

# The Second Regiment of Engineers

The only A.E.F. Engineer Regiment to be decorated with The Croix de Guerre by The French Government!


[Guestbook](#)
[Home](#)
[Contact](#)
[About](#)
[Site Map](#)

## CHAPTER II

### CHATEAU THIERRY.

(May 31, 1918 to July 16, 1918)

**The Second Engineers lost no less than 95 men KIA, 7 MIA, 285 Wounded and 69 Evacuated Sick  
—accounting for nearly 29% of enlisted men—  
at Belleau Wood.**



**The Problem of Battle.** The German drives towards Amiens and later to Chateau Thierry had created a situation fraught with serious dangers to the Allies. The drive towards Amiens had shown that the days of trench warfare had about ended, that Infantry supplied with much artillery could break through a series of well organized trenches. After the Amiens drive had been stopped the 1st Division was preparing for its attack of May 23 resulting in the recapture of Cantigny . The 2nd Division had received orders to move toward Montdidier and everyone thought that it would back up and assist the 1st Division in taking back what the Germans had won in their Amiens drive. However, on May 27th the Germans started their Chateau Thierry drive and advanced some 33 miles in four days against the French. The situation became critical; a further advance west of Chateau Thierry would still more endanger Paris and would cause the abandonment by the Allies of the salient between the Amiens and the Chateau Thierry fronts. The need was evident. The Germans at Chateau Thierry must be stopped, and driven back if possible, and the 2nd Division was selected to do the work.

**The March to Battle.** It was Decoration Day, May 30, 1918, and a more beautiful day was never seen in the 2nd Division area, 30 kilometers northwest of Paris . A holiday was declared, and the 2nd Division stopped its intensive training and spent the day at racing, running, jumping and swimming. Several days previous, the Division had received maps of the British Front, the 1st Division having been there longer than usual, and naturally the 2nd Division expected to relieve the 1st Division. At 8:00 P. M. that day the 2nd Engineers got orders to be ready to move in three hours, but to go in another direction. Heavy packs were made, the wagons loaded, and the billets and stables cleaned. The companies fell in, stacked arms and unslung equipment; then they fell out again to get as much rest as possible.

About 1:30 A. M., May 31st, 1918, orders came for the regiment to march about four kilometers to a highway where it would embuss in camions. Arriving there, the whole regiment found itself together for the first time since arrival in France . Word came that the trucks could not be expected before 8: 00 or 9: 00 A. M. and a hurry-up call was sent for the rolling kitchens, which had been left behind to follow with the wagon train. They arrived about 7: 00 A. M. and the regiment received a meal that was the last real cooked meal for many days.

About 10: 00 A. M. the trucks arrived. They were little light French ones, driven by French and Chinese drivers. The regiment climbed on and started for \*\* \* they knew not where.

The men were packed rather tight and the sun kept getting hotter and hotter. The dust arose in great clouds and the men were soon covered with a thick grayish powder. The truck train headed towards Paris , which fact gave rise to all sorts of speculations. Civilians all along the route waved and shouted, and at every halt gave the men water, etc.

We reached [Meaux](#) about dark, and had to stop for a while because a German bombing squadron was making itself obnoxious. The road was almost blockaded by truck loads of men and ammunition moving northward and by hundreds of refugees moving toward Paris.

The bombardment lasted only half an hour, and the trucks quickly moved forward once more. Arriving about 5.00 A. M. June 1st, at May-en-Multien, Seine-et-Marne, the regiment unloaded, the companies formed, and roll was called. Here it was discovered that several trucks had not arrived, so the order was given to fall out for a short time. The men made the most of their opportunity by washing in a couple of tiny springs and eating a portion of their reserve rations, and also filling their canteens. A little before 6:00 A. M., the regiment marched out town, and split into two battalions at the first cross roads, both battalions arriving at Montreuil-aux-Lions, Aisne, shortly after noon. The men arrived tired but in very good condition, considering the hardships which they had endured. This was due mainly to frequent rests while on the march.

The Officers of Headquarters of the Regiment and a small detail of enlisted men were billeted in Montreuil-aux-Lions and were among the first American troops to be stationed there.

Camp was made in a field near town, but too late to make fires and cook another meal. However, the French soldiers had their kitchens with them, and they gave coffee and food to the men until their kettles were empty.

The regiment arrived in the town of Montreuil-aux-Lions just at the time when the last of the civilian population was making a hasty departure, thinking that the enemy might continue his advance and capture the town. All homes were left unguarded, and very little furniture or other private property was carried away by the owners. In one building in particular a great quantity of wine was stored; but our men had no time to investigate and left it severely alone.

**Summary of Campaign.** The first work of the 2nd Division was to stop the advancing Germans. A very thin French line was out in front and it remained there until the night of June 2-3. On June 2nd, the 2nd Division had established itself on the line. On June 4th, the Germans made their big attack, principally at Hill 142, and were repulsed. On June 6th, the Americans began attacking, principally because they were Americans, but partly because certain sections of the German line were troublesome and would preferably be in our hands. These attacks continued day after day and the Germans launched several vigorous counter attacks; but by July 10th when the 2nd Division was relieved, it had fought and won the battles of [Belleau Wood](#) , [Bouresches](#), [Bois de la Marettte and Vaux](#). It had forced back the whole German line about a mile and a half and had kept the Germans there. The work of the 2nd Division Engineers is given later more in detail; briefly, during these forty days, it had fought in the front line as Infantry and in off times had laid out, as engineers, and assisted in constructing, a heavily entrenched second line approximately on our position. Even if we had not beaten back the Germans, they would have been unable to

break through this second line.

**The Repulse of the Germans.** Before the first American attack our line ran south of Hill 142 ; through [Lucy-le-Bocage](#), Triangle Farm, Le Thiolet to La Nouette Farm. The 4th (Marine) Brigade held the left, and the 3rd (Infantry) Brigade held the right. Theoretically, the 2nd Engineers was to be in division reserve at Montreuil-aux-Lions, but practically it did not stay there at all. Very soon the Division Commander decided to assign the 1st Battalion to help the 3rd Brigade and the 2nd Battalion to help the 4th Brigade. Also, theoretically, we were to be used principally as engineers to help in the work of consolidation but practically it was decided that they were needed more as Infantry and that their Engineering knowledge could be applied when possible. It is reported that one Infantry Commander thought that engineers should dig standing up while Infantry fought lying down, but on trial it was found that the standing Engineers lasted about five minutes and the survivors lay down and began shooting.

Company "A" advanced along the Paris-Metz Road in a line of combat groups, was supplied with entrenching tools at the Paris Farm, and continued to La Croisette Woods thence to La Loup Woods, arriving there about 3:00 A. M. June 2, 1918. The company assisted the 1st Battalion of the 9th Infantry in preparing a position at that place, working at night, and resting in the nearby woods during the day. The company was divided into platoons, each working, cooking and camping independently in order to cover the front necessary with the least circulation. Capt. Spalding had his headquarters at Beaupaire Farm and made it possible for the company to do the work for the 9th Infantry by scouring the community for tools and utensils, with the permission of the French Authorities. The company left La Loup Woods at 8:00 P. M. June 3, 1918, and arrived at La Croisette Woods about 4:00 A. M. June 4, 1918, after assisting the 1st Battalion of the 9th Infantry to consolidate positions just east of that place during the night.

Company "B" rested with the balance of the 1st Battalion at Montreuil-aux-Lions the afternoon of June 1st. The men had eaten practically nothing since the little bread and coffee served the morning of the day before. They had just made fires and were about to cook a little bacon when the regiment received orders to move. At 4: 00 P. M. the company resumed its march, proceeding in half-platoon columns through fields of wheat along the Paris-Metz road and taking entrenching tools from a dump at the Paris Farm. The company was to be attached to the 2nd Battalion of the 9th Infantry, but the exact location of the battalion was not known. It was well on toward morning before the destination was reached and the men arrived very tired and faint from the lack of food and sleep. Headquarters and the first platoon took position in a sunken road, running south from the Paris-Metz road at Le Thiolet. The 2nd platoon occupied the small wood to the right, on the road between La Croisette and La Tafournay Farm, while the fourth platoon was placed on the left in the woods immediately south of Paris-Metz road at Le Thiolet. The third platoon was divided among the other three. The mission of the company was to help fortify the positions of those units of the 9th Infantry to which it was attached and if necessary act in their support. In front of the 9th Infantry was a line of French outposts. On the left of the 9th, north of the Paris-Metz Highway , were the Marines. The company's first night at the front was as quiet as any in its history, but the next day, the enemy having brought his artillery up, there was some shelling which increased in violence as time went on. We strengthened our fortifications; rifle pits were consolidated into trenches, machine gun emplacements were built and barbed wire entanglements were constructed, wire fences being torn down to supply the wire.

In these first days when the transportation of the regiment had not arrived, it was almost impossible to obtain rations. Platoon commanders had to shift the best way they could and very little food was available.

Company "C," after leaving the trucks at May-en-Multion on June 1st, marched with the 1st battalion to camp near Montreuil-aux-Lions. The orders were for the company to report to Commanding Officer, 23rd Infantry, and do Engineer duty with that regiment.

The Commanding Officer of Company "C" was appointed Engineer Officer of the 23rd Regiment of Infantry and the company was divided into four platoons. The 1st and 4th were attached to the 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry, and the 2nd and 3rd to the 3rd Battalion of the same regiment. These battalions assisted in the repulse of the attack by the Germans.

The 2nd Battalion was attached to the Marine Brigade and marched to Paris Farm where it drew tools. Acting upon instructions from the Brigade Commander to march to the line running roughly from Lucy-le-Bocage to Triangle Farm, and there to assist the Marines in defensive positions, the entire battalion moved forward in platoon column, each platoon being given a sector of the line. Due to darkness, the lack of maps, and the lack of information, the battalion arrived on the line with "D" and "E" Companies in the Vicinity of Triangle Farm and "F" Company in front of Lucy-le-Bocage.

Each platoon of Company "D" was assigned to a company of the [6th Marines](#). It was used in the firing line as Infantry when the men could not work at consolidating positions. It was also in the line during the German attack of June 2nd which was repulsed. It was relieved on the morning of June 5th at 3: 00 A. M. and marched to a reserve position south of Marigny where it remained in reserve until 10: 00 P. M. on the evening of June 5th, 1918. On the night of the 5th it moved to the woods near La Voie du Chatel. On the morning of the 6th it moved to Hill 142 with Company "E" and part of Company "F" and assisted in Major Turrell's Battalion of the 5th Marines. When on June 8th the enemy launched a determined counter attack, which was directed against the Marine Brigade, "D" Company of the Engineers was in the line as Infantry and helped to repulse the Germans.

**Attacking and Digging** . In the first attacks by our division, the Bois-de-Belleau and Boursches were our main objectives. As a consequence, we find the 2nd Engineers are attached to the troops against these objectives and to the right and left of them. On June 6th, the day when our first attack was launched we find Company "C" goes with attackers to the right of Boursches, later Company "A" goes to Boursches and Company "B" to the southwest edge of Bois-de-Belleau; Companies "D," "E" and "F" over to the left of the line as far as Hill 142. From this day until the 2nd Division was relieved on June 10th , we find all or part of the 2nd Engineers joining in every attack, and after the hottest fighting is over, retiring to the Position of Principle Defense, (described later), and working on it every night under shell and machine gun fire until called on to accompany another attack

Company "C" was the right company of Engineers in the attack of June 6th. Orders were received by Company "C" to go into action as the 4th wave, carrying intrenching [entrenching] tools in order to dig in when the objective was reached. As ordered, they went over as the 4th wave on June 6th; but casualties in all waves were so heavy that by the time they reached the front wave, no Infantry officers were left; so the Engineers with their remaining



officers carried the line to its objective, until relieved by other Infantry that night. The front line, as it was then established, ran from Bois-de-Belleau to Triangle Farm and then through Bois de la Rochette. After being relieved from holding the front line Company "C" set to work on the Position of Principal Resistance, near Triangle Farm, remaining there strengthening positions until June 18th when it was ordered to return to La Croisette Woods and rejoin the 1st Battalion of Engineers. It arrived at La Croisette Woods without mishap and worked on reserve positions until June 30th when it joined in the Vaux attack.

On the morning of June 6th, 1918, Company "A," then at La Croisette Woods, was ordered to proceed overland to the Bois de Bourbelin, a distance of about two kilometers. At 3.40 A. M. June 6th, when practically at its destination, the enemy shelled the road travelled, sending over seven shells, all of which burst very close to the company column, instantly killing one man and wounding three; one of the wounded died next day. The company immediately deployed into the woods and commenced digging shelters. The woods and immediate surrounding territory occupied by the company was heavily shelled by the enemy, and in the afternoon a great number of stray bullets of a machine gun barrage went through the woods. During the afternoon the company went out until 7: 00 P. M. to dig trenches on the line held by the 2nd battalion of the 9th Infantry, when orders were received to proceed to Lucy-le-Bocage.

At 8:30 P. M. June 6th, Companies "A" and "B," under the command of Major Fox, left the woods enroute for Lucy-le-Bocage, by way of Croisette Farm - Coupru marching through heavy shell fire and gas to Lucy-le-Bocage. Upon arrival at Lucy-le-Bocage, further orders were received to march to Boursesches, which had just been taken. The column, with Company "A" in the lead, at once left Lucy-le-Bocage by way of the Lucy-Boursesches road. When the column was about two kilometers from Boursesches, the enemy commenced shelling the road with one pounders and high explosive shells, but the column continued going forward and Company "A" entered Boursesches at 2: 00 A. M. June 7, 1918, Company "B" leaving the road and entering the Bois-de-Belleau.

Upon arrival in Boursesches, Company "A" separated into platoons, each platoon seeking the best shelter available, in caves, in back of buildings and walls, etc. The bombardment of the Germans continued all during the day and became so intense at times as to necessitate the shifting of the platoons to better positions of safety. The fourth platoon was forced to change position four times during the bombardment.

At 10:30 P. M., working parties were sent out. The 1st Platoon, under 1st Lieutenant Wyche, barricaded the street in the center of the line, the 2nd Platoon under 1st Lieutenant Burton commenced improving a strong point and erecting machine gun emplacements and splinter proof shelters for same on the left flank, and twenty men of the 3rd Platoon under 2nd Lieutenant Woodle went out to improve positions on the extreme right flank, the rest of the platoon remaining in billets as reserves. The 4th Platoon under 2nd Lieutenant Booth engaged in constructing machine gun emplacements in the center of the line.

At about 12:30 A. M. June 8, 1918, the enemy attacked the town under cover of a heavy machine gun barrage. All work was immediately stopped, and the positions were occupied by both the Marines and Engineers against all enemy efforts to take them. In the town, all men not out with working parties were at once formed at the square and placed at the disposal of Captain Zane, U.S.M.C., Commanding Officer, and used by him in connection with his own men as outposts, reliefs and reinforcement parties and patrols. The German counter attack continued until about 2.30 A. M. June 8, 1918, when, completely beaten, the enemy was repelled and forced to withdraw to his old positions. Anticipating further attacks, additional men from the reserve in town were sent as reinforcements by Captain Spalding to the extreme right flank of the positions held by the Marine's, bringing the total number of Engineers in the line up to 110, who remained there until withdrawal of the company from town after they were relieved by the Marines. The casualties were only seven men killed and wounded, which was very light for the action in which the company participated. The town was shelled all through the following two days, but no further attempts were made to take it. At 1:25 A. M. June 10, Company Headquarters and the 2nd and 3rd platoons, followed at 2:30' A. M. by the 1st and 4th platoons, left Boursesches, arriving at La Croisette Wood at 3:30 A. M. and 5:00 A. M. respectively. Great difficulty was encountered in assembling the company prior to leaving the town owing to the heavy shell fire, but the move was accomplished with but one casualty, Pvt. 1st Cl. Still being killed carrying a message of relief through the heavy barrage. Great pride and satisfaction is taken in the men for their coolness and bravery under fire and the ability to adapt themselves to conditions, a fact which was noticed by all officers in the town and comment passed by Major Holcomb, Commanding the Battalion of Marines.

On the night of June 11th, Company "A" began work on the Position of Principal Resistance which ran roughly from the village of Le Thiolet, southeast through the woods west of Bourbelin thence south through Tafournay Farm, joining the French position east of Farm la Nauette. The company worked on this position until June 30th.

At 8:30 P. M. June 6th, Company "B" turned off from Company "A" going to Boursesches and skirted the southeast edge of Bois-de-Belleau. The Lucy-Boursesches road was under shell fire and Company "B" sustained its first casualty when Sergeant 1st Class Gore was severely [sic] wounded by a shell fragment. The company followed the line of woods, reaching a ravine and going along it until it touched with the Marines under whose guidance it occupied a position in Bois-de-Belleau about 2:30 A. M. June 7th.

When the two companies left Lucy-le-Bocage, "B" Company was in single file at five pace intervals, and in the darkness a man of the 3rd platoon lost contact with the man ahead of him and instead of turning to the right towards Boursesches, continued straight on so that a portion of the 3rd platoon and all of the 4th found themselves separated from the rest of the company at the outer edge of town. The Marines had advanced two hours before and the Engineers took shelter in their jumping off trenches which were at the edge of the town and were being heavily shelled. They remained in these trenches until a guide sent back by Captain Dederer was found at the cross-roads. The detachment was then marched on toward Boursesches, but as it did not encounter the other guide left by Captain Dederer where the company turned off from the road, it marched all the way to Boursesches. The Germans were shelling this whole area over which the Marines had advanced but a short time before, putting over both high explosive and gas. When the detachment reached Boursesches it had had two men killed and seven wounded. The detachment commander put his men at the disposal of the Marine commander of the town. There being a large number of wounded and no means of evacuation. Corporal Wilkinson went for an ambulance and succeeded in obtaining one. In the meantime liaison had been established in Bois-de-Belleau with company and battalion P. Cs. and orders were received to join the company in Bois-de-Belleau at dark. So, that evening, the detachment started following the ravine that leads from Boursesches towards the Bois-de-Belleau. It was a very dark night and the ravine was obstructed with boulders and tangled underbrush; a sergeant and several men arriving at a fork in the ravine turned in the wrong direction, and came unexpectedly upon three Germans on guard at a culvert. The men left the ravine and took cover in the nearest woods. For three days these men, their retreat cut off, wandered behind the German lines, frequently engaging enemy patrols, and having experiences very remarkable, but finally most of them returned safely to their company. Meanwhile, the remainder of the detachment took the fork in the ravine and reached the company's position about midnight of June 7th.

In Bois-de-Belleau, early in the morning of June 7th, the company dug two-men shelter pits in three lines, got a short rest and received rations of French bread, syrup, raisins and meat. The Engineers occupied a position in support of the Marines. All day long the woods were subjected to artillery, machine gun, and trench mortar fire. At evening the Marines were withdrawn from their position in front of the Engineers. At about 12:30 A. M. June 8th, simultaneously with his counter attack on Boursesches, the enemy opened up on our positions in the Bois-de-Belleau with an intense mortar and machine gun barrage, but his attack was not seriously pushed here. During the barrage. Company "B" lost 6 men killed and 3 wounded. At 4:30 A. M. the company was ordered to the ravine at the foot of the hill. At dawn, the next morning, the Marines again attacked, the 1st platoon under Lieutenant Smith following in support, and the 2nd

under Lieutenant Gregory being used as flank patrols. Later, the 4th platoon joined the 1st, the 3rd remained as reserve in the ravine. The attack was not successful and that afternoon the company was required to dig-in in a new position. On the night of June 8th, the company was withdrawn from the Bois-de-Belleau, and marching all night was bivouaced [sic] in a woods near Marigny where it rested all day. At 10:00 P. M. the night of June 9th, 1918, the company marched to La Croisette Woods, digging in the same night. From June 10th to July 7th, inclusive, the company remained camped in this woods, sleeping during the day and going out each night to dig trenches or to put up wire and other work on the Position of Principal Resistance.

The 2nd Battalion was engaged in the attack on Hill 142 of June 6th and "D" and "F" Companies under Major Snow joined in the battle in Belleau Woods on June 11th. The following sketch of the activities of Company "D" in this action is typical of the 2nd Battalion. Company "E" was engaged in consolidating positions near Montreuil-aux-Lions during the Belleau Woods fight.

At 8:00 P. M. June 5th, we were ordered to the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. We were in a reserve position that night and the next day we moved up to support. The company was split up in details, for rations, ammunition, wounded, burying German dead and on the night of June 7th took up an alert position. On the morning of the 8th we covered the flanks during the attack by the Marines, and immediately afterwards were relieved and withdrew to the woods north of Montreuil and established camp. The kitchen had been brought up and we got our first cup of hot coffee and rested until the morning of June 11th, when we received orders to be ready to get into trucks by 11:00 A. M. We got in and went down the road under direct observation to Maison Blanche where we got out and marched to Lucy-le-Bocage and were issued picks and shovels. We then proceeded to Lieut. Col. Wise's P. C. where the company was divided up and each platoon assigned to a company of Marines, during the German counter attack on the evening of June the 11th. On the 12th, things were quieter but in the afternoon things began to happen. The Germans laid down a bombardment, using everything they had. It is estimated that there were 80,000 shells in less than four hours. How any man could come through alive was a mystery. The barrage lifted and we went over. During the barrage there was a supposed French aeroplane hovering over our position. After awhile it dropped five bombs on us and flew to the German lines. On the 13th, it was quieter with the exception of local engagements; and we used the time in straightening out certain parts of the line. On the morning of the 14th, the Germans shelled us with gas, using a great variety of poison. We were relieved on the morning of the 14th and went back to our former camp. There had been quite a number of casualties, 11 men were wounded or killed since the 1st of June and some 40 or 50 gassed; 20 or 30 went to the hospital from sheer exhaustion. We had only 30 men for duty on the night of June the 16th when we started to organize the Position of Principal Resistance.

**The Second Line of Defence.** During all the time from June 2nd to July 10th, the Engineers were working on trenches in the front line or farther back. First it was necessary to consolidate the front line; later, a strong second position was constructed.

From June 2nd to 7th, inclusive, the 4th Brigade held a general line beginning at a point about a kilometer north of Champillon, thence in a southeasterly direction passing through the wood north of Lucy-le-Bocage to Triangle Farm. The task assigned to the 2nd Battalion of Engineers was to entrench and consolidate this position; this work was carried on with great difficulty under heavy shell fire, and on occasions was interrupted, as detachments of Engineers were called upon to go forward as Infantry in support of attacking parties of Marines, and again were sometimes called upon to defend against enemy attacks the positions they were fortifying. Thus, during these days of strenuous work and fighting, both officers and men of the Engineers found occasions to be thankful that their training in infantry tactics in open warfare had not been neglected.

By June 8th the lines held by our troops had become stabilized to such an extent that definite plans for the organization of the terrain could be planned, and the work thereon systematized. Col. F. B. Wilby was sent down from General Headquarters. These lines of defence were designated "A," "B" and "C," in order from rear to front. The Engineers on June 7th were ordered back into the Divisional Reserve and under direction of the Division Engineer were assigned the task of organizing and constructing Position "B." Working parties of Infantry from the Division reserve were also placed at the disposal of the Division Engineer for this work. The 1st Battalion dug shelters and established itself in Bois de la Croisette as a base to work from; the 2nd Battalion did the same in Bois de Gros Jean and worked from there.

One Engineer Officer was attached to each Brigade to give technical advice and assistance in the construction of Position "C" or the front line position. Work on this position was carried out by the Infantry units occupying the line.

At 5:00 P. M. on June 11th, just at the time when the Battalion Commanders had completed the reconnaissance of Position "B," and when about to begin work. Companies "D" and "F" were ordered to report to the 4th Brigade for duty with that Brigade. This action was taken in view of the fact that an enemy attack was expected. As already described, these companies were placed in front line positions, in support of the Marine units holding that line and were used as Infantry until June 14th, when they were again withdrawn to the Division Reserve.

This action seriously delayed the work of the 2nd Battalion, not only because of the time lost, but because both companies were subjected to terrific fire and suffered serious casualties, and the men when withdrawn were in a state of exhaustion and physically unfit to properly carry on their work for several days after this action as Infantry.

The work done on position "B" consisted mainly of organizing platoon "Groupes de Combat," or elements of firing trench and machine gun positions, located in such a way as to be self-supporting and to afford a flanking fire covering the whole front. These Groupes de Combat were echeloned in depth in such a manner as to form a support line, Groupes de Combat being located in rear so as to flank the Groupes de Combat forming the front of the position, with the object of preventing enemy infiltration.

Barbed wire entanglements were constructed. On account of the scarcity of material, these entanglement were made simple in their nature and usually consisted of a single row of double apron wire. An attempt was made to locate machine guns so that all wire entanglements would be enfiladed.

All Engineer material for this work was obtained from the French Army Corps, and difficulty was experienced in getting material in sufficient quantity. Barbed wire and sand bags were the only items obtained in any quantity.

Tools and material were supplied by the Division Engineer to the Infantry Brigade to carry out this work. At times, small details of Engineers constructed special works, such as splinter proof shelters for Infantry Brigades and Regimental Command Posts.

During the later part of the month of June, a readjustment of the lines was effected. The first position was then divided into three Zones, termed Zone of Advance Posts, Zone of principal Resistance and the Zone of Reserves. Position "B" with certain minor changes constituted the Zone of Principal Resistance. Work on Field Fortifications of this position was continued throughout the month of June and until July 7th, when both Battalions were relieved by the 101st Engineers of the 26th Division.

After starting on this Zone of Principal Resistance, the rolling kitchens were brought up, and the men lived in fairly comfortable circumstances compared to their first few days at the front. The work was all in the vicinity of the enemy, and was about evenly divided between work in the open and work in the woods. The operations under cover of the woods could be carried on in the day time, but the going to and from work usually necessitated the crossing of open places, so all travel to and from work, as well as the work in the open, had to be at night. This made it necessary in doing day work to have breakfast at about 2:30 A. M. in order to start in time to safely reach cover from enemy observation before daylight, and for the same reason it was impossible to return to camp

before 10:00 P. M., thus making a very long day for men working seven days a week.

All work was greatly interfered with by enemy artillery fire, both high explosive and gas. At times work was completely stopped on account of heavy concentration of mustard gas. The men were under considerable strain during our stay at this place, as they were under an intermittent shell fire both at work and at camp.

The Camouflage Detachment of the 2nd Engineers, was under command of Captain St. Gaudens, and worked principally with the artillery during the battle.

The following is a report submitted by him on the operation of this Detachment:

The 2nd Division having established its [Headquarters at Montreuil-aux-Lions](#) on June 1st, requisitions were sent through military channels for camouflage material, on June 2nd, and camouflage work began on batteries at once. Owing to the nature of the terrain, the constant lack of material, and constant shifting of batteries, virtually all camouflage efforts have been confined to the Artillery. For the first ten days, the open warfare, the fact that the batteries were constantly moving and that the Germans had neither proper aeroplane service nor the Artillery to do counter battery work, made the camouflage situation a very simple one. But as the lines became more stable, and the Boche gaining the supremacy of the air obtained both excellent photographs and good balloon observation, the situation took on a more serious aspect.

The difficulty of the situation was further intensified by the extreme slowness of the arrival of Camouflage materials. The most vital portions of the requisitions of June 2nd, 9th, 13th, 18th and 20th were not filled throughout the month. This meant that camouflage consisted of a constant series of reconnaissance for positions affording good natural cover and frequent shifts of batteries where proper artificial cover could not be obtained. Camouflage material, to be of value, must be installed at the earliest possible moment, a condition which did not prevail in this region. It is suggested that some other means of obtaining camouflage material more rapidly than the present regulation channels be devised.

The camouflage personnel throughout the month consisted of one officer and about thirty men. This proved ample to meet the needs of the situation within the Division. The men were distributed so as to allow one man to remain in charge of each battery and one sergeant to remain in charge of each regiment. Had the material been ample to meet the situation, there would have been no difficulty in maintaining the proper camouflage of the batteries.

The question of camouflage discipline is one that has not yet been adequately solved within the Division. The severe lessons taught by German Artillery where camouflage principles have been violated have impressed the present personnel to some extent, but until the vital need of circulation has been taught to men as persistently as gas drill is taught, it is quite certain that numbers of lives will be sacrificed through perfectly useless carelessness.

The camouflage situation within the Division at the end of the month, therefore, was good within the limits imposed by the lack of long time insistence [sic] on camouflage discipline. With the arrival of material and with another month of persistent education given by both the camouflage personnel and the German Artillery, the division should be considered in excellent shape, from a camouflage point of review.

(Signed) Homer Saint Gaudens,  
Capt. Engrs. N.A.

By June 28th, things had become somewhat quiet along the front; the Artillery fire was no longer a continuous roll; the Infantry slept more or less regularly. So, for fear that the enemy might also sleep more or less regularly and lose his fear of the 2nd Division, it was decided to wake him up again by taking some more of his line away from him. Vaux and Hill 204 were just then giving us the most trouble; so arrangements were made with the French to take Hill 204 and the 2nd Division was to take Vaux and the line to the northwest. Two battalions were detailed for the work, one from the 9th Infantry to take Vaux, one from the 23rd to take the line to the northwest of Vaux: Company "A" of the 2nd Engineers was attached to the battalion from the 9th to help in the attack and consolidate the position, Company "C" was similarly attached to the battalion from the 23rd Infantry.

In taking up the position at the jumping off place, Captain Spalding, with Company "A," stopped in the village of Monneaux with his headquarters in order to give some final instructions to the platoon commanders and the leaders as they filed by to take up their positions. Before the last platoon had passed, a shell struck in the little group, killing or wounding every man but one. Captain Spalding was wounded severely in the right leg and died in the hospital at 7:00 A. M. the following morning. The company went into battle a few minutes later without the captain or headquarters, and without the fourth platoon having received final instructions, this platoon being commanded by a sergeant first class who was later awarded the D. S. C. for his conspicuous bravery in this action. The company was subjected to considerable indirect fire while awaiting the zero hour, but our entrance into the village was accomplished with very slight losses as our artillery had compelled the enemy in VAUX to seek shelter in the cellars and the enemy shelled only the western edge of the village. In assisting the 9th Infantry to "clean up" the village, and hold positions along the railroad just north of there, we found a number of German machine guns and plenty of ammunition for same, but the men had not been instructed in the use of these weapons; hence they could not use them in defending the village during the next few days. The company assisted the 9th Infantry in consolidating positions on the outskirts and in the village of Vaux. These were made fairly strong, but due to the fact that the French had failed to take Hill 204, our right flank was menaced from that position and our general position was not strong. Two platoons were held in the front line, and two acting as reserve were occupied in clearing communication to the rear, fortifying supporting positions, carrying ammunition and caring for the dead and wounded. About 10:00 P. M. on July 4th, the 2nd and 3rd platoons returned to camp in La Croisette Woods, reaching the area about midnight, leaving the 1st and 4th platoons to finish some work on consolidation. These latter platoons reached camp in La Croisette Woods the following night about 11:30 P. M.

Company "C" left its camp at Bois de la Croisette on June 3rd, and joined the battalion from the 23rd Infantry at the jumping off place. On the evening of July 1st, the Infantry went over the top and the Engineers rested at the jumping off place until word was sent back that the objective had been reached, fifteen minutes after the attack started. The Engineers then set out and dug them in before morning and returned immediately to Bois de Marette. The next day, the company returned to its old camp at La Croisette Woods and continued work on the reserve positions and rested there.

On July 4th, Col. W. A. Mitchell arrived to relieve Colonel McIndoe of command of the regiment, as Colonel McIndoe had been selected for Corps Engineer of the IV Corps. Colonel Mitchell was a first honor graduate of West Point and had spent four years there as instructor and Assistant Professor in Military Engineering and the Art of War. He was also very fortunate in that he had recently completed the courses at Fort Leavenworth in the Line and Staff classes.

Colonel McIndoe relinquished command of the regiment on July 6th and left the same day to take up his duties with the IV Corps. He was later promoted to the grade of Brigadier General as result of recommendation by the Commanding General of the 2nd Division for his excellent work while commanding the 2nd Engineers. General McIndoe was then placed in charge of the Department of Military Engineering and Engineering Supplies and remained on that work until ordered to return to the United States. While en route to the Rhine on an inspection trip preparatory to his return to the United States, General McIndoe was suddenly taken ill and on February 6th, 1919, died at Neufchateau of pneumonia. Thus passed away our first regimental commander. His death was felt personally by all of his men; many had been in close contact with him and all had learned to admire him for his personal qualities and his unusual ability.

**Resting.** On July 8th-10th, the 2nd Division was relieved by the 26th Division. The 2nd Engineers camped in woods southwest of Montreuil-aux-Lions and bathed, refitted, drilled and did a little work on the corps defence line until it left on July 16th for its share in the Soissons battle.

#### MEN SPECIALLY DISTINGUISHED

SEE APPENDIX No. 2.

#### LOSSES AND REPLACEMENTS DURING PERIOD MAY 30 TO JULY 16, 1918.

	Officers	Enlisted Men	Total
Morning Report of May 31, 1918	54	1542	1596
Loss by transfer, evacuations, etc	36	559	595
Gain by transfer, replacements, etc	31	655	686
Morning Report of July 16, 1918	49	1638	1687

**Comments.** In the matter of supplies, this campaign showed that larger quantities of supplies of picks and shovels would be needed. Very few ever were recovered after once being issued to troops; they used and left them; some kept them and carried them to other battles. Platoon leadership was found to be especially important, and henceforward initiative was especially cultivated.

The 2nd Engineers was used very often as infantry. This seemed unavoidable in this battle. After many fights, practically every one thought that each company should have some automatic rifles as part of its equipment; also many officers maintained that each platoon should be armed with and be drilled in the use of Machine Guns. After three or four more campaigns, opinions changed and now it is not believed that machine guns should form part of the equipment of an engineer sapper regiment, as it would simply form a temptation to use the engineers as Infantry in cases where there was no emergency and thus take them from their logical engineer work. However, opinions are nearly unanimous that each engineer company should have automatic rifles.

Although there can be no criticism of the use of engineers as infantry in emergency, this battle showed that the policy of assigning engineers to infantry brigades or regiments should be avoided. To the Division Staff, engineers are specially trained men who can fight as infantry, but to an infantry brigade or regimental commander, engineers reporting to him represent only an additional force of infantry and he generally uses them immediately as such. This battle showed, and it was promptly adopted as a policy in the 2nd Division, that the engineers must be kept under the direct control of the Division Commander; that they should be kept generally on engineering work under his control; that they should never be attached to infantry brigades or regiments except for a specific task: as engineers or even as infantry; and that they must be returned to the direct control of the Division Commander immediately upon completion of the specific task to which they have been assigned.



American Troops in Public Square of Chateau-Thierry After Its Capture, July 1918