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UNIT : 1135 Engr Group.
PERIOD : 7 to 13th February 1945.
ACTION : Bridging Sauer and Our Rivers.
SOURCE : Lt Col H. B. Hines, Exec O, 1135th Engr GP
PLACE AND DATE OF INTERVIEW: Fels, Luxembourg, 13 Feb 1945.
INTERVIEWER : Capt Dello G. Dayton.
MAPS : 1/12,500.

"This bridging operation was the most difficult the group has had," said Lt Col Hines. The colonel then went on to explain why. There was little advance knowledge of the attack that jumped off early on the morning of the 7th; consequently there was limited time for reconnaissance. The reconnaissance engaged in was inadequate, but the nature of the terrain and the location of the enemy prevented it from being otherwise. The Sauer and Our Rivers run thru deep, narrow valleys and the roadnets, which are extremely limited, dictate the feasible locations for bridges and control the movement of troops and materials. On the south and east sides of the river, the sides held by us previous to the attack, the high ground enabled us to have good observation on the enemy but visibility on the river itself was limited from available OP's. Ground reconnaissance was almost impossible because of fire from the enemy held pillboxes which covered the rivers throughout the entire area through which the attack took place. Terrain and enemy were not the only limiting factors. Throughout the period (7-12 Feb) the streams were in a violent flood state and were flowing at a rate which varied between 12 and 17 miles per hour.

(2) The battalions operating with the 1135th Group during the operation were the 150th C Bn, 166th C Bn and the 179th C Bn. Several days before the attack the Bns were located in the general area of COLMAR, BERG, and MERSCH. On the 5th ?, however, the companies and the advanced CPs moved into assembly areas near the location of the assault crossings and prospective bridge sites. There was no time before the cross-

ing for rehearsals with the infantry. The infantry themselves did not get into the attack area until two or three days before the attack. The 150th Engr C Bn operated with the 319th Inf, initially and subsequently the 179th; the 166th Engr Bn operated with the 318th Inf. For the assault crossing approximately 50 M-2 assault boats were brought up into each regimental area on the night of the 5th.

The attack jumped off at 0300 on the 7th. The 319th had two crossing sites at (943434) and (95404315) and crossed elements of two battalions at the same time. There was one crossing site in the 318th sector at (979410).

The crossing was, from the beginning, extremely difficult and the mortality rate of assault boats was tremendously high. Before the crossing operation was completed more than 300 boats were used--about 150 of which were lost because of the swift current or from enemy fire. An effort was made to use 25 rubber boats but they were punctured by enemy fire before they could be put on the river.

On the 7th an effort was made to put footbridges across at the points of the assault crossings. No progress was made. Enemy fire inhibited operations but the condition of the streams was the greatest obstacle. Because of the current it was almost impossible to get cable across, ^{one across} the 4 inch cables snapped or pulled loose from the places of anchorage. Efforts to put in footbridges continued through the 8th and the 9th but at no time was one successfully constructed. Since attempts to construct footbridges were thwarted it was decided to put in a floating treadway across the Our at (958428). Because of enemy fire the engineers were unable to even get started on it the 7th. Abortive efforts were made on the 8th. Enemy fire, especially from

artillery still continued heavy. It wasn't until the morning of the 12th at 0200 that a 204 foot treadway was finally completed at the site indicated. In the afternoon of the following day a 312 foot treadway was completed across the Sauer at (98403985). Work at night on this bridge was facilitated by light reflected from the searchlight being used to the east in the 5th Division sector.

On the 12th the 1135th Engr Group began to construct bailey bridges *at the old bridge sites*
A which had been blown by the enemy. One, 150 job, was started at (95704295); work began on the other, a 270 foot span, at (983404). To protect the construction crews from enemy patrols that might infiltrate near the bridge sites reenforced infantry squads were provided by the infantry units in the bridging area. Besides the two large Bailey bridges being constructed across the Our and Sauer there were two short span baileys put in across small tributaries to the rivers--an 80 foot one at (985397), and a 70 foot span at (976423). A 48 foot treadway was constructed at (97904175)) and a 36 foot on at (98004085).

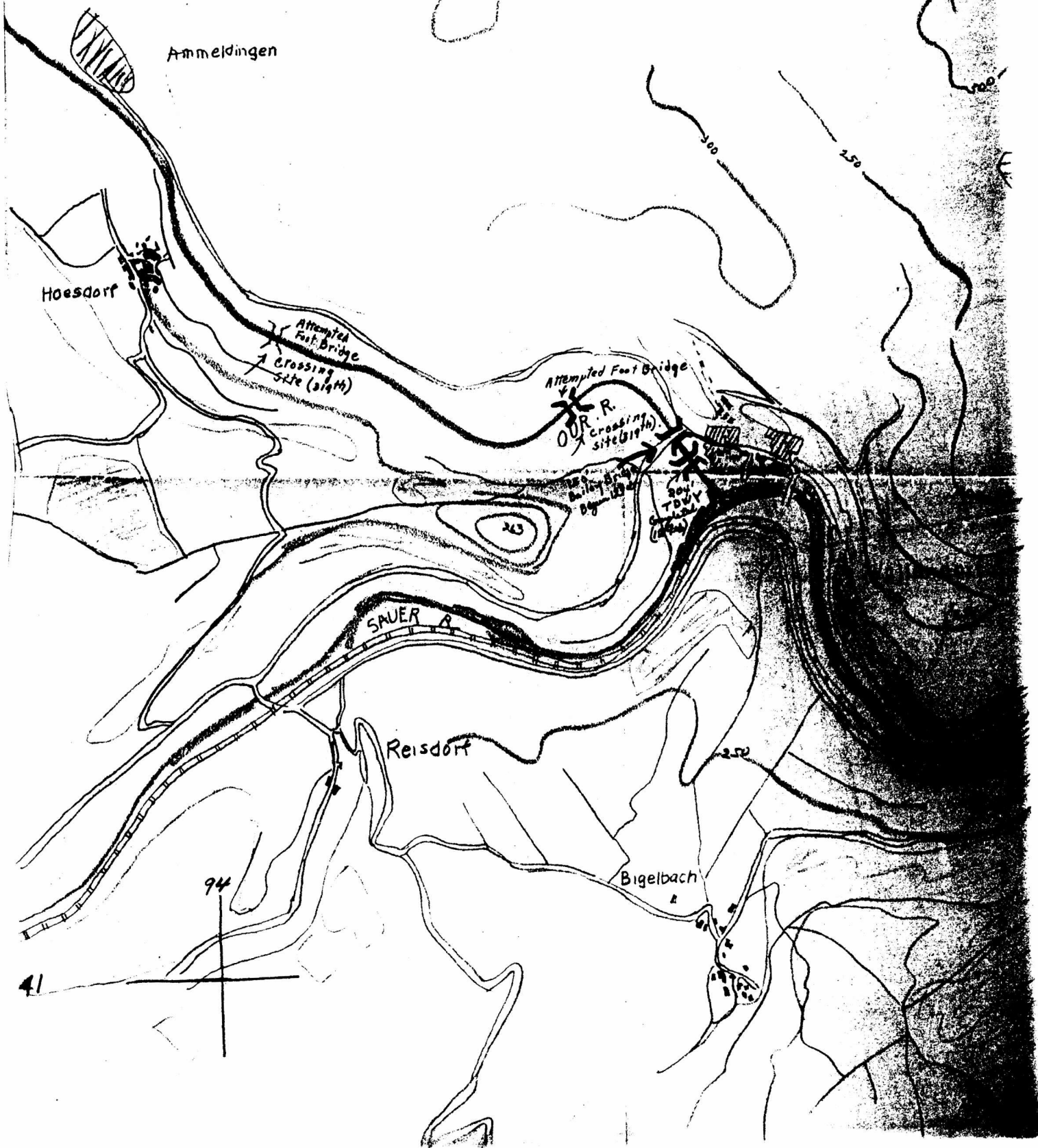
X Col Hines said that the engineer units received some criticism because of their inability to get footbridges and assault bridges in. He said that maybe some of the criticism was justified but he felt the units had done a good job and had tried their best. The colonel said that it is almost impossible to get a bridge in in the face of small arms fire and observed artillery fire as was the situation in this operation. Even if a unit were fortunate enough to get a bridge in under these circumstances artillery would knock it out. The colonel said the greatest inhibiting factor was the extremely rapid current of the streams and the swollen condition of them. In concluding Lt Col Hines said, "Infantrymen can fight from cover, but engineers can't build bridges from cover, and it is next to impossible to keep them from ~~being~~

1135th Engr Group (con't) Page 4.

seeking cover in the face of small arms and well directed artillery
fire."



7-12 Feb 45



INER-OUR CROSSINGS (9-12 T201)
Map 1/12500 (Sheet Wallendorf 6103 NE)
1135th Engr Bridge Sites

