

ACTION: 3rd Battalion, 317th Inf, 80th Div. Crossing the CLERT River, and the capture of BOCKHOLTZ. Date: 1st-27th Jan.

SOURCE: Capt Maurice Kaufman, S-3, and Capt Robert Phifer, S-1, 3rd Battalion, 317th.

Place: 3rd Battalion CP, HEFFINGEN, LUXEMBOURG

Date: 5 Feb 45

Maps: GSGS 4414 DASBURG Sheet 5902 1/25,000; RINGEL Sheet 6002 1/25,000; GSGS 4041 WILTZ 122 North 1/25,000

Interviewer: T/Sgt C.J. Angulo.

On the 1st Jan 45 the average company strength was 65 men.

During the period 1st to the 16th the battalion occupied a defensive position along the regimental left wing northeast of HEIDERSCHEID (7344). On the 16th the 3rd was relieved by the 2nd and became division reserve at the town of HEIDERSCHEID.

The night of the 16th Company K was sent to HEIDERSCHEIDERGRUND (7246) which was occupied without mishap. The following night the 3rd relieved the 2nd in the vicinity of GOESDORF (7248) where it remained until 1200, the 20th, when a march of two hours duration was made to HEIDERSCHEID. One antitank gun and a platoon of K Company was left at HEIDERSCHEIDERGRUND.

The 3rd Battalion from positions at RINGEL (7647) supported by fire the abortive attack of the 2nd Battalion on the 21st. The battalion brought into play its heavy mortars and machine guns.

On the same day at 1745 the 3rd was directed to HEIDERSCHEID (7150) to relieve the 26th Div Recon Troop. There contact was made with the right of the 319th Inf at NOCHER (7351).

The 3rd Battalion made a march by foot to WILTZ on the 22nd. The following day at 0730, formed in a column of companies in order L, I and K the battalion launched an attack to the northeast. A machine gun platoon from M Company accompanied L Company

Two kilometers west of WILWERWILTZ (7555) L Company met resistance. Heavy mortar, artillery, and machine gun fire was received from the high ground on the east side of the CLERT River. It was snowing and the cold was bitter.

The battalion sent out patrols to determine existing bridges and data regarding the width, depth, and approaches to the river. It was ascertained that the river was 2 feet in depth and 25 in width. A fording site was chosen where later an engineer bridge was put in by the division engineers.

A combat platoon was put across to hold the approaches.

Meanwhile Company I was sent to the town of ENCHERANGE (7557) to wade the river and drive southeast on PINTSCH (7556). Simultaneously K Company successfully took the town of WILWERWILTZ at 0100, 24th st. The river was forded and the attack on PINTSCH followed at 1300. By 1700 the town was taken.

The enemy, thought to have been 300 strong, supported by three tanks, was well burrowed in the cellars. A battalion 12 volley preceded the attack. It fell within 50 yards of the infantry and succeeded in driving the Kraut tanks away. Six prisoners were taken.

It was a house by house fight. After L Company had cleared the town, Company I arrived from the north (ENCHERANGE).

The night of the 25th the battalion CP was moved to WILWERWILTZ.

At 0500, the 25th, the battalion attacked toward BOCKHOLTZ (7958). The formation was columnar with Company I in the lead. The 1st Battalion, 317th Inf, was on the left, the 2nd on the right.

One mile west of BOCKHOLTZ a defended roadblock denied further progress. Then at 2330 an order was received stating that the battalion was part of Task Force Summers and ordering the attack to clear

BOCKHOLTZ (7958) by 0230 the next day.

In the cold and knee-deep snow the attack went off.

Company L with Company A, 702nd Tank Battalion (one platoon) moved by road eastward to the town. I and K Companies moved northward along a defiladed approach, by-passed SIEBENALER (7758), and advanced eastward along a draw toward the objective. The heavy weapons and ammunition were hand-carried along the difficult trails.

A 15 minute artillery preparation on BECKHOLTZ was on call, but was not utilized.

The antitank platoon followed the tanks closely. Telephone communication was maintained between the infantry from I and K Companies and the tanks with Company L. When I and K Companies were a half hour's distance from the town, the tanks were notified to advance. With L Company mounted, the Shermans swept into the town followed closely by the infantry who then outposted the town.

There was evidence that the enemy had been surprised. Overcoats were left. Food remained uneaten on the tables. Only four prisoners were taken. It was believed that 300 Kraut had been in the town.

After the town had been cleared and outposted the 1st Battalion, 31st with tanks passed through to take HOSINGEN.

At 1500, the 27th, the battalion moved to HALLER, the day following to HEFFINGEN.