

maj: Col
ACTION: 317th Inf, 80th Div. Crossing of the SURE River, ~~the~~ Capture
of HOSINGEN. Date: 1st-27th Jan 45

SOURCE: Major James Hayes, S-3, 317th Inf

PLACE: 317th Inf CP, MEDERNACH, LUXEMBOURG

DATE: 4th Feb 45

MAPS: GSGS 4040 WILTZ 122 1/50,000

INTERVIEWER: T/Sgt C.J. Angulo

At the commencement of this phase the regiment was at three quarters strength.

During the period 1st-7th January the regiment occupied defensive positions south of the SURE River. It is believed that NIEDER (7840) and FEULEN (7840) were key points in the German Main Line of Resistance. Each day from 40 to 50 rounds of enemy artillery fire were fired on this area. In addition a daily dose of about 10 rounds of Nebelwerfer was received. The 317th conducted active patrolling.

On the 8th the regimental CP was moved from HEIDERSCHEID (7344) to the vicinity of SCHEIDEL (7845). At this time the 319th Inf was on the left while the 318th Inf took over the sector of the 317th which regrouped prior to attack to clear the bend in the SURE River, northeast of HEIDERSCHEID.

The day of the 13th a line-straightening operation took place. A platoon from the 1st Battalion moved into SCHEIDEL (7845), cleared and outposted the town. The 3rd Battalion was on the left northeast of HEIDERSCHEID while the 1st was in the vicinity of SCHEIDEL. The 2nd was in the division reserve at HEIDERSCHEID.

The 2nd Battalion relieved the 3rd on the 16th. The 3rd then became division reserve at HEIDERSCHEID. This ~~referred to~~ based on

12
the reason that the 3rd had been most exposed to the cold therefore
most ~~exposed~~ ^{susceptible} to frostbite

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The following day a platoon reinforced from Company F, 2nd Battalion, was dispatched to guard the bridge at HEIDERSCHEIDGRUND (7246). There the only enemy activity was an occasional artillery shell.

On the 18th the 319th Inf on the left attacked to gain the high ground vicinity of NOCHER (7351) and MASSELER (7849). The 317th participated by supporting with fire. The weapons of the 3rd Battalion fired over 600 mortar rounds and from 10 to 15 boxes of machine gun ammunition per gun. The attack succeeded in the capture of NOCHER, but not of MASSELER.

The night of the 20th the 2nd Battalion was assigned the mission of seizing BOURSCHEID (7946), the attack to jump-off on the following day. The 1st Battalion was commissioned to move on KEHMEN (7845) on regimental order.

However at 0900, 21st, the Commanding General of the 80th Div changed the plan of attack. According to the new scheme the 2nd Battalion was to attack without delay across the SURE River east of DIRBACH (7848) drive northward and seize the high ground at GOEBELSMUHLE (7948) on the first day. On the following day the battalion was to gain the high ground at GIRSCHEND (7950) and BESCHEND (7650). The 1st Battalion was to follow and secure the high ground vicinity of NIEDERSCHLINDER (7950). The 3rd Battalion was to attack on order in the vicinity of MASSELER (7749).

Meanwhile the 318th Inf on the right had sent a patrol into BOURSCHEID (8047). There was insufficient time for reconnaissance and no information was available regarding the bridges over the SURE River. It was later ascertained that the bridge at DIRBACH had been blown.

Shortly after 0900 the attack jumped off. The 2nd Battalion became "boxed" in a deep gorge south of the river. What had appeared as a steep slope on the 1/50,000 map actually was found to be a perpendicular cliff.

The ~~3rd~~ Battalion unable to descend to the river became a target for some very heavy artillery fire. Lt Col William Boydston, Co of the 2nd Battalion, was killed by Nebelwerfer fire.

At 1800, 21st, the 2nd Battalion was ordered back to its original position. The 3rd had never moved out of ~~of~~ HEIDERSCHEID. In the meantime the 1st Battalion had taken KEHMEN. This attack had been launched at 1400, and by 1800 the town had been cleared.

The evening of the 21st, at approximately 2100 an order was received to assemble a Combat Team in the vicinity of WILTZ (7153), which would move out at daylight on the next day. The regimental mission was to gain and maintain contact with the enemy and to seize the high ground at HOSINGEN (8259).

On the 22nd the regiment issued a Field Message directing the 3rd Battalion to BUDERSCHEID (7149), the 1st to GOESDORF (7348), and the 2nd to HEIDERSCHEID (7344) on relief by the 318th Inf. By 2400 the night of the 22nd the regiment had closed in WILTZ.

At 0730 the next day the attack was launched in column of battalions with the 3rd as spearhead followed by the 1st and 2nd. The 313th Field Artillery was in direct support and leapfrogged through the column to give the advance elements the maximum support. The Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon pointed the formation, fanning out to search the enemy strength.

ERPELDANGE (7154) was the first objective, then WILWERWILTZ (7556).

At WILWERWILTZ the 3rd Battalion met resistance of company strength located on the east side of the CLERT River. Artillery and mortar fire was heavy. 300 rounds of Nebelwerfer and artillery were received on the positions occupied by the 3rd Battalion. The enemy then commenced "building up" by bringing in more troops to the area. Bicycle troops

Were observed at PINTSCHE (7656).

It was too hot for the 3rd Battalion to cross at that point. The 1st Battalion was committed to the left at ENSCHERANGE (7557) where resistance was also encountered. At these two points the regiment held for the evening of the 23rd.

The 24th the regiment reconnoitered for possible crossing sites. All bridges between WILWERWILTZ and ENSCHERANGE were out, although some railroad bridges were still intact south of WILWERWILTZ and north of ENSCHERANGE there several fording places.

On the evening of the 24th Field Order #32 was issued. Therein was contained the scheme of attack for the regiment. On the north the 1st Battalion was to cross near DRAUFFEL (7659) and take initially the high ground at (7859); the 2nd by the railroad bridge at LELLINGEN (7659) and to drive for the wooded high ground at (7857). Meanwhile the 3rd Battalion was to launch a containing attack from WILWERWILTZ and seize PINTSCHE (7658) in an attempt to simulate the main effort. The 1st and 2nd Battalions were to execute a pincer movement to trap the enemy concentrated along the CLERT River.

The 313th Field Artillery Battalion arranged a preparation consisting of a series of concentrations. However it was decided not to employ artillery initially in order to gain surprise. As the troops advanced the concentrations planned for ground occupied by them were crossed out.

To aid in the attack the 1st Battalion, 318th, was attached to the 317th Inf.

The attack moved out on the 25th at 0400. In one hour the 1st was across and Company C had gained the height at (7657). An entire enemy company was captured intact without the loss of a single

man or the firing of a shot.

The 2nd Battalion was held up at LELLINGEN and failed to get across.

At 1000 the 3rd Battalion was ordered to cross at WILVERWILTZ. During the night a platoon infiltrated across the river into the eastern of the town, thereby establishing a small bridgehead.

An alternate plan was adopted. The 3rd Battalion took PINTSCHE after a bitter house by house fight. The town was clear by 1600. At 1900 the 2nd Battalion was pulled back from LELLINGEN where a company remained to contain the enemy. The remainder of the battalion crossed by the engineer bridge at WILVERWILTZ, turned to the right and flanked LELLINGEN, thereby capturing the town.

140 prisoners were captured that day by the ~~division~~ regiment.

The attack was resumed at 0400. the 26th, according to the alternate plan. The 3rd Battalion took the 2nd Battalion objectives while the 2nd Battalion followed, occupying PENZENBERG (7956), thus guarding the right of the regiment.

At 1700, 26th, the regiment requested a concentration of artillery fire. Four Battalions participated in a preparation of 15 minutes duration. Only the 1st Battalion was situated to take advantage of the support. By 2000 the 1st Battalion had taken its objectives: DORSCHIED (8061) and NEIDHAUSEN (8060). The 3rd Battalion was engaged in a fire fight at a roadblock (7958).

At 2000, 26th, the CG of the division called and stated that ~~the~~ 317th was now part of Task Force Summers.

Composition of TF Summers: 317th Inf
1st Battalion 318th Inf
313th FA Battalion
315th FA Battalion
215th FA Battalion

Composition of TF Summers (cont): 80th Div Recon Troop
Co. A, 702nd Tk Battalion
Co. D, 702nd Tk Battalion
Co. B, 610 TD Battalion
2 Platoons, Co. A, 610 TD Bn

At 2345 Field Message #1 from TF Summers was issued. The 318th 1st Battalion was to attack north of the 3rd Battalion, 317th, and seize the high ground east of HOSINGEN (8259). The 2nd Battalion, 317th Inf, was directed to seize Mon SCHMITZ (8157). The 1st Battalion was to maintain positions on its objective. The 3rd Battalion, 317th, was to seize BOCKHOLZ (7958) and become the reserve of the TF.

The attack moved out at 0200. By 0500 BOCKHOLZ was clear and the high ground east of HOSINGEN seized by the 1st Battalion, 318th. The 2nd Battalion was advancing slowly in the face of burp gun fire and seized its objective by 1800. Then the 5th Div Recon Troop took over.

In the attack on BOCKHOLTZ artillery was not employed. It was a night attack and surprise was sought. The Krauts were unprepared and the attack was a success.

During the 27th an assembly party arrived from the 17th Airborne. On this day the 1st Battalion, 317th, moved to MEDERNACH, the 2nd to CRUCHTON, the 3rd to HEFFINGEN.

For the period 23rd to the 28th the regiment suffered 83 casualties. 80 reinforcements arrived during the period from the 23rd, and 200 were received on the 27th. However these were not used since it was believed that the men engaged were sufficient to handle the situation. Some of the 80 were used as litter bearers and as wirelayers. Of the 83 casualties suffered by the regiment for this period only 34 were termed battle casualties.

For the period 23rd to the 27th, 359 prisoners were taken, an estimated 100 killed, and 200 wounded. One large enemy ammunition dump was captured which dump covered an area of 2 square miles. It was turned over to the 5th Div.

In this terrain tanks were of limited value. Also the weather hindered tank movement. It was necessary for an engineer truck to go ahead of the tanks and spread sand on the roads. The same was true for the TDS with the exception of one platoon equipped with cleats on the tracks.

To support the river crossing of the CLERT Battery D, 633 AA mobile was commissioned to support the 317th. However because of the icy roads the battery could not get into position to be of use. Therefore the battery was assigned to protect division artillery.

When the 317th reached WILTZ there was a traffic jam. In the town were the 6th Cav, 80th Recon Troop, and elements of the 26th Div. There was no space to disperse the vehicles and the only clear road was canalized between cliffs. It was a traffic control problem.

One platoon, Co B, 610 TDS (SP) was attached to each battalion. At first only one platoon was able to move over the ice. Later a second platoon was equipped with steel cleats and was of some assistance. Enemy tanks were observed at PINTCHE, but withdrew.

One platoon, Co A, 702nd Tk Battalion was attached to each battalion, but were of limited value because of weather and terrain.