

This is what we always referred to as the colonel Barney letter. It is the feedback to brother TD commanders from the first Bn. commander to engage the enemy using Hood tactics and his comments on equipment, employment and tactics, in North Africa.

Barney Letter

776 TD Bn.
APO
April 21

My dear

As we are in the midst of waiting for the other troops to get the Hell out of the way so we can move up for the kill I thought that perhaps you all would perhaps like a few observations on the things that we have LEARNED instead of some of the bull that some of the "observers" brought back. We have been there since seeing you all and the observations that I am writing you are for your information and not repeat not, for general distribution and not for quotation as coming from me. First the TBA is all of the first water. You have got to have at least 14 more GMCs and trailers to even start to haul deisel, gas and ammo and so you have to have the 14 extra men to drive them. (We got them and as a result we are able to function anywhere they ask us to). Next the amphib jeeps are as useless as the on a bear hog and should never even be considered except as special issue in very exceptional circumstances. We still have ours but between shrapnel and mg holes and the beating they took in the high centered roads they are simply four wheels and a steering mech. (they are nice and roomy for Nurse transport however). Next the radio set up of the Rec Co is the bunk in this new fangled fighting. The 608 simply will not carry far enough. (At one time I had 3 relay stations from the platoons to the Co and they then relayed to me). You have to have at least SCR 193 sets as the company has to work far out and in addition to that they will be grabbed off by the high command despite all the that the TD school puts out and they will be given missions of rec for the high command. We have some 193s now and are to get some more for Recen. (For God's sake dont let them put any AM sets in the gun companies as that is the main lever we use to keep them from detaching them to work alone as the high command does not have FM sets to tie into them and so they leave them alone if you fight hard enuff) Next the equipment of the Rec Co **MUST BE ARMORED**. In order to make a Rec of the passes they must go in until they draw fire and if they are not armored they get the Hell shot out of them. We were lucky (some anyway) and in addition they gave me 6 M-5 light tanks for that work and I got armored vehicles for the pioneers, M-2s and as a result we have had fairly light losses in the Rec Co. The British have the answer in a little armored job, a Daimler that will take a 50 right on the front and keep right on purring. What in the Hell the TDs are sweating over an armored peep for when this job is in production I cant see. It has been battle tested and I have seen the Derbyshire Yeomanry use them in any place the peep can. They have separate drive on any wheel you want and are the nuts. (I have one that I found in the hills where it had hit a mine and its a dorb. They have a No 19 radio that is made by the General Electric that has anything we own backed off the map. We could hear all the reports of the observers at El Guettar 40 miles away up where we were and kept in touch with the situation all the time. (I have one of those too that was in the little car). For the love of Pete get your Rec Co officers and have them teach their men real cavalry reconnaissance and what the meaning of real **NEGATIVE** rec is. We were blessed (in a way till the Div found out that they were good and grabbed the company for their missions) in our company and its officers as they have to have the guts of the devil and the ability of the long famed Indian scouts to be able to go out and bring in the info that **MUST BE GOTTEN**. Hand pick every man and make sure he can cook, climb, shoot, run, drive, swim, read a map, navigate by the stars and in fact do anything in the world and that a little better than anyone else and mostly that he absolutely **KNOWS** how to report what he sees and what is or isnt in a place. I have seen on an old battle field the results of faulty rec where a Rec outfit (not a TD unit however) reported that there **WERE NO ENEMY TROOPS** in a certain area and

Forwarded by Roy T. McJann

at one of these places there are -- American M-4s and at another --- of the same that were surprised and slaughtered by BATTALIONS OF GERMANS that were in the exact area that this unit reported that there were NO ENEMY. If you can teach your men that one lesson before they go into action you will have progressed a lot. Fortunately I knew that stuff and drove it into Scope before we ever even went to Hood and as a result my Rec Co has done itself proud and is the General's pet as he has said many times and it comes in the Intelligence Summaries, So and so reported by Rec Co TD, (Complete reliability), and that little phrase in this outfit means what it says too. They have actually made reports and reconnaissance BEHIND the enemy lines and have come in with the exact coordinates of enemy installations without being fired on but it took the loss of three fine men to teach them that what I have always dubbed "Peepitis" was a fatal disease and that they had to get out and crawl if they wanted to get the dope and live. The next idea that MUST be taught the Pns is that all that stuff about TANK HUNTING and chasing tanks is The [redacted] tried it and there has been a hell of a stink over what happened. They were not with us so I do not know the details but I have heard plenty. YOU MUST SELECT POSITIONS, DIG INTO THEM, LEAVE THEM FOR OTHERS AND ONLY OCCUPY THEM WHEN YOU ARE READY TO SHOOT OR YOU GET DESTROYED JUST BEFORE THE ATTACK COMES. We were lucky again in that I refused to let the Doughboys order my guns all over hell as accompanying guns and held the Bn intact except for one Co they took for the first three days and lost 4 guns by their GD foolishness, but the big General straightened them all out and now we are all set and the arty the tanks and the Hqs are all aligned on the proper use of us and my men are all wise too. We pick our ground, we reconnoiter it till we know it by heart, (with the gun crews) and we move somewhere else and we send our security way, my out to keep us informed and then we "set and wait" till the show up and then we occupy the prepared (and boy I mean prepared too with the muzzles of the guns on THE LEVEL OF THE GROUND) positions and let them come. If you try any shooting it out with an 88 or a souped up 75 or a 50mm you are a dead goose unless you hit him with the first round. The sights on the 88, 75 50 and the M IV and M VI tanks are at least 10 power and not 4 and that is the scope sight we should have to put our men on even terms. In addition see that every man can lay parallel for indirect fire and get your gunners quadrants and aiming circle so the platoons or companies can be laid by compass for indirect fire. We have both and I had the pleasure of climbing to the exact top of a high mountain and adjusting the guns of a platoon on the retreating German columns all one day at 14,500 yards. NO I DONT MEAN 1450 yards I MEAN 14,500, and three days later we went down to the spot and found over a hundred vehicles we had knocked out or caused to pull off the road and be abandoned when they got stuck in the sand. The division arty will only shoot 11500 and that not very accurately whereas our guns are as accurate as a rifle and one german prisoner we got could talk of nothing but the terrible gun that had knocked out his own personal truck when they thought they were safe from any arty that the Americans had there. He tried his best to find out what it was but no soap. I kept our guns hidden except when we opened up on a few tanks and an arty battery and then only with a few so they wouldnt know we were there and apparently it worked. The kept saying that the gun just went pop bang with no time to duck and it pleased me no end to know that they disliked being shot at with our gun as much as we disliked their GD 88. Boy its a and they CAN SHOOT IT TOO AND DONT YOU FORGET IT. I have been very lucky so far as I had 4 MG bullets put thru my peep within 6 inches of me and a bomb fragment lit in my DG bed with me and a shall burst splashed one nice slug into the ground just immediately in rear of my right shoulder while the Krauts were surrounding us the other morning. I have one personal Wop to my credit so far and have his nice carbine as a souvenir.

Its been right warm up here at times but we are all still thriving except for a few who went fight any more. Hated to lose some of the men as they were good ones that got it. There is one more thing that you want to get over to your Bn Commanders... its a touchy subject but an important one, its this look over every officer in particular and see what he has. I have sent three to the rear under charges who were good men in garrison but they were of a nervous temperament and they just blew their tops under sustained shell fire and aerial bombardment and were a liability to good men. You have just got to be absolutely ruthless in this matter as it means life and death to a lot of good men if they have poor officers and probably court-martial for the officer. Some men simply cant take it and that is all there is to it. Nobody likes it but some men simply lose all sense when the big boys start and others have an uncontrollable fear of the Stukas. Personally I prefer the Stukas to the Arty cause I know how the guns can shoot and the Stukas WILL STAY HIGH IF THE AA GUNNERS AND EVERY OTHER MAN WILL FIRE ON THEM. We got one the first day and since then the men are all nuts to get them one and as a result in the last fight after the second day the Stukas stayed way high and didnt do ONE BIT OF HARM and before we moved over with all our AA they were batting the Hell out of the arty over there. All the other outfits love to have us come in near them as they have found out that we carry so much AA stuff. By the way the issue AA mount aint worth a cent. It wobbles too damned much BUT there is a mount that the Navy uses for mounting the 50 on the landing barges with a heavy shield on which the gunner sits in a sling and traverses with his feet and the elevation is from two shoulder brackets that is as flexible as my and from which you can shoot like hell. Its proof against 50 caliber bullets and the men love them and will sit there and shoot it out with any type of plane. I got them off the wrecked barges at Casablanca and we have them for all our AA guns (and a few extra that we somehow acquired). The tourelle mount on the trucks is good but there is no more use shooting 30 at these armored planes than spitting at them so we have 50s on all ours. Another thing, see about getting the small electric welding outfit that is issued to the tank companies at least for the motor maintenance platoon. We have them for each company and the acetelens just wont do the jobs on the big stuff. Dont let anyone stuff you with the they gave me about the MOTORS available in the theater of operation. Its bull there aint none and fight like hell to bring your own stuff. We moved out in a hurry and got second hand vehicles almost entirely but the guys that furnished them to us were good hombres and knew we were going straight into action after a 1500 mile hike so they gave us good ones and we have had very little trouble. If you bring your GMCs get some channel iron and reinforce every frame as despite all they tell you you will have to load them heavy and even with their prescribed loads you will break their backs on the things they call roads in the battle area. We go cross country by preference when we can but now the mines are so thick you dont dare leave the roads without a mine detector. Speaking of mines you cant begin to tell the men too much about them. We have been lucky to date and havent lost any vehicles and only one officer killed but other outfits here have lost plenty. I have tried to get permission to ship back some samples to the school of all the types here but they wont let us and we sure have plenty to spare. Fight like hell for your detectors...they are GOOD but we cant get ours here. I made the 1st TD Group kick loose with one as they had two and we had none but we have never been able to draw one yet and the Rec Co needs them bad and at least one per gun co. Until you have seen the numbers of mines that these plant in an area you cant believe it at all. Bands 100 yards deep and three and four bands to a field. The Engineers do a fine job on them and we get thru OK but they sure do succeed in making real man made defiles and I dont mean maybe. The S mine of the Germans is a It jumps about

four feet in the air and is filled with 360 old steel balls and when it bursts it cleans house for a radius of about 100 feet. It has three little brown prongs that stick up and any pressure over three pounds sets it off. It goes pop, then sizzles and if you aren't completely paralyzed by that and can think to do it you can dive for the ground and cover up and squeeze the left ... and sometimes they burst over you without hitting you if you are close enough but if you stand up they get you in the belly or back and as the balls have force enough to puncture a motor block they do a fine job on a man. I could write you a volume on the things we have learned here but I get writers cramps and I suppose that you have already gotten all this anyway. We have learned easier than most as we made friends with the British and they took the officers in to their messes and clubs and they told us all they know and we have sent men and officers to every school that they have run and as my Swedes still do what they are told and have implicit faith in what they are told and try to do what they are told they have fared well. Get your people in the habit of functioning with their field trains being kept back ten to twenty miles as if you bring them farther to the front most of the time you get them shot to hell for no reason and when the men can rest back there they are much more efficient when they have to wrestle them up later. See that your personnel sections are so arranged that they can function way back as they take them away and keep them far back and you just send them a daily newspaper with all the dope to go in the records etc and you only see them once in a while. The present set up of the Motor Group is good but if you want to keep going you will have to do 3 and 4 echelon work or not have the vehicles. (I have one 3/4 ton AA gun now that has a pop rear end under it and it goes like a scared rabbit and we have had to put extra vehicles in the platoon as we stripped every vehicle on the battle fields of Sened and Nakmasy and Sidi bou Zid. We even have an extra M10 engine complete we "acquired" from the Ordnance in Gafsa and we have switched motors using it twice now so as to be able to repair the one out of the destroyer at "leisure". If possible have your officers get glasses of 8 or 10 power. The issue ones are not good enough for identification purposes. Stress the vehicular and airplane identification courses as there have been several sad things happen as a result of mistaken identity. Also the are using our vehicles and you have to be more than sure before you fire. One TD company in a Dn that was here was shot all to hell by T38s because they opened fire on the planes and downed 2 of them. In addition put the stars on the vehicles BIG. You can cover them with mud for camouflage when you are hiding and wipe them off so they will show when you go into action. We have the roar of all our turrets painted bright yellow so they can be seen a mile and I think all the other vehicles in the div will be soon as the boss was much enthralled with the idea. Another thing, the CD junk they say will be carried overloads every vehicle and WHEN THEY GO INTO ACTION YOU CARRY ALL THE WAY FROM THREE DAYS TO SEVEN DAYS OF TYPE RATION AND WATER WITH THE VEHICLES so you may as well plan on jettisoning a lot of the crap and cutting down on the amount of ammunition as you wont get to use most of it. We have used ONE rocket gun to date. The big sand grouse as they are thick. I brought my old 12 gauge and we have eaten many of them. The General caught me the other day while we were resting and he took his share of birds and I have a friend for life. They are delicious but for some damned reason they always seem to be more plentiful out where they shoot MGs than any other place and some of the Heinies seem to object to my hunting out there. and I were out last Sunday and we sure had to dig for the dirt twice when the opened up with long range MG fire. That's where I was when the General caught me and he said I was crazy but after he had eaten the birds he phoned to say that he was convinced that perhaps I wasn't as crazy as he thought.

Its all the straight McCoy and I hope to get it all written up in a decent form later to send to the General to use if he sees fit but as so many of the things that we have found out are at such direct variance from the ideas of some of these old they have down there they may not like the frank expression of their fallacies.

My very bestest and dont hurry too much to get here... it aint nice at all.... I havent had a drink OR A BATH OR CHANGED CLOTHES since March 19 and boy howdy do I stink grand. All our extra clothes are 150 miles in the rear as we were only going to take the passes at Malmassy etc when we started but now things are going so fine we are going to keep on and got it over with..... WE HOPE.

SAAAAAY you can tell and some of those other "observers" for me that all I can say is either that they sat in Cairo and never saw the front or else they are blind and dumb to boot..... every man in the American army that has fought with the Limeys will fight you if you dare say a word against them and my gang is the same way. They fight so easy and calmly that it seems they are careless and blase but you never see columns bugged up or rations not getting there or anything like that and they grin into anything with a smile on and they will share their last drop of Scotch with the "Tanks" if their ration has come up. They are snooty too and if some crew starts to show them how it should be done they simply close up like clams and say nothing but if they like you they will do anything. They have sent officers and NCOs over to us to instruct my men in every thing that I have asked them about and they have come over and related true action stories to the men and officers so they would get the real picture of what the fighting has been like and show us from their in many cases bitter experiences what to expect. We have learned more from them than from anyone else and we all hang out with the British whenever we are out of the line at all. My men and officers have the DGest morale you have ever seen and are as proud as punches and when someone says "What outfit you can hear them simply snap" and they dont even say TD or anything else as everyone knows who that is, even the Limeys. They always say "Oz yer doin' can openers?" and the men love that name better than any of the others they have been called.

COFS.. got to go to Bn COS meeting for the march tomorrow. We go in again in a few hours so I guess that by the time you get this it will be all over or else.

Again my best

Get M3 half tracks for your commanders cars and Staff group. They can be arranged for blackout and have some room in them. The #2s are not so hot.