

5 June 1984

Mr. Norman G. J. Jones, Chairman  
Memorialization Committee  
Seventh Armored Division Association

Dear Norman,

In reading the Memorialization Committee Report in the Spring 1984 issue of Workshop News I noticed your request for information about 7th Armored Division action at Rambouillet, in August 1944. Although I can not offer much more information than you already have, I can relate my experience as a member of 2nd Platoon, Recon. Co., 814th TD Bn. (attached to 7th Armored Division) in this respect.

First let me say I have no knowledge of any 7th Armored Division casualties in taking or attempting to take Rambouillet. However, 2nd Platoon, under Second Lt. Raymond A. Fuca, was assigned to lead a Task Force of CCA's into Rambouillet. Consisting of tanks, self-propelled 105s and armored infantry, the Task Force, with 2nd Platoon in the lead, approached the outskirts of Rambouillet. Reference to this is made in After Action Reports (CCA, 7th Armored, 814th TD, ?) I'm not sure which series, but the report is in my files at home in College Station, Texas--photocopies from the Federal Records Center in Suitland, Maryland.

My problem is in affixing the date, away from my files, although I don't feel it was 15th August. Perhaps the 17th, although the 22nd might be more nearly correct. Normally my platoon was attached to CCR, but was placed with CCA for this purpose.

Anyway, with 2nd Platoon in the lead of the Task Force, we approached the outskirts of Rambouillet. I was gunner on the lead armored car, while Lt. Fuca led the way in his jeep. A high rock wall was on the left side and as we approached this town, or a village on the outskirts, perhaps, a French civilian was spotted, seated on this fairly high wall, to see the action. Taking no chances, we ordered him at pistol point to come down and then sent him on his way. A very short distance farther we ran into a jeep (identified as belonging to a cavalry unit), hit and still smoldering. A member of that jeep's crew lay in the ditch and shouted to us -- "watch that 88."

Looking to my right across a large ploughed field and in the distance I spotted a railroad embankment angling across the side and toward a possible intersection with the paved road we were travelling. My immediate thought was that the "88" was hidden behind this embankment. I searched with my field glasses as did S/Sgt. Peter Pregi, seated at my side. We crept slowly forward with urgings from the rear--then the hidden gun fired. The shell burst through the wall on our left, scattering rocks over us. Lt. Fuca said later he figured we had been hit--a front tire was torn loose at the tread, although not deflated. As one, the crew urged our driver to back up, which he did, into the wall. I traversed my 37mm in the direction of the source of fire, at which time the "88" fired again. Spotting the blast, I watched the trajectory as the shell kicked up dirt from the plowed field, looking much as a torpedo seeking its mark. The shell passed directly under our armored car and into the wall. I looked into the gunsight and almost fired as Lt. Fuca's jeep passed in my view. I paused, then the armored car began moving off the wall. Then I fired as we moved, having no chance to take good aim, with the armor piercing shell, judged by the tracer, passing way too high. Nevertheless, this returned fire delayed the "88" from firing again--at least until we had turned around and headed for the bend in the road and out of the line of fire. Two more rounds came at us, but missed by wide margins.

An officer in the column ordered us back with a spotter carrying a walkie-talkie to order in artillery fire. Later we were told they had

knocked out the "88". Doubt it was an 88, and I'm not sure it was mounted on a tank or was a separate field piece.

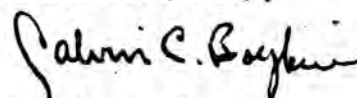
At the same time a low level aerial battle was taking place between two Thunderbolts and four or more ME-109s ( or a ship of this class). We could hear machine gun fire as the planes attacked each other. One Thunderbolt came down in flames, followed by a downed ME-109. We crouched in the ditch for awhile--not long. Then the whole Task Force was ordered back. My platoon rejoined CCR and ended up a day or two later at the proposed Seine River crossing at Melun. Second Platoon was to have crossed there, again in the lead, but we were diverted farther south to an alternate crossing, where we crossed peacefully.

Thinking that Rambouillet was the gateway to Paris, we later figured we were called back to allow French forces to enter Paris on their own.

This is all peripheral to your information needs, although I hope my account will help in some small way and will not confuse anyone.

Best wishes from Botswana, Southern Africa.

Yours sincerely,



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Calvin C. Boykin

8 June 1984

Mr. Norman G. J. Jones, Chairman  
Memorialization Committee  
Seventh Armored Division Association

Dear Norman,

One brief amendment to my account about 2nd Platoon Recon. Co, 814th TD Bn.-- as the Task Force pulled back from Rambouillet and turned south--it was more than a day or two before we reached the Seine River crossing at Melun. In fact, somewhere between these two points, on the 27th I believe, 2nd Platoon headed up another Task Force. Ran into a German column--armored cars, trucks, infantry, towed anti-tank guns. I knocked out the lead armored car as we ran together face to face--and machine gun fire from light tanks behind my platoon set fire to a truck loaded with infantry. Nevertheless, the Germans managed to get the towed anti-tank gun set up and knocked out one of 7th Armored's light tanks that had pulled around my armored car in hot pursuit of Germans scattering in all directions, save for that cool bunch manning the anti-tank gun. The light tank crew escaped their burning vehicle.

So it goes--by the way--Lt. Fuca, my platoon leader, and I were interviewed by the radio program correspondent reporting to the Army Hour (NBC) at the Seine River crossing (proposed) at Melun. Something about the rapid armor movement of the past few days and our planning on being the first unit across the Seine at this point. Typed script and all--one rehearsal. Not very spontaneous.

So long again.

Yours sincerely,

  
Calvin C. Boykin