

**My Experiences
In the World War**

(Continued from page 3)



Serving a Field Gun.

The Thirty-third, Seventy-eighth, Eightieth and Eighty-second divisions had been training behind the British front, one brigade of the Thirty-third having had front-line service with the British, and the Ninety-first division had never been in the front line and had received less than four weeks' training in France.

Misleading the Germans.

The considerable circulation of troops in the St. Mihiel area naturally attracted the attention of the people and of the officers and soldiers. Although cautioned against such discussion, the probability of an American attack on the salient was discussed here and there.

To divert the enemy's attention from our real objective it was necessary first to create some uncertainty in the minds of our own troops. The rumor was therefore started around the camp that our first offensive would be in the direction of Mulhouse, beyond the direction of the Rhine valley, northeast of Belfort. To make a diversion in that direction, and as a preliminary step an officer was sent to lease buildings in Belfort. At the same time confidential instructions were sent Major-General Bundy, commanding the Sixth corps, to proceed to Belfort with a limited staff and prepare detailed plans for an offensive with the object of seizing Mulhouse and the heights to the southeast and eventually establishing our line along the Rhine.

In the letter of instructions seven divisions were mentioned as having been designated for the attack, and three officers from each of these units were detailed to report to General Bundy to assist in the reconnaissance. He was directed to expedite the work of preparation, as the movement would probably begin September 8, under my personal command.

An attack by the French Tenth army, begun August 23, 1918, was undertaken to force the retirement of the enemy from the Vesle and Aisne rivers. On its relief from the Vesle August 7 the Thirty-second division (Haan) was assigned to the Tenth army and entered the line August 28, immediately undertaking a series of local operations in which gains were made in the face of very heavy fire. Ravines and numerous caves in the region provided ideal cover for the defending troops.

The general attack of the army the following day met but slight success, the enemy resisting desperately along his entire front, but on the 30th, by a flank attack from the south, the Thirty-second division captured Juvisy, pushing a small salient into the German lines.

Hard fighting continued August 31, but by the end of the day the Thirty-second had reached the important Soissons-St. Quentin road, where it was relieved September 2. The Thirty-second division had advanced nearly three miles and its success contributed greatly to the forced withdrawal of the German line to the Aisne river.

Pershing Takes Over Sector.

As prearranged between General Petain and myself, the sector from Port-sur-Selle (east of the Moselle river) to Watronville (north of Les Esparges), forty-two miles in extent, then occupied by the entire French Eighth army and a part of the French

Second army, was transferred to my command on August 30.

The front included the St. Mihiel salient, which was between these points, and embraced the permanent fortresses around Toul. We had three divisions in line on the south face of the sector, but the mass of our battle troops would not take over the trenches until the night before the attack.

Foch Springs Surprise.

August 30, the day I assumed command of the sector, Marshal Foch, accompanied by General Weygand, his chief of staff, came to my residence at Ligny-en-Barrois and after the usual cordial exchange of greetings presented an entirely new plan for the use of the American army.

The marshal began by saying that the German armies were in more or less disorder from recent attacks by the allies and that we must not allow them to reorganize, and that the British would continue their attack in the direction of Cambrai and St. Quentin and the French toward Mesnil.

Then, much to my surprise, he proposed that the objectives in the St. Mihiel operation be restricted and the attack made on the southern face only, and that upon its completion two other operations be undertaken by combined American and French, a number of our divisions going under French command.

Pershing Insists on U. S. Army.

I repeated what I had often said, that the American government and people expected the army to act as a unit and not be dispersed in this way. I pointed out that each time we were about to complete the organization of our army, some proposition like this was presented to prevent it.

The discussion was somewhat heated and much of it was carried on so rapidly that it could not be translated. He continued to reiterate his demands for the adoption of his plan, but I had learned that it was necessary to be very firm in dealing with him, and I finally said, in effect:

"Marshal Foch, you have no authority as allied commander in chief to call upon me to yield up my command of the American army to have it scattered among the allied forces, where it will not be an American army at all."

He was apparently surprised at my resentment of his attempt to confine American effort to subordinate roles, and said, "I must insist upon the arrangement," to which I replied, as we both rose:

"You may insist all you please, but I decline absolutely to agree to your plan. While our army will fight wherever you may decide, it will not fight except as an independent American army."

He said he was disposed to do what he could toward forming an American army. He then picked up his maps and papers and left, very pale and apparently exhausted, saying at the door as he handed me the memorandum of his proposal that he thought that after careful study I should arrive at the same conclusion he had.

Agreement is Reached.

My chief of staff, General McAndrew, and chief of operations, Fox Conner, were sent to confer with Weygand September 1 and returned to Ligny-en-Barrois with word that Marshal Foch desired to see General Petain and me the following day. Motoring to Petain's headquarters with Boyd and De Marcenches, we found McAndrew and Conner had preceded us and after lunch we went to Bonbon.

Opening the conference Foch referred to the note he had handed me August 30 and to my reply and asked my observations. Stating my attitude on the desirability of carrying out vigorous offensives to the fullest possible extent, I explained that if it should be deemed necessary to abandon the St. Mihiel project in order to begin the larger offensive, which was understood to be west of the Meuse, I would abide by his decision.

In the ensuing discussion, while there was considerable sparring, it was agreed the American army should operate as a unit under its own commander on the Meuse-Argonne front.

Marshal Foch concluded that the date for the operation should be postponed so we could first carry out the limited attack at St. Mihiel. We finally reached the definite understanding that after St. Mihiel our First army should prepare to begin this

second offensive not later than September 25.

CHAPTER LXI.

"The First army attacked yesterday and the reduction of the St. Mihiel salient is complete," reads my diary of September 13, written at Ligny-en-Barrois.

"Our troops behaved splendidly. The secretary of war visited two corps headquarters; returned to Ligny much delighted at our success.

"Petain and I went to the town of St. Mihiel today and were warmly greeted by the people. This is my birthday and a very happy one."

The attack of the infantry on the southern face of the St. Mihiel salient started at five in the morning and before that I went with several staff officers to old Fort Gironville, situated on a commanding height overlooking the battlefield from the south. The secondary attack on the west was launched at 8 a. m., as an element of surprise for artillery preparation there.

Weather Gives Advantage.

A drizzling rain and mist prevented us from getting a clear view, but the progress of our troops could be followed by the barrage which preceded them. Notwithstanding a heavy rainfall the night of September 11-12, the

weather gave us an advantage, as the mist partly screened our advance from the enemy.

Overcome Entanglements.

Thanks to the thorough preparation beforehand, the wire entanglements were more easily overcome than we had expected.

Trained teams of pioneers and engineers, with bangalore torpedoes, wire cutters and axes, assisted in opening gaps in the masses of barbed wire covering the German positions. The leading troops themselves carried along rolls of chicken wire, which was thrown across entanglements here and there, forming a kind of bridge for the infantry.

In all their offensives the allies had spent days destroying entanglements with artillery fire or had used a large number of heavy tanks, but we had only a few light tanks, ineffective for such work. The fact that we had smothered the enemy artillery was an advantage, as it enabled the leading waves deliberately to do their work without serious loss.

The quick passage through these entanglements by our troops excited no little surprise among the French, who sent a large number of officers and noncommissioned officers to St. Mihiel several days later to see how it had been done. One of these officers, after his reconnaissance, remarked in all seriousness that the Americans had the advantage over Frenchmen because of their long legs and large feet.

Troops Overrun Objectives.

In making our dispositions for battle our older divisions, the First, Second and Forty-second, had received positions on the southern face opposite the open spaces, to enable them to flank the wooded areas quickly, thus aiding the advance of less experienced units assigned to these areas.

The whole line, pivoting as planned on the Eighty-second division on the right, advanced resolutely to the attack. The entire operation was carried through with dash and precision.

By afternoon the troops had pushed beyond their scheduled objectives and by evening had reached the second day's objective on most of the southern front.

The division of the Fourth corps (Dickman) and those on the left of the First corps (Liggett) overwhelmed the hostile garrisons, and quickly overran their positions, carrying the fighting into the open. The German resistance on this part of the front was disorganized by the rapidity of our advance and was soon overcome. Although the enemy was expecting an attack, he did not think it would take place so soon and it therefore came as a surprise.

When the First division, on the marching flank of the southern attack, had broken through the hostile forward positions, the squadron of cavalry attached to the Fourth corps was passed through the breach. At 1:45 p. m. it pushed forward to reconnoiter the roads toward Vigneulles, but encountering machine guns in position was forced to retire.

Western Attack Slower.

On the western face of the salient

progress was not so satisfactory. The Twenty-sixth division, in its attempt to make a deep advance toward Vigneulles, met considerable resistance, and except for a battalion of the division reserve had not reached the day's objective.

The French at the tip of the salient had attempted to follow up the flanks of our successful penetrations, but made only small advances. Upon the request of Gen. E. J. Blondiat, com-

manding the French Second Colonial corps, a regiment of the Eightieth division (Cronkite), in reserve, was sent to his assistance.

On the afternoon of the Twelfth, learning that the roads leading out of the salient between the two attacks were filled with retreating enemy troops, with their trains and artillery, I gave orders to the commanders of the Fourth and Fifth corps to push forward without delay.

Using the telephone myself, I directed the commander of the Fifth corps to send at least one regiment of the Twenty-sixth division toward Vigneulles with all possible speed.

That evening a strong force from the Fifty-first brigade pushed boldly forward and reached Vigneulles at 2:15 a. m. the 13th. It immediately made dispositions that effectively closed the roads leading out of the

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