

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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> Division.

The plan of attack was 2<sup>nd</sup> platoon on the left and 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon on the right with me as acting platoon leader. The 1<sup>st</sup> platoon was in reserve and 4<sup>th</sup> 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 Demolition 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. In 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 Camp Blodgett 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 19<sup>th</sup> I was in charge of what was left of the weapons platoon, 3<sup>rd</sup> platoon and a few men who had got cut off from 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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

