

In my capacity as Battalion S-3, I formulated a tentative night-march plan to go through the flooded swamp area, which we had waded finding it to be waist to chest deep, or alternatively to go around the surrounding coast line to Carentan, link up with the US force there and continue on to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Division area. The plan had its negative aspects: 81 MM mortars would have to be spiked, ammunition destroyed and various other equipment abandoned. Additionally, the swamp appeared to include canals of unknown depth requiring us to swim a short distance or requisition two or three of the small fishing boats observed nearby for ferry use in accommodating the heavy equipment and non-swimmers. I considered our Battalion MISSION to be critical, overriding these obstacles and worthy of our best effort. I presented the plan to Major Johnson who rejected it curtly, turning aside my forceful reference to our stated MISSION. Instead, Major Johnson directed that we remain in place, organize a perimeter defense around the village of Graignes and await a link-up with ground forces coming across the beach. That decision entailed an on-the-spot reorganization of our specialist personnel into provisional infantry fire teams reinforced by the machine gun and mortar platoons. During the ensuing days the officers and men proved beyond a doubt that they were elite troops of the highest order. They went on both reconnaissance and combat patrols, mined the key Graignes bridge, manned outpost and perimeter defense positions set up with final protective fires, targeted gaps with pre-planned mortar fires and established wire and radio communications throughout the position. The Command Post and the Battalion Aid Station became operational. The position was improved as sporadic contact was made with German forces. On D+4 a German scout was killed. His papers identified him as a member of the reconnaissance battalion of an Armored Division.

On Sunday June 11<sup>th</sup>, the Germans launched a massive attack with a large infantry force variously estimated at a plus or minus regiment reinforced with artillery. Judging by the black uniforms found later on dead German soldiers, the attacking force contained SS troops. The attack increased in intensity through the afternoon and night hours. Wire communications were cut and radio communications became undependable. I took part in several fire-fights while visiting defensive positions. As the last position was being outflanked, I ordered the crew members of the remaining light machine-gun to withdraw to a previously designated fall-back position. During the movement both crewmembers were killed. I discarded my carbine, scooped up the machine gun (minus the damaged tripod) and the box of ammunition and leaped over a stone wall from which two troopers were giving me covering fire. As I reached their side, both were killed by small arms fire. I swung the gun around and steadying it fired a burst in the direction of the enemy fire. I heard no more from that sector. There was a lull in the fighting and not having received any recent communication from Major Johnson, I moved to another firing position behind a stone wall near the church. Battalion Sergeant Major Salewski approached me with information that "Major Johnson gave the order to abandon the position and attempt to return individually to friendly lines. He and others in the command post have gone." I walked over to the command post and found the report to be accurate. I did discover, however, that the Battalion S-1 (Lt. Wagner) plus a number of other troopers were still in firing positions nearby. Also our two French speaking Spanish civilians were still