

Dear Chad:

In my letter I tried to describe the period between July 7-19, 1944 so I could use statistics from a War Dept. Study for that period. It's hard to condense 12 days of combat to 1 1/2 pages long hand!

This time I will attempt to cover July 19 - July 24, 1944. (Ready for operation Cobra or breakout in the next installment)

Some letters to me from 30th Division soldiers written many years after the war ended. This may only add to confusion because some of them can't be sure even of the date they were wounded. Confusion is a key element of combat.

July 19, 1944

This was a very bad day for me and is picked by some historians as the worst day for the 30th Division.

The plan of attack was 2nd platoon on the left and 3rd platoon on the right with me as acting platoon leader. The 1st platoon was in reserve and 4th platoon which has machine guns and mortars was with the forward command post.

The closer we got to St Lo the more resistance we met. The fields here were much longer and the ground more level than it had been closer to the Beach Head. I was assigned an area bordered by a road from St Hilary to St Lo. Before I had gone far, I was stopped by a dig in the main tank with a very brave crew and plenty of

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machine gun ammunition - no gas - no shells for big guns. In behind the Tank were Demom mortars and infantry.

We were using radios and talking in the clear. I was X-3, the CP was X, I called for support from the Weapons platoon. Capt. Smith sent it to me with a replacement officer, Lt. Williams in charge. We had received him the night before and this was his first day in combat. X Company was still under strength. Our order to get a field of fire to the dug in Tank they had to set up the machine guns in a prone position which is bad because of concussion.

Sgt. Wacker set up the #1 gun and got into action first. Soon after it started firing the gun crew was hit by mortars. Sgt. Wacker was shot in both legs. George Tibbels set up #2 gun and started firing. Mortars took it out. Letter from Tibbels describing this action is enclosed. Our casualties were high. Lt. Williams was killed in his first day of Battle. Both Tibbels and Wacker were original X Co. men. The photocopies of pictures attached to Tibbels' letter were made at Long Blending when I was in charge of the Light Machine gun section. Both men are dead now. George died in VA Hospital in Mass. Oct. 15, 1992. Wacker died with a stroke April 7, 1994. While we were stationed at Aylesbury England Sgt. Wacker, Sgt. Harris, and I shared a room. I found one of Wacker's letters describing his wounds and how he lost down to 125 lbs when he was discharged with 90% disability.

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By afternoon of July 19th I was in charge of what was left of the weapons platoon, 3rd platoon and a few men who had got cut off from 2nd platoon.

I called the CP and requested permission to move out of the road which their mortars and artillery had zero on. I wanted to set up on higher ground just back of the ~~road~~ road. Permission was denied and an arrangement was made to meet Capt. Smith at the 1st curve on the road on my left at mid night. I could not describe my situation talking in the Clear on Radio. Too much danger of enemy interception.

When we had our meeting, Capt. Smith told me to hold what I had until daylight and that instead of continuing the attack they would join me and help remove my wounded. See copy of letter from Sgt. Helton when he describes Pvt. Pope who was wounded July 19th ending up in Dawson General Hospital in Atlanta with both legs and one arm off.

Before daylight I company pulled out leaving my right flank exposed. I talked to the Lt. in charge as they passed thru our area. I tried to get him to help me with that Tank. Of course he couldn't and it was a mistake to ask him. He asked me what I was drinking? I told him "apple Jack Brandy" and offered him some out of my canteen. He ordered me to give it out which I did. I did not know his name — the next time I saw him was when he gave me first aid when his platoon helped me

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out of the river line when I was wounded but that
will keep until the next letter.

July 20

It took us 1/2 day to remove our wounded.
By after noon the 29th Division had captured St. E.
The War Dept. study of that period credits 30th Div. for
making it possible. See photo copy of Hal Boyler's news
release July 29th, 1944, T/Sgt. Boyler killed on a patrol.

July 21

moved fast on the right of St. Jo, this was the worst
damaged city I saw in the war. Many men found 1/2
of Cross still intact and broke it with the butt of
his rifle.

July 22

We were in location where we would be for
the break out. This was the Day Capt. Smith was wounded
See his letter to me Aug 25, 1989. The G. Executive office
to Lt. Carl Harnden took command of K Co.

July 23, 1944

Period of waiting and preparation, after dark Lt. Harnden
sent a runner to bring our platoon at a time back 1,000 yds
to give us a margin of safety for the air attack.

Your grand father, John,
99. added another letter to me 12-11-92 from
Enoch Potter, my BAT man from Pikeville, Ky.
It's hard to read and another example of confusion. Tom
Dobbs stuck the Demos before a shot was fired. I'm
glad Potter remembers my help instead of the times I put him
in Horn's way, loss of battle fatigue in operations Cobra.