

HEADQUARTERS *New Georgia*
169TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION *Baanga*
APO 43, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, Calif. *Aundel*

HISTORY OF 169TH FIELD ARTILLERY BATTALION

June 30, 1943 to Sept. 30, 1943

The 169th Field Artillery Battalion with a strength of 27 Officers, 2 Warrant Officers, and 543 Enlisted Men, loaded personnel, organizational equipment, 5 units of fire on 2 LST's and 1 LCI at Pavuvu, Russell Islands and sailed on July 3, 1943 bound for New Georgia. The ships formed part of the 169th Combat Team Convoy and after a rough overnight voyage, dropped anchor in Rendova Harbor. The personnel of Headquarters and Service Batteries debarked from the LCT. The personnel of the firing batteries remained on the LST's in the harbor.

In the middle of the afternoon sixteen Japanese medium bombers bombed the harbor, damaging the LCI from which the Headquarters and Service Batteries had just debarked and injuring slightly the Battalion Commanding Officer and three enlisted men.

Shortly after this attack the firing batteries on the LST's and the Headquarters and Service Batteries on LCI's moved to Barabuzi and from there transhipped on LCT's to Sasavele Island and began the organization of gun positions from which direct support could be given to the 169th Infantry in their attack on New Georgia. Prior to the arrival of the battalion advance Survey and Signal parties had arrived on the island and initiated survey control and the establishment of wire communications.

After the battalion arrived, liason and forward observer parties were sent to the mainland to join the Infantry already there and an Observation Post party was sent to nearby Roviana Island to organize an observation post. From this observation post, Baker Battery was registered on the Battalion Base Point on the 7th of July, 1943. With the data thus obtained the Fire Direction Center set up a firing chart and began the preparation of data for Division Artillery Concentrations.

At 0500 on the 9th of July, 1943, the Battalion opened fire on the mainland, firing on concentrations assigned by Division Artillery.

From this time on the Battalion fired day and night on Division Concentrations, on direct support missions called for by the Liason Officers and on targets reported from the observation Post on Roviana. The battalion continued in support of the 169th Infantry until 20 July, 1943 when the 169th Infantry was relieved by the 145th Infantry. At that time the Battalion was attached to the 37th Division and assigned to direct support of the 145th Infantry and also to direct support of the 146th Infantry. Command liason only was maintained with the 146th Infantry, but complete liason and forward observer parties were assigned to the 145th Infantry. The Battalion was relieved of support of the 146th Infantry on the 25th of July, 1943, but continued in support of the 145th Infantry until the conclusion of the Battle of Buna, on 6 August 1943.

During this period the battalion fired approximately 29,000 rounds of ammunitions on about 460 missions. With the exception of air activity the battalion position on Sasavele was not effected by enemy activity. Several times bombs were dropped on the island during the night but caused damage to neither personnel nor material, but during the morning of 4 August 1943 enemy planes raided Sasavele Island and strafed the beach. One of the planes was shot down by a Anti-Aircraft gun manned by personnel of the Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Tank Platoon of the Headquarters Battery.

At the conclusion of this period the strength of the Battalion was 22 Officers, 2 Warrant Officers, and 499 Enlisted Men.

The following were the casualties during this period.

KILLED:

1st Lt. Earl M. Payne on 13 July 1943 while acting as a forward observer with the Infantry ran into a machine gun nest and was shot and killed.

2nd Lt. Arthur F. Malone on 28 July 1943 while moving forward with a company of the 1st Battalion, 145th Infantry was hit by a hand grenade and killed.

WOUNDED:

Lt. Colonel (then Major) Wilber E. Bradt suffered lacerations of the forehead on 4 July, 1943 during an enemy bomber attack on Rendova Harbor.

1st Lt. Robert E. Jones, on Special Duty with Division Artillery Headquarters was wounded on Rendova Island during an enemy bomber attack on 3 July 1943.

2nd Lt. Ralph M. Pacella was shot in both legs at the Command Post of the 169th Infantry Regiment on 15 July 1943.

1st Lt. Donald Bushik suffered a slight wound in the elbow from a piece of enemy shrapnel while on duty at a forward Observation Post.

Captain (then 1st Lt.) Edward W. Wild on 2 August 1943 was wounded in the neck by shrapnel from an enemy shell while maintaining liason with the 2nd Battalion, 145th Infantry.

Pfc. Thurston E. Limer, Battery "C" received shrapnel wounds in the arm and feet on the Munda Trail, while engaged in laying a wire line.

Pfc. John Zapotodry, Battery "B" was wounded in the foot while on duty with a forward observer party.

Cpl. Clyde R. Hills, Headquarters Battery, received a shrapnel wound while a member of a liason section on the Munda Trail.

BAANGA
The Munda Battle over, the Battalion was relieved of attachment to the 37th Division, returned to the control of the 43rd Division and assigned to direct support of the 169th Infantry. Command liason was established with the Infantry. On 11 August 1943 patrols from the 169th Infantry met resistance on Baanga Island and the liason Officer sent back a request for fire. The Battalion Commander went to the Regimental Headquarters to take over the Command Liason and took with him liason and forward observer parties.

As Baanga Island was beyond the maximum range of our guns, fire was delivered by the 136th Field Artillery Battalion on call from our observers until 18 August 1943, when the Battalion moved to positions North of Sibilo Hill on the New Georgia mainland and took over the firing. Our observers continued to function until the 172nd Infantry was committed to the action and observers from the 103rd Field Artillery Battalion established liaison with the Infantry units. However the Battalion continued to fire in support of the 172nd Infantry on call from the observers of the 103rd Field Artillery Battalion. After Baanga Island was secured the Battalion fired preparation fires on the Islands west of Baanga prior to Infantry landings and also fired interdiction fires on Iulu Channel and Diamond Narrows. Direct support of the 172nd Infantry was continued to the maximum range of the howitzers on Wayne Point on Arundel Island.

During this engagement the Battalion fired a total of 2951 rounds on 14 missions.

On several occasions enemy shells landed in the Battalion area but caused neither damage nor casualties.

The Battalion suffered the following casualties during this period:

MISSING IN ACTION

1st Lt. Robert J. Heidelberg on 15 August 1943, landed on Baanga Island with a small group of Infantry men, which was surrounded by the enemy and cut off from contact with the regiment.

Corporal Robert T. McElroy, Battery "C" was with Lt. Heidelberg and although an Infantry Officer reported that he had seen him after he (McElroy) had swam to the mainland, no record of his reaching a hospital has to date been received.

WOUNDED:

Corporal Samuel L. Morgan, Battery "C" was with Lt. Heidelberg, was wounded and picked up two days later and evacuated.

Pfc. Jack T. Dickerson "Battery "C" also with Lt. Heidelberg was wounded and evacuated at the same time as Cpl. Morgan.

T/5 Frank J. Chevalier, Battery "A" suffered shrapnel wounds in the leg, face and shoulder when a vehicle, on which he was working on in the Battery motor park, slipped off the jack and exploded a Jap shell which had been buried in the ground.

Corporal Richard Aldrich, Headquarters Battery received a shrapnel wound in the shoulder while a member of a liaison section on Baanga Island.

The Battalion received two Officers and two Enlisted Men as replacements during this battle and at the end of August the strength of the Battalion was 24 Officers, 2 Warrant Officers, 432 Enlisted Men.

After the Infantry had moved beyond the maximum range of the howitzers, the Battalion settled down to a period of intense housekeeping duties and a general overhaul of howitzers, vehicles and other equipment. A more or lessarrison setup prevailed and in addition plans were formulated for the organization of positions for the defense of the New Georgia mainland. Twenty-two

additional enlisted men were assigned to the Battalion as replacements and a beginning made in the training of these men.

This period was short lived however for on 8 September 1943, the Battalion was alerted to move to Ondongo Island and relieve the 140th Field Artillery Battalion of direct support of the 172nd Infantry, then engaged on Arundel Island.

Battery "A" was detached from Battalion control and assigned to a group^{ment} Commanded by Major William N. Bailey. On 10 September 1943 the Battery moved to Bustling Point on the west shore of Arundel Island and given the mission of interdiction fires on Kolombangara Island. Later, as part of the groupment, it was given the added mission of direct support of the 27th Infantry in its advance from West Arundel.

On the 11-12 September 1943 the Battalion (less Battery "A") moved from the New Georgia mainland to Piru Plantation on Ondongo Island and took over positions occupied by Batteries of the 140th Field Artillery Battalion. The occupation of position was most unusual in that the exchange of Batteries was effected without interfering with the firing. This was accomplished by substituting the base piece of the 140th Field Artillery Battalion Battery and while the remainder of the Battery of the 140th Field Artillery Battalion continued to fire, the base piece of the Battery of this Battalion was registered on the base point. The registration completed, the remaining three howitzers of each Battery were exchanged and the firing taken up by this Battalion. This procedure was employed both on the 11th September 1943, when Battery "B" relieved Battery "A", 140th Field Artillery Battalion and on the 12th September 1943 when Battery "C", relieved Battery "B", 140th Field Artillery Battalion.

Liaison and forward observer parties from this Battalion relieved those of the 140th Field Artillery Battalion on Arundel Island and complete support was given to the 172nd Infantry.

What is believed to be a Jap 4.7 inch naval gun fired several times daily into the Battalion area, but caused no damage and did not interfere with the functioning of the Battalion.

An Observation Post was established on a small island off the East Shore of Arundel and in addition to affording observation of the fires of this Battalion, it was also possible for the observer there to see and adjust the fires of the 155 guns of a Marine Defense Battalion. Reports on the firing of the 155 guns were transmitted to the Marine Fire Direction Center through our Fire Direction Center. On several occasions the firing of the 155 guns was adjusted from our Observation Post.

On 21 September 1943 Arundel Island was secured by our forces and all firing ceased.

During this battle the Battalion (less Battery "A") fired a total of 6530 rounds in 44 missions. In addition Battery "A" fired 10,544 rounds in support of the 27th Infantry and on harassing mission on Kolombangara.

Casualties suffered by this Battalion during the Arundel Battle were:

Pfc. Earl E. Donawitz, Headquarters Battery, received a shrapnel wound in the head while on duty as a wire linesman on Arundel Island.

Sergeant Halsey W. Baehler, Battery "B" received a shrapnel wound in the arm when a round burst, prematurely, about 50 feet in front of the muzzle of a "B" Battery howitzer, while the Battery was engaged in firing a night harassing mission.

Sergeant George W. Decoteaux, Battery "B" received a shrapnel wound on the chin from the premature burst.

Private Anthony DeMaio received a shrapnel wound on the thigh from the premature burst.

Private Chandler, Battery "B" killed by premature burst.

Best A
The Arundel Battle over, the Battalion was assigned to support the 161st Infantry in its mission of defense of New Georgia from Piru Planation to Bairoko Harbor. In order to accomplish this mission new positions were selected and occupied on Ondongo Island by Batteries "B" and "C", and on San Ondongo Peninsula by Battery "A".

The Battalion received five Officer replacements during this period.

This Battalion took part in three battles of the New Georgia Campaign from 4 July 1943 to 21 September 1943, and during that time fired a total of 48,511 rounds of ammunition. It has furnished direct support to five Infantry Regiments and part of a sixth, the 169th Infantry, 145th Infantry, 148th Infantry, 172nd Infantry, 27th Infantry, and part of the 103rd Infantry Regiments and is presently in support of the 161st Infantry.

The Battalion was Commanded during the entire period by Lt. Colonel (promoted from Major on 8 September 1943) Wilber E. Bradt.

The strength of the Battalion on September 30, 1943 was 29 Officers, 2 Warrant Officers, and 506 Enlisted Men.

September 30, 1943 marked the completion of one year's overseas service for this Battalion.

Wilber E. Bradt
WILBER E. BRADT
Lt. Colonel, F.A.
Commanding