"BRIEF NARRATIVE OF THE OPERATIONS OF 2D BATTALION, 117TH ENGINEER REGIMENT, DURING 1915-16."

(1917 to 1919.)

"The Second Battalion was comprised of Companies D from Sacramento and E and F from Los Angeles. In the California National Guard these organizations were known as Companies A, B, and C, 1st Battalion Engineers. This battalion, prior to an Eastern movement, was employed in constructing camps at Camp Fremont and Kearney, and at various dates throughout September, 1917, started an Eastern movement, arriving in Camp Mills on the sixth and seventh of September, 1917, that being the first time that the battalion was assembled as a unit. We remained in Camp Mills until the eighteenth of October, the time being spent in intensive training, principally close-order drill.

On the 15th of October, 1917, we sailed for France on the U.S.S. "Covington," arriving in St. Nazaire on November 1. We remained on the beat five days, enlisting on November 5th for some point in France, and arrived at Nancy on the 8th of November, and were billeted in the house and key lots of the villagers. This being the first time our troops were billeted in this manner, it was quite a novel experience at first. The weather at this time of the year was cold and disagreeable, and considerable sickness, due to colds made it very inconvenient for a while, but we soon became acclimated and nothing serious developed.

On the 24th of November the majority of the officers left for the First Corps School at Gondrecourt, remaining until the thirtieth of December, 1917. Officers from all branches of the service were there, but it was mostly an Infantry-Engineer school. The organization moved from Nancy to Chalainay on the twenty-sixth of December, where it was joined by the officers returning from school. This latter tour was in what was known as the 7th Divisional Area, and we were there on barracks construction, making ready for the invading troops. It was here that we came in contact with the French lines of communication troops.

On the twenty-seventh day of January, 1918, I took half of D Company, which I had command of at that time, to Chateau, the General Headquarters, on barracks and camp construction, remaining there until the 16th of February, when we rejoined the regiment again at Chalainay at 4 a.m., on February 14, and entrained at Longres, arriving at Nancy at 6 a.m. on February 15.

We marched from Nancy to Habibneville and went into the line on the twenty-second of February under French command, attached to the 16th French Infantry. We stayed in line continuously thereafter until the eighteenth of June. During this period we picked up matters of modern warfare that were invaluable, as we learned in the campaigns that followed, and I consider this basis and the 7th Division, to which we were attached, as most fortunate in being able to spend so much time in a semi-active sector, which, however, occasionally active at times, the officers and men becoming accustomed to shell and gas attacks, both shell and projector. We spent long days at hard work throughout our entire period in this, the Bochean Sector, and I consider this, alone, made us physically fit to undertake the hard campaigns which followed soon thereafter.

We left Vaucourville for the rear on June 15, and marched to St. Benoit, then to St. Helene, thence to Thion, where we entrained June 24, arriving at Coiseul June 25, and marched twenty-two kilometers to Habibneville.

We marched out of Habibneville on June 26 to L'Piné, a distance of thirty kilometers. While here we rehearsed a problem of an attack we were to make west of Rheims, but this was suddenly called off, and we marched into line in front of Aisne on the night of July 4, arriving there at daybreak on July 5. Here we noticed great preparations for a counter to the pending German attack. We worked day and night on the trenches of the second position, getting them in readiness, and all units were informed that they must dig in for their self-preservation. Everyone seemed to realize, including officers and men, that a heavy attack was impending, but no one seemed to doubt that we were perfectly safe from any deep penetration on the part of the enemy. The Front Line units (French) made one raid every night, and sometimes too a night, and gained most valuable information. Here we passed down as to the exact hour the bombardment would open up, never before had the organization been upon the receiving end of a more violent
artillery column, D and E Companies stood to as Reserve Infantry with the 84th Brigade, and F Company in reserve to the same brigade.

During the day of July 15, 1918, moving out as a battalion to the left of the Divisional Sector, we joined the First Battalion, taking up our position as Reserve Infantry, an regiment, at the left of the 84th Infantry, relieving the 169th New York Infantry. During this action D Company was the first to receive any casualties, it losing, in killed and wounded, about 11 per cent from enemy shell fire. This was on the night of July 14 and the morning of the 15th. While in the Joncourt Farm section F Company stood to as Infantry, and D and E Companies in reserve. We received at this time considerable annoyance from gas shells, but suffered no serious casualties.

We moved out of our position on August 5, while in Force de Force, and went to force de force, to reorganize our Battalion, and then moved back to Force de Force, as Infantry. We spent reconnaissance parties along the Ourcq River, getting information for the Division in general, and three bridges across the Ourcq for light artillery, this being done under shell fire. The bridge party from F Company, while putting a bridge in front of Serzy, was fired upon and almost wiped out, three of four being killed and the rest wounded.

We moved out of Force de Force toward the rear and arrived at Bongainville, August 13, remaining in this sector until August 19th, when we marched to Chateau Thierry and entrained, arriving in Daxville August 20th. We remained in this sector, in training, until August 28th, when we started on our march to the Toul Sector. The commander of E Company, Capt. Wood, and myself proceeded the battalion on the line by three days, the organization was ordered to be in line and got to the attack on July 25th and the 26th. D and E Companies sent one platoon each with the 167th and 168th Regiments of Infantry to cut wire at the head of the attacking party, one platoon each with the small French tanks and two platoons with the artillery section of the battalion. F Company being in reserve in the rear of the line and the work. The preparations were made for the attack at a jump-off point, as the infantry troops would come into the line at midnight prior to the attack.

Trains were cut through the woods for a quarter of a kilometer, and smooth wire put on both sides for guides with illuminated signs, in large letters, at the entrances to these trains, luminous paint being used for this purpose. This, the St. Mihiel Offensive, started on the 5th of September, zero hour 5 o'clock, the bombardment starting at 2 o'clock. As midnight of September 11 a terrific rainstorm started and continued throughout the night until the zero hour, but stopped soon thereafter, and broke out into a wonderful day. All of us were of the opinion that we would not with a stubborn resilience, and little did anyone think, on the morning that we "went over", that our objective would be reached so easily. The attacking units were a very wonderful sight, three distinct Infantry waves, the tanks and sniping batteries following in support, and about an hour afterwards, the prisoners coming back. The men went into this action with a vigor and purpose unrivaled by any troops, and I want to pay great tribute to the Engineer soldiers, when their work was accomplished as Engineers, after getting through the wire, they fought with the infantry in reducing machine-gun nests, taking many prisoners.

Our objective took us to a line from through St. Benoit and known as the Boyau-Prunier Sector, which line we held until the First of October, when we moved to the immediate rear and entrained on an Indo-China train, arriving at Souilly, then advanced Army Headquarters, on October 2, remaining there until October 4, when we started our march to the Argonne, arriving at Sois-de-Montfoucault, where we stayed until the eleventh of October, when we moved to Rouloy, relieving the First Engineers at this point.

On October 12, 1918, we moved to Carpentras. On October 14 we moved out at 3 a.m. into an attack, in Reserve to the 84th Infantry Brigade, arriving at Roncourt on the same afternoon. A portion of F Company proceeded the 169th Infantry in this attack, in which they received many casualties. The rest of the organization stood in Reserve Infantry. The battalion stayed in the vicinity of Roncourt until the 24th of November on the organization of c position. 
in front of Landres St. Georges. On November 2, D Company moved out with the 84th Brigade along the left flank of the Divisional Sector, and the rest of the regiment followed up as Engineers. This drive was the one that landed the Division in front of Sedan, at which point we arrived on the afternoon of November 7th.

Our troops were engaged in reconnaissance work ahead of the infantry along the Moselle River, and, on the evening of November 8, we threw a footbridge across the Meuse in front of Nancy, received order on November 9th to move to the rear. We marched to Les PortAILS

On November 10 we moved to Bar-sur-Auzon. We were at this point on November 12, when we heard unconfirmed rumors that the armistice had been signed. On the 12th of November we received notification of the report, and at 11 a.m. we were to be a part of the army of Occupation. Left Bar-sur-Auzon November 14, and camped at Landeville.

On November 16 we marched out of Landeville via Landres St. Georges, Senones and Roncey, camping in the woods just east of Ronceveille, left next morning, November 17, and camped at Bricheville. Here we met the first liberated Allied prisoners, among them being French, English and American. Left Bricheville on November 20 and camped at Serigny. Here we met other Allied prisoners, who showed signs of terrific mistreatment and looked very much emaciated.

Left Serigny on November 22, marching via Nancy to Baccarat. This was the last town in France, being two kilometers from the Belgian frontier and a large German ammunition camp. On November 23 we moved to Chatillon via Viron, Belmont and St. Leger, passing the Belgian frontier at 8:00 a.m. On November 24 we moved out and camped at Steenbecq-le-Secour, this town being in Luxembourg, passing the boundary of Belgium at 11:45 a.m. We camped in this town, rolling up equipment and drilling, until December 1, when we moved out and camped at Brouck.

Moved out of Brouck on December 2, 1918, and marched to Hoffingen, left Hoffingen on December 3, and marched to Ballendorf, arriving there at 2:30 p.m., crossing the Upper River, which is the boundary line between Luxembourg and Germany at this point. We were two days behind the German army in accordance with the terms of the armistice. We camped in this town until the 9th of December, when I moved out with D Company to Mersch, to guard a point fortified over which the Division was moving its supplies between Trier and B Ritch. The rest of the regiment moved on into Germany with the Division, behind the German army, their line of march being as follows:

- Ballendorf on December 3
- Oberein on December 3
- Reunk on December 5
- Schwirichain on December 5
- Pfeufer on December 6
- Dorol on December 9
- Bruck on December 12
- Mersch on December 13

D Company stayed in Mersch, on this railroad guard, until the 18th of December, when we moved out by train at 11 a.m., arriving in Mersch at 3 p.m., where we joined the rest of the regiment. The wagon train was sent overland, and did not arrive until a week later. We camped in this camp during our period of occupation in Germany where the regiment was engaged in barrier and stable construction and maneuver problems.

Left Mersch on April 10, 1919, entraining at Oberwinter on the Rhine, for our trip to Brost. Arrived at Brost on April 13, and marched to Camp Punckenheim.

Left Brost on April 16, and boarded the U.S.S. "Pueblo", headed bound, arriving in New York on the twenty-eighth of April, and camped at Camp Merritt, N.Y., where the Division was broken up into detachments and sent to the respective rendezvous.

All of the headquarters company of the regiment went to South Carolina, and the detachments of 2nd Battalion to Camp Biscoey and the Provost of San Francisco.

We left Camp Merritt on May 10, arriving in San Francisco about seven days later, where we were discharged from the service of the United States, and there ending the service and designation of the 2nd Battalion, 112th Engineer Regiment.