve me of the 53-pound tripod. I gladly lifted it off my shoulders and placed it on his back. He handed me his rifle and we continued our hurried march. I began to roll and rotate my shoulders to get feeling back into the muscles.

The road curved slightly to the right; I spotted an American tank ahead of us on the road. Most of the time tanks brought artillery fire. German artillery began to explode in the trees around us, far enough away that we kept moving. A shell hit in the treetops to my left, close behind me. I twisted toward the ditch on my right and began to drop to the road, my head going down first. Three red-hot pieces of metal flew between my legs, two cutting my left pants leg. One piece hit my left calf. I fell to my knees. The rifle butt hit the road, causing it to fall off my shoulder and crashed on the road. I tried to get up on my feet, but fell back down on the road. Somebody yelled for our medic, Pfc. Arthur A. Lombardi, from Little Falls, NY; we called him "Beezer". He ran to me and dragged me off the road into the ditch beside the road.

Our sergeants yelled for everybody to get on their feet and get moving. My company moved rapidly down the road out of sight. The rest of the battalion moved past, while Beezer pulled me from the ditch and up on the hillside. He ripped my pants leg open, exposing the bleeding, jagged wound. I opened my first aid packet and handed him the bandage. Then I gently picked the piece of shrapnel from my leg. Beezer poured sulfa powder on the wound and bandaged the leg with my first aid bandage. He instructed me to take all 8 sulfa tablets that each of us carried in our first aid kit and, he continued, drink all the water in your canteen. He left me and ran after the troops. The woods became quiet. I began to swallow the sulfa tablets and drink from my canteen. I gagged on the water, but finally finished the tablets and the water. Then I lay back on the ground wondering what would happen next. *Captain Maiale* wrote "...the battalion had just moved off the road into position for an attack when the Germans spotted them and fired artillery and mortars. The men dug holes to await the attack order".

I lay exposed on the side of a hill; artillery shells exploded on the road and in the tree tops, shrapnel flew through the air and into the ground around me. I heard rifle and machine gunfire from the direction of the town. I quickly crawled and rolled down the hill into the deep drainage ditch along the road. Shrapnel from shell explosions hit the road, skidded across my body and slammed into the dirt bank along my right side. I was alone; I could not see anyone. Where were the medical evacuation people? The small arms fire died down. Time

passed. The woods became silent again.

19. MOTHER'S POEM

On this terrible day, my mother wrote a poem titled:

MY BOY IN WAR

I have a boy who's over there
He's straight and tall, complexion fair
He writes us he is doing fine
But we know what is on his mind.

He's out to win a "War of Hate"
And only, we; can sit and wait
Till he returns, our own "Dear Son"
To bring back home those days of fun.

Seems cruel, how a Christian land
Must give our boys to take a hand
In a war that's planned by a cruel mind
God knows no love, is there to find.

Yes, we suffer the pangs of loneliness
And allow such actions to rob all of us
Of those we love and hold so dear
While a "War" is waged both far & near.

Oh! God, Our Father, protect our boys
While serving their country in many ways
Bring them back to the land they love
We ask of thee, Dear God above.

11/16/44 Love to you Bill from Mom

20. REGIMENTAL COMMANDER KILLED

Three US Jeeps came down the road from the rear area, behind me. A GI sat on the hood of the lead Jeep. As they came closer I could see that the GI was a Captain. The lead Jeep stopped when they saw me in the ditch, those following also stopped. A tall, heavy officer in a cream colored trench coat stepped out of the lead jeep. The trench coat stood out like a beacon in those dark woods. Everybody else was dressed in the dark green uniform. He walked toward me. I recognized him as Colonel William Ellis, the 397th Infantry Regimental Commander, from White Plains, NY. He asked what had happened to me. After I told him he patted my shoulder and assured me that the medics would be here soon to get me. Then he asked where the 397th Regiment was located. I pointed down the road and toward the location of the previous firefight. He turned to one of the officers in the group and ordered him to "setup the radio in that culvert", pointing to a concrete sewer opening in the ditch,

about 10 yards to the right of my position. He returned to the Jeep and the group drove off, leaving the radio operator and me alone in the quiet woods.

A few minutes later, I heard the sound of German machine guns bursts and rifle fire, and then the woods became silent. A short time later, the Captain came running out of the woods and up the road, without his helmet or jacket, running toward the radio operator, yelling, "Red Fox is dead". That remark made no impression on me. The radio operator called somebody and announced that German machine gun fire had killed Colonel Ellis. My thought was that his cream-colored trench coat made a clear target.

Many years later Captain Maiale told me that General Burrell, our Division Commander, had called Colonel Ellis that morning and directly ordered him to determine why the 397th Regiment was not attacking as ordered. Colonel Ellis hurriedly left his office, jumped in his jeep and directed his driver to the regiment's location. On the way he picked up Captain Doherty of the 397th Cannon Company, who offered to guide him to the troops; Doherty rode on the hood. After he left me in the ditch, Colonel Ellis was driven down the paved road, then turned left off the road toward a farmhouse. A German machine gunner fired on the three jeeps. Colonel Ellis was hit and died immediately. After the war he was buried in Arlington Cemetery in Washington, DC.

Colonel Ellis was posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal for his actions. Confusion reigned in the regiment. *Captain Maiale* wrote... "at 1 PM the battalion got out of their holes to attack. The Germans could see them because a heavy barrage of mortar and artillery hit and caused them to dive for cover. So the afternoon passed. Each time the GIs stuck their head up the Germans fired at them. The 2nd Battalion was unable to attack".

21. REGIMENTAL AID STATION

Hours later as daylight faded into dusk, two Medics drove down the road in a Jeep looking for wounded. They picked me out of the ditch, carried me to the Jeep and drove me to the Regimental Aid Station. Other GIs carried me to a hillside and sat me down in a group of wounded GIs. I was told that I would have to wait; the doctors were working on the more severely wounded. I looked around, directly in front of me sat a GI with a one-inch square hole punched in the back of his steel helmet. A trickle of blood ran down the back of his neck. I wondered how far the piece of shrapnel had penetrated into his skull. He turned around and I recognized Corporal Rufus Dalton from our mortar platoon.

Remark: On June 25, 2000, Rufus and Ruth Dalton, Jim and Emily Henderson and I visited Raon-L'Tape. We noticed a tablet on the City Hall wall which stated: "This Plaque is dedicated by the City of Raon-L'Tape and the 100th US Infantry Division to the nearly 1500 soldiers of the division who were killed, wounded, missing or captured during the battle of the Vosges known as the Ensemble De Raon-L'Tape between November 6, 1944 and November 20, 1944 when the city was taken by the 100th US Infantry Division. It is also dedicated to the Citizens of Raon-L'Tape who lost their lives or were injured during the battle". Nearby another tablet records that 150 French Soldiers, 40 Jew Refugees and 120 Civilians were also killed, wounded, missing or captured during the battle".