

Sergeant York 'Skeyhill' Account & Patrol Affidavits

Corporal Alvin C. York
'His Own Life Story and War Diary'
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Argonne Forest, France. And when we jumped across a little stream of water that was there they was about 15 or 20 Germans jumped up and throwed up their hands and said Comrade so the one in charge of us boys told us not to shoot they was going to give up any way.

It was headquarters. There were orderlies, stretcher-bearers, runners, a major and two officers sitting or standing around a sort of small wooden shack. They seemed to be having a sort of conference. And they done jes had breakfast too. And there was a mess of beefsteaks, jellies, jams, and loaf bread around. They were unarmed. All except the major. And some of them were in their short sleeves. By the way they were going on we knowed they never even dreamed that there were any Americans near them.

Of course, we were most as surprised as they were, coming on them so sudden. But we kept our heads and jumped them right smart, and covered them and told them to put up their hands and keep them up. And they done done it. And we fired a few shots just to sorter impress them. I guess they thought the whole American Army was in their rear. And we didn't stop to tell them any different. Sergeant Early, who was in command of us, told us to hold our fire, as we had them, but to keep them covered and to hurry up and search and line them up. Just as he was turning around from giving this order and we were moving forward to obey, some machine guns up on the hill in front of us and between us and the American lines, suddenly turned around and opened fire on us. Early went down with five bullets through the lower part of his body and one through the arm. Corporal Savage was killed.

He must have had over a hundred bullets in his body. His clothes were most all shot off. And Corporal Cutting was also shot up. Six of the other boys were killed or wounded. That machine-gun burst came sorter sudden and unexpected. And it done got us hard. The moment it begun the German prisoners fell flat on their faces. So did the rest of us American boys who were still standing. You see, while we were capturing headquarters the German machine gunners up there on the hill seed us and done turned their guns around and let us have it.

After the first few bursts a whole heap of other machine guns joined in. There must have been over twenty of them and they kept up a continuous fire. Never letting up. Thousands of bullets kicked up the dust all around us. The undergrowth was cut down like as though they used a scythe. The air was just plumb full of death.

Some of our boys done huddled up against the prisoners and so were able to get some protection and at the same time guard the prisoners. Some others crawled under cover, or jumped up and got behind trees.

I was caught out in the open, a little bit to the left and in front of the group of prisoners and about twenty-five yards away from the machine guns which were in pits and trenches upon the hillside above me. I was now in charge.

Argonne Forest, France. So by this time some of the Germans from on the hill was shooting at us. Well I was giving them the Best I had and by this time the Germans had got their machine guns turned around and fired on us so they killed 6 and wounded 3. So that just left 8 and then we got into it right by this time so we had a hard battle for a little while.

But I hadn't time to give no orders nohow. There was such a noise and racket all around that I would not have been heard even if I had done given them. I had no time nohow to do nothing but watch them there German machine gunners and give them the best I had. Every time I seed a German I jes teched him off. At first I was shooting from a prone position; that is lying down; jes like we often shoot at the targets in the shooting matches in the mountains of Tennessee; and it was just about the same distance. But the targets here were bigger. I jes couldn't miss a Germans head or body at that distance. And I didn't. Besides, it weren't no time to miss nohow. I knowed that in order to shoot me the Germans would have to get their heads up to see where I was lying. And I knowed that my only chance was to keep their heads down. And I done done it. I covered their positions and let fly every time I seed anything to shoot at. Every time a head come up I done knocked it down.

Then they would sorter stop for a moment and then another head would come up and I would knock it down too. I was giving them the best I had. I was right out in the open and the machine guns were spitting fire and cutting up all around me something awful. But they didn't seem to be able to hit me. All the time the Germans were shouting orders. You never heard such a racket in all of your life. I still hadn't time or a chance to look around for the other boys. I didn't know where they were now. I didn't know what they were doing. I didn't even know if they were still living. Later on they done said that in the thick of the fight they didn't fire a shot.

Of course, all of this only took a few minutes. As soon as I was able I stood up and begun to shoot off-hand, which is my favorite position. I was still sharpshooting with that-there old army rifle. I used up several clips. The barrel was getting hot and my rifle ammunition was running low, or was where it was hard for me to get at quickly. But I had to keep on shooting jes the same.

In the middle of the fight a German officer and five men done jumped out of a trench and charged me with fixed bayonets. They had about twenty-five yards to

come and they were coming right smart. I had only about half a clip left in my rifle; but I had my pistol ready. I done flipped it out fast and teched them off, too.

I teched off the sixth man first; then the fifth; then the fourth; then the third; and so on. That's the way we shoot wild turkeys at home. You see we don't want the front ones to know that we're getting the back ones, and then they keep on coming until we get them all. Of course, I hadn't time to think if that. I guess I jes naturally did it. I knowed, too, that if the front ones wavered, or if I stopped them the rear ones would drop down and pump a volley into me and get me.

Then I returned to the rifle, and kept right on after those machine guns. I knowed now that if I had done kept my head and didn't run out of ammunition I had them. So I done hollered to them to come down and give up. I didn't want to kill any more'n I had to. I would tech a couple of them off and holler again. But I guess they couldn't understand my language, or else couldn't hear me in the awful racket that was going on. Over twenty Germans were killed by this time.

Argonne Forest, France. And I got hold of a German major and he told me if I wouldn't kill any more of them he would make them quit firing. So I told him alright if he would do it now. So he blew a little whistle and they quit shooting and come down and give up.

I think he had done been firing at me while I was fighting the machine guns – I examined his pistol later and sure enough it was empty. Jes the same, he hadn't pestered me nohow. After he seed me stop the six Germans who charged with fixed bayonets he got up off the ground and walked over to me and yelled "English?"

I said, "No, not English."

He said, "What?"

I said, "American."

He said, "Good Lord!" Then he said, "If you won't shoot any more I will make them give up."

I told him he had better. I covered him with my automatic and told him if he didn't make them stop firing I would take his head next. And he knowed I meant it. So he blowed a little whistle and they come down out of the trench and throwed down their guns and equipment and held up their hands and begun to gather around. I guess, though, one of them thought he could get me. He had his hands up all right. But he done had a little hand grenade concealed, and as he come up to me he throwed it right at my head. But it missed me and wounded one of the prisoners. I had to tech him off. The rest surrendered without any more trouble. There must

have been about fifty of them.

Argonne Forest, France. So we had about 80 or 90 Germans there disarmed and had another line of Germans to go through to get out. So I called for my men and one of them answered from behind a big oak tree and the others were on my right in the brush so I said lets get these Germans out of here. So one of my men said it is impossible so I said no lets get them out. So when my men said that this German major said how many have you got and I said I have got a plenty and pointed my pistol at him all the time – in this battle I was using a rifle or a 45 Colts automatic pistol. So I lined the Germans up in a line of twos and got between the ones in front and I had the German major before me. So I marched them straight into those other machine guns and I got them.

The German major could speak English as well as I could. Before the war he used to work in Chicago. When the prisoners in the front trench surrendered I yelled out to my men to let's get them out. And one of my men said it was impossible to get so many prisoners back to the American lines. And I told him to shut up and to let's get them out. Then the German major became suspicious and wanted to know how many men I had. And I told him I had a-plenty. And I told him to keep his hands up and to line up his men in a column of two and to do it in double time. And he did it. And I lined up my men that were left on either side of the column and I told one to guard the rear.

Sergeant Early and Corporal Cutting then come up towards me. Corporal Cutting said: "I am hit and hit bad." He was wounded in the arm. He done had all the buttons shot off his uniform and there was a great big "X" shot in his helmet. Sergeant Early said: "York, I am shot and shot bad. What shall I do?" I knowed by the look of him that he was very badly wounded. He was dazed and in most awful pain. I done told them they could come out in the rear of our column with the other boys.

I ordered the prisoners to pick up and carry our wounded. I wasn't a-goin' to leave any good America boys lying out there to die. So I made the Germans carry them. And they did. And I takened the major and placed him at the head of the column and I got behind him and used him as a screen. I poked the Colt in his back and told him to hike. And he hiked. I guess I had him bluffed. It was pretty hard to tell in the brush and with all the noise and confusion around which way to go. The major done suggested we go down the gully. Then I knowed that was going the wrong way. And I told him we were not going down any gully. We were going straight through the German front-line trenches back to the American lines. It was their second line that I had captured. We sure did get a long way behind the German trenches. And so I done marched them straight at that old German front line trench. And some more machine guns swung around to fire. I told the major to blow the whistle or I would take his head and theirs too. So he blowed his whistle and they all done surrendered. All except one. I made the major order him to surrender twice.

But he wouldn't. And I had to tech him off. I hated to do it. I've been doing a tol'able lot of thinking about it since. He was probably a brave soldier boy. But I couldn't afford to take any chances, and so I had to let him have it. There was considerably over a hundred prisoners now. It was a problem to get them back safely to our own lines. There was so many of them there was a danger of our own artillery mistaking us for a German counter-attack and opening up on us. I sure was relieved when we run into the relief squads that had been sent forward through the brush to help us.

Argonne Forest, France. So when I got back to my majors P.C. I had 132 prisoners.

We marched those German prisoners on back into the American lines to the Battalion P.C. and there we come to the Intelligence Department and Lieutenant Woods come out and counted them and counted 132. We were ordered to take them out to Regimental Headquarters at Chatel Chehery; and from there all the way back to Division Headquarters and turn them over to the Military Police. We had such a mess of German prisoners that nobody seemed to want to take them over. So we had to take them back a right-far piece ourselves.

This is York's statement taken by the 82nd Division in 1919. The story starts where he says the patrol reaches the little creek in the ravine:

Corporal Alvin C. York
Statement Taken by the 82nd Division
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Excerpt:

.....This little stream of which I spoke runs through a gulch into the valley. On either side of the stream there was a little stretch of flat level ground, about twenty feet wide, which was covered with extremely thick bush. On the east bank of the stream was a hill having an exceedingly steep slope. The hill was somewhat semi-circular in shape and afforded excellent protection to anyone behind it. Along the top of the hill were the machine guns firing across the valley at our troops.

We burst through the undergrowth and were upon the Germans before we knew it, because the undergrowth was so thick that we could only see a few yards ahead of us. There was a little shack thrown together that seemed to be used as a sort of P.C. by the Germans. In front of this, in sort of a semi-circular mass, sat about seventy-five Boche, and by the side o the commanding officer and two other officers. The Boche seemed to be having some kind of conference.

When we burst in on the circle, some of the Boche jumped up and threw up their hands, shouting "Kamerad". Then the others jumped up, and we began shooting. About two or three Germans were hit. None of our men fell.

Sergeant Early said: "Don't shoot any more. They are going to give up anyhow", and for a moment our fire ceased, except that one German continued to fire at me, and I shot him. In the meantime, the Boche upon the hill with the machine guns swung the left guns to the left oblique and opened fire on us. I was at this time just a few paces from the mass of Boche who were crowded around the P.C. At first burst of machine gun fire from the machine guns, all the Boche in this group hit the ground, lying flat in their stomachs. I, and a few other of our men, hit the ground at the same time. Those who did not take cover were either killed or wounded by the Boche machine-gun fire, the range being so close that the clothes were literally torn from their bodies. Sergeant Early and Corporal Cutting were wounded, and Corporal Savage was killed. In this first fire we had six killed and three wounded. By this time, those of my men who were left had gotten behind trees, and two men sniped at the Boche. They fired about half a clip each. But there wasn't any tree for me, so I just sat in the mud and used my rifle, shooting at the Boche machine gunners. I am a pretty good shot with the rifle, also with the pistol, having used them practically all my life, and having had a great deal of practice. I shot my rifle until I did not have any more clips convenient and then I used my pistol.

The Boche machine gun fire was sweeping over the mass of Germans who were laying flat, and passing a few inches over my head, but I was so close to the mass of Germans who were lying down that the Boche machine gunners could not hit me without hitting their own men. There were about fifty Boche with the machine guns and under the command of a lieutenant. By this time, the remaining Boche guns had been turned around and were firing at us, and the lieutenant with eight or ten Germans armed with rifles rushed towards us. One threw a little grenade, about the size of a dollar and with a string that you pull like this when you want to explode it, at me, but missed me by a few feet, wounding however, one of his own men.

I just let the Boche come down the hill and then I poured it into them with my pistol, and I am, as I said before, a pretty good shot with the pistol. I shot the lieutenant, and when he was killed the machine gun fire ceased. During the fight, I kept hearing a pistol firing from the midst of the Boche who were lying on the ground. This was evidently the commanding officer shooting, as he was the only one in the crowd armed with a pistol, and all of his clips were empty when I examined them later.

When the machine guns ceased firing the commanding officer, who spoke English, got off the ground and walked over to me. He said: "English?" I said: "No, not English". He said: "What?" I said: "American" He said: "Good Lord". Then he said:

If you won't shoot any more, I will make them give up", and I said: "well, all right, I will treat you like a man", and he turned around and said something to his men in German, and they all threw off their belts and arms and the machine gunners threw down their arms and came down the hill.

I called to my men and one of them answered me from over here, another from over here and another here (they were pretty scattered), and when they come to me, I found that there were six left besides myself.

We searched the Boche and told them to line up in column of twos. The Boche commanding officer wanted to line up facing north and go down through the valley along the road which runs by the foot of the hill, but I knew if they got me there it would be as good as they wanted on account of the machine guns on the opposite slope, so I said, "No, I am going this way", which was the way I had come, and which led through the group of machine guns placed here (pointing at the map), which seemed to be outpost guns. We had missed this machine gun nest as we advanced, because we had gone further to the left.

When we got the Boche lined up in a column of twos, I scattered my men along and at the rear of the column and told them to stay well to the rear and that I would lead the way. So I took the commanding officer and the other two officers and put one in front of me and one on each side of me, and we headed the column. I did that because I knew that if I were caught on the side of the column, the machine gunners would shoot me, but that if I kept in the column, they would have to shoot their officers before they could kill me. In this manner we advanced along a path and into the machine gun nest which is situated here (pointing at the map).

The machine gunners, as I said before, could not kill me without killing their officers, and I was ready for them. One aimed a rifle at me from behind a tree, and, as I pointed my pistol at him, the commanding officer said: "If you won't shoot any more, I will tell them to surrender". He did and we had them in our column.

I then reported with the prisoners to the Battalion P.C. They were counted and there were 132 of them. I was there ordered to deliver the prisoners to Brigade Headquarters, which I did, and returned to my company the next morning.

Below is a very interesting statement that York gave the 82nd Division in 1919. Here he says he thinks he had 146 prisoners. This agrees with Lt. Flynt's field message where he witnesses 146 German prisoners being marched through Apremont on their way to the rear. From these two documents we know that York picked up additional prisoners at the Regimental P.C. which appears to have increased the number to 146. Where exactly the additional prisoners were added to the column to bring the final total in Varennes to 208, is unknown.

Here is York's additional statement to the 82nd Division:

*Corporal Alvin C. York
Supplementary Statement Taken by the 82nd Division
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*Supplementary statement by Sergeant Alvin C. (1,910,426) York, Company G,
328th Infantry:*

*After the German captain made the Germans remaining on the hill surrender and the firing stopped, Corporals Early and Cutting came toward me. Corporal Cutting said: "I'm hit and hit bad" and Corporal Early said: "York, I'm shot and shot bad. What shall I do?" I told him: "You can come out in the rear of our column with the other boys." Private Donohue helped Corporal Early out to the edge of the woods, where they met a stretcher bearer from G Company with a stretcher, and Corporal Early was carried back to Chatel Chehery, when the German prisoners carried him to the ambulance. Corporal Early was shot through the lower body. Corporal Cutting was shot three times in the left arm. Private Muzzi was shot in the shoulder. Corporal Cutting and Private Muzzi walked out themselves. No German wounded, as far as any of us know, came out with our prisoners. The wounded German lieutenant was brought out. I think afterwards by German prisoners who went back for him. When we got back to the Battalion P.C., the prisoners were counted by Lieutenant Woods and Lieutenant Garner. Lieutenant Woods told us to take them to the Battalion P.C. and Colonel Wetherill told us to take them to Brigade Headquarters at Varennes. Another group of prisoners were added to those we had and I turned over at Varennes 208 prisoners to the Military Police, and a receipt was given to Corporal Clark, who joined us after the fight was over. The prisoners which were captured and which were counted at the Battalion P.C. by Lieutenants Woods and Garner, I am told, amounted to 132. I counted them roughly by myself and thought there were about **146**.*

The statements of some of the other men in the patrol, those who were not in the hospital, are also found in the York Diary. Private Beardsley, who was a member of York's automatic squad (Chauchat machine-gun) issued two statements in 1919.

Here is Beardsley's first statement:

*Hq. 82nd Div., American E.F., France
26 January, 1919.*

Private Percy (1,190,246) Beardsley, Company G, 328th Infantry, being duly sworn made the following affidavit.

On 8th day of October 1918, I was a member of Corporal York's squad in G Company, 328th Infantry. When we were under acting-Sergeant Bernard Early to clean out the machine guns on our left, I was following behind Corporal York. I saw two Red Cross Germans and when they started to run, we fired at them. One of them stopped and gave himself up. We followed after the other German and about 20 paces from where we had first sighted these two Red Cross Germans, we ran into a bunch of Germans all together in an underbrush on the slope of the hill. When we appeared, Germans came running out of the brush and machine-gun trenches in every direction. There seemed to be about one hundred of these Germans. Some of them held up their hands and shouted "Kamerad" and gave themselves up. A few shots were fired at us and a few men on our side fired back. After this, all the Germans in sight stopped firing and came in around us, having thrown down their arms and equipment. Before we could line them up in a column and move them out, German machine gunners, whom we had not seen before this, commenced firing down the hill at our men. This fire came mostly from the opposite our own right flank. We had six men killed and three wounded in a very short time.

I was at first near Corporal York, but soon after thought it would be better to take cover behind a large tree about fifteen paces in rear of Corporal York. Privates Dymowski and Waring were on each side of me and both were killed by machine gun fire. When the machine-gun fire on each side of my tree stopped, I came back to where the Germans were and fired my pistol two or three times. I saw Corporal York fire his pistol repeatedly in front of me. After I came back from the tree I saw Germans who had been hit fall down. I saw German prisoners who were still in a bunch together waving their hands at the machine gunners on the hill as if motioning for them to go away. Finally the fire stopped and Corporal York told us to have the prisoners fall in columns of twos and for me to take my place at the rear.

This statement was read to Private Beardsley after being taken, and he stated the same was correct.

I certify that the above is statement made by Private Percy (1,190,426) Beardsley, Company G, 328th Infantry, to which he made oath before me.¹

*G. Edward Buxton, Jr.
Major, Inf., U.S.A.
Division Historical Officer.*

Here is Beardsley's other statement he gave in 1919:

Private Percy Beardsley

¹ Beardsley Affidavit, 26 January, 1919 'His Own Life Story and War Diary' p. 249 – 251

*Affidavit 26 February, 1919
'His Own Life Story and War Diary'
Pg. 245 – 247*

*2nd Bn. 328th Inf.
82nd Div. America E.F.
Frettes, France, Feb. 21, 1919*

Affidavit of Private Percy (1,910,246) Beardsley.

Personally appeared before me the undersigned, Private Percy (1,910,246) Beardsley, first being duly sworn according to law, says that he was present with Sergeant Alvin C. (1,919,426) York, northwest of Chatel Chehery on the morning of October 8, 1918, and testified to the distinguished personal courage, self-sacrifice, and presence of mind of Sergeant Alvin C. (1,910,426) York, as follows:

On the morning of the 8th of October, 1918, Sergeant York was a corporal in G Company, 328th Infantry, and I was a member of his squad. Our battalion, the 2nd Battalion of the 328th Infantry, was attacking the ridge northwest of Chatel Chehery. The battalion had to manoeuvre across the valley under heavy machine-gun fire which came from our right and left as well as in front of us. Very heavy fire came from a hill on our left flank. Sergeant Parsons was our platoon leader and he told acting Sergeant Early to take three squads and go over and clean out the machine guns that were shooting at our left flank. He circled the hill first in a southerly and then in a southwesterly direction until the noise of the machine guns sounded as if it were between us and our battalion. We went down the west slope of the hill into a ravine filled with heavy underbrush and there found two Germans and fired at one of them when he refused to halt. We were following the one who ran and came onto a battalion of Germans grouped together on the bottom and slope of the hill. Those nearest us were surprised, and, thinking they were surrounded, started to surrender, but a lot of machine gunners halfway up the turned their machine guns on us, killing six and wounding three of our detachment. All three of our other non-commissioned officers were shot and there was left only Corporal York and seven privates. We were up against a whole battalion of Germans and it looked pretty hopeless for us. We were scattered out in the brush, some were guarding a bunch of Germans who had begun to surrender and three or four of us fired two or three shots at the line of Germans on the hillside. The German machine gunners kept up a heavy fire, as did the German riflemen on the hillside with the machine gunners. The Germans could not hit us without endangering the prisoners whom we had taken at the very first. A storm of bullets was passing just around and over us. Corporal York was nearest the enemy and close up to the bottom of the hill. He fired rapidly with rifle and pistol until he had shot down a German officer and many of his men. The officer whom Corporal York shot was leading a charge of some riflemen with bayonets fixed down the hillside

towards us. Finally the German battalion commander surrendered to Corporal York, who called the seven privates remaining up to him and directed us to place ourselves along the middle and rear of the column of prisoners, which we had assisted him in forming. When we moved out some Germans on a near-by hill continued to fire at us. Corporal York was at the head of the column where he placed two German officers in front of him. A considerable number of German prisoners were taken on our way back over the hill. Corporal York made them surrender by having the German battalion commander call to them to give up.²

Private Percy Beardsley

The following are summaries or excerpts from the other witness accounts found in the York Diary:

SUMMARY:

Konotski says that York killed no less than 15 Germans and took the German battalion commander prisoner.

SUMMARY:

Saccina says he fired three shots when they initially encountered the Germans in the ravine and afterwards was busy guarding prisoners. He says he could not see any of the other patrol members during the fight.

SUMMARY:

Donohue says that he fired one shot when they initially encountered the Germans in the ravine and afterwards was busy guarding prisoners. He said that during the fight he could see **Wills, Saccina, and Sok.**

SUMMARY:

Wills says that he was busy guarding prisoners during the fight and only saw **Donohue, Saccina, Beardsley and Muzzi.** He also said that **Swanson** was near him when he was shot and that he could hear **York**, but not see him shouting to the machine-gunners on the hill to surrender.

In 1928 Sgt. Early issued this deposition to the New Haven, Connecticut Superior Court:

Sgt. Early excerpt:

² *ibid.* p.245 - 247

.....We jumped a little stream and suddenly unexpectedly discovered the headquarters of a German machine – gun regiment. There must have been at least one hundred Germans, including three officers and several non-commissioned officers. There were also runners, orderlies, and others. They were having breakfast and we completely surprised them. We fired several shots to intimidate them and rushed them with fixed bayonets. I was out in front leading them and, seeing the Germans throwing up their hands, I ordered my men to cease firing and to cover and close in on them. I then ordered my men to line them up preparatory to marching them back to our P.C.

In the act of turning around issuing this order, a burst of machine gun bullets struck me. I fell with one bullet through my arm and five through the lower part of my body. I called on Corporal Cutting to take command and get the prisoners out and if possible later on come back and get me.

A little later Corporal Cutting was wounded and Corporal York took command.

I was carried back with the German prisoners to our first-aid station. There I was operated on and some of the bullets were taken out and I was sent to the hospital.

This is the 1919 affidavit of **Lt. Woods**, who was at the Battalion C.P. when York returned with the column of prisoners:

On the morning of Oct. 8, 1918, I was the battalion adjutant, 2nd Battalion, 328th Infantry. The Battalion P.C. had been moved forward from Hill 223 to a hillside across the valley and just west of Hill 223, the jumping off place. We heard some heavy and almost continuous firing on the other side of our hill and in the direction taken by Sergeant Early, Corporal York and their detachment. Some time later I personally saw Corporal York and seven privates returning down the hillside on which our P.C. was located. They had 132 prisoners with them, including three German officers, one battalion commander. I personally counted the prisoners when Corporal York reported the detachment and prisoners. Corporal York was in entire charge of this party and was marching at the head of the column with the German officers. The seven men with Corporal York were scattered along the flanks and rear of the column. Sergeant Early and Cutting, were both severely wounded, were being assisted at the rear of the column.

And the affidavit of **Lt. Cox**, F company, 328th Infantry:

On the morning of October 8th, I commanded a support platoon of F Company, 2nd

Battalion of the 328th Infantry. Shortly after Corporal York and his detachment of seven men succeeded in capturing the greater part of a German battalion, I advanced with my platoon and passed the scene of the fighting, which took place before this capture was accomplished. The ground was covered with German equipment and I should estimate that there were between 20 and 25 dead Germans on the scene of the fight.

The 1928 deposition given by Sgt. Parsons, Support Platoon Sergeant, G Company, 328th Infantry – York's platoon sergeant:

Sgt. Parsons excerpt:

Sergeant Early was in charge of the four sections, and Corporal York, Corporal Cutting and Corporal Savage were in charge of the squads. The thirteen private soldiers were privates Dymowski, Wiley, Waring, Wins, Swanson, Muzzi, Beardsley, Konotski, Sok, Johnson, Sacina, Donahue, and Wills. Led by Sergeant Early, as ordered, the men immediately advanced through the brush on the left flank and disappeared. A few minutes later we heard heavy firing from the direction which they had taken; and shortly after the German machine-gun fire ceased. It was after this that Corporal York and seven privates returned with 132 German prisoners. Corporal York marched in front of the prisoners and was in absolute command. Unquestionably, the silencing of these machine guns played a tremendous part in our success in finally reaching our objective

And finally the statement of York's Company Commander, Captain Danforth. We don't know when this statement was taken and it is possible that this is a statement he provided personally for Skeyhill to use in his book.

Capt. Danforth excerpt:

At zero hour we began the advance, moving down the slope of Hill 223 and across the five-hundred-yard open valley toward a steep wooded hill to our immediate front. On our right was E Company, 328th Infantry; on our left Unit 5 of the 28th Division, though throughout the entire day we had no contact with these troops on our left.

Upon reaching about the centre of this valley we were stopped by a withering fire of machine guns from the front, from the unscalable heights of the Champrocher Ridge on our right and from the heavily wooded hill on the left. From this point the advance was very slow, the men moving by rushes from shell hole to shell hole a few feet at a time. At some point during the morning the fire from the left flank slackened and we were enabled to gain the hill to our immediate front, capturing a great many machine guns and driving the enemy to the west. During the progress of the fighting across the valley, I was with the assault waves and gave no orders

for the employment of the support platoons, which had been ordered to follow at three hundred yards.

About noon I left the assault wave and with one runner returned to bring up my support platoons, running into a group of forty-four Germans in the woods just outside our left flank, which group surrendered to my runner and me without firing a shot at us. I sent these prisoners to the rear, located my support platoons, returned with them to the front lines, and at 4 P.M. continued the advance to the corps objective with the other companies of the 2d Battalion. The objective - the Decauville Railroad - we took at about 5 P.M. With the handful of men that were left we organized a position and held it throughout the night of October 8th and 9th.

On the morning of October 9th and about ten o'clock Corporal York with seven men reported to me on the railroad. Corporal York, when questioned about his whereabouts and activities during the previous day's fighting, said that he had been sent with a detachment to silence some machine gun nests on the left of the valley, that this detachment had become heavily engaged, losing half its strength, and that he captured about one hundred and fifty prisoners. He stated that all non-commissioned officers of the detachment had been killed or wounded, that he had taken command and had shot a number of Germans during the engagement and that he carried his prisoners from headquarters to headquarters, finally delivering them to the military police many miles to the rear. His statement to me on the morning of October 9th was the first time that I knew anything of his fight on our left flank and offered the best explanation of why the fire from that point had slackened on the morning of the 8th.

After coming out of the lines I fully investigated this detachment's fighting and recommended Corporal York for the Distinguished Service Cross and later, after more careful study, for the Congressional Medal of Honour.

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