

Action of 1st Bn, 31st at ETTTELBRUCK, LUXEMBOURG and in drive toward EASTOYNE, BELGIUM, 22-28 DEC 1944.

SOURCES: 1st Lt Edward E. Rueske, S-3 1st Bn 318th; 1st Lt. Thomas L Murphy, S-2 1st Bn 318th; 1st Lt John Ryan, Arty Ln C 314th FA.

PLACE: HALLER, LUXEMBOURG, Bn CP, 30 January 1945:

MAPS: Sheets 6102 and 6202, scale 1/25,000; ARLON AND TRIER, scale 1/100,000:

INTERVIEWER: Lt S. J. Tobin.

At 0300 on 22 Dec 44, 1st Bn moved from the assembly area near MERSCH by way of ROOST to COLMAR. The order of March was Co B 702d Tk Bn, with Co A 1st Bn mounted on the tanks; and Co C 610th TD Bn (90mm guns SP). They were followed by the AT Plat, Co C, Co B, mortar Plat, and Co. D. Movement was accomplished by organic transportation. At 0600 they left COLMAR going by way of BERG, WELSDORF to GRENTZINGEN. The troops by-passed the town, the CP group going in about 0830 where they captured 10 PWS who were equipped with several telephones and 2 radios. They stated that they were a listening post for the enemy troops who were stationed in ETTTELBRUCK ~~and the high ground~~. In the vicinity of GRENTZINGEN, the troops were held up by enemy artillery fire coming from the vicinity of ETTTELBRUCK and the high ground north and west of the town. At 0930 Lt Col Albert S Tosi, Bn CO, issued a plan of attack to seize ETTTELBRUCK and the high ground northwest of the town. From GRENTZINGEN the attack moved out with A Co mounted on the tanks in the lead; B Co on the left and Co C in reserve. Approaches to the town were channelized by natural obstacles--the ALZETTE River just to the right of the road and a steep bank rising from the west of the road. Maneuverability of armored vehicles was seriously restricted. By 1100 B Co after a severe fire fight with the enemy had driven them off the high ground west of the road in the vicinity of 814389. The tanks and the troops along the road were receiving direct

fire of small arms and several tanks in the town and artillery fire from high ground northeast of the town. The Bn was momentarily stopped.

B Co then moved from the high ground west of the road along to the left and drove the enemy off the high ground west of ETTTELBRUCK and Lopert Hill. Meanwhile A Co was pinned down along the road south of the town and C Co was not able to move. About 1800 B Co succeeded in moving down and capturing a number of buildings on the western outskirts of ETTTELBRUCK where they stayed for the remainder of the night. Communication within all units was established during the day by means of radio. Artillery support was supplied by the 314th FA bn.

On 23 Dec 44 Lt Col Tosi ordered the Bn to attack at 0800. Three attempts were made to enter the town each being driven back by severe MG and mortar fire in addition to heavy artillery fire. The situation was stalemated until approximately 1400 at which time Lt Col Tosi and 1st Lt Murphy went to A Co and 1st Lt Hueske went to C Co. They coordinated with all units for an attack on the town with the tanks in direct support. The attack jumped off at 1430. One of our tanks was knocked out by direct fire from the town. The Cos succeeded in occupying some of the buildings on the fringe of the town. Between 50-60 PWs were captured. Lt Col Tosi was wounded seriously at 1530 on the edge of town and was evacuated. Major George W. Connaughton took command of the Bn. One of our tanks penetrated into the town but had to return because the debris in the streets limited maneuverability. At 1600 orders were received to withdraw from the town as their position was untenable. B Co withdrew around behind C Co to reserve after dark, and positions were maintained outside the town for the rest of the night. Intermittent artillery and mortar fire was received during the night. On the morning of the 24th, the Bn mission was to hold and contain ETTTELBRUCK, plan of action being frequent exchanges of

small arms and counter-battery artillery fire. 1300 information was received that they were to be relieved by the 3rd Bn of the 318th, and that the Bn was ordered to attack on toward BASTOYNE with the 4th Armd Div. The 3d Bn completed replacement of the 1st by approximately 1700, the 1st withdrawing by infiltration under small arms fire from the vicinity of the town. They returned to BERG where they entrucked at 1900 to move to the 4th armd Div. Lt Hueske said that the Bn was approximately T/O strength before the engagement at ETTELBRUCK and that during the fight at ETTELBRUCK they had lost the equivalent of one Co--100-150 men. He stated that the mission was too large for a Bn objective. A PW's statement said that there were over 600 infantrymen in the town, three tanks and an artillery Bn in support. The very nature of the terrain channelized the attack forcing the Bn to attack the town frontally. The enemy held the high ground with excellent fields of fire. Lt Hueske said it was his opinion that the objective was too large for the one Bn.

At 1900 Bn moved out from BERG arriving at MARTELANGE at 2300: There they received orders from Gen Earnest CG CCA that they would attack at 0800 on the morning of 25 Dec with a mission of seizing TINTANGE, HONVILLE, LIVARCHAMPS and proceed on to relieve BASTOGNE. The main road, ARLON-BASTOGNE, would be their left boundry. The Bn attacked at 0800 on the 25th toward TINTANGE. The attack progressed towards TINTANGE with intermittent clashes with small groups of enemy infantry who were infiltrating from place to place through the wooded area between TINTANGE and RJ 558416. The fighting was principally our infantry against the elements of the 5th Para Div, who had the advantage of prepared positions and were heavily armed with automatic weapons: tanks of the 35th Tk Bn and tank destroyers of the 704th TD bn were in support but could not be used due to the rugged nature of the terrain and woods. The Bn reached the LD at 1400 and jumped off in (3)

attack towards TINTAL E with C Co on the left, A Co on the right, B Co in reserve. Air support as well as artillery was on call, and at 1430 7 of our planes made three runs over TINTANGE dropping 20 bombs and strafing the town. Artillery support was used after contact had been made with the enemy and accurate locations of troops were known. Enemy fire from the town pinned C and A Cos down and they were subjected to Nebelwerfer fire and shelled by a large cal SP assault gun in the town. B Co sent 2 Plats to attack the town frontally passing through B and C, and sent their 3d Plat around to the right to flank the town. The enemy revealed their positions by firing at the plats attacking frontally and were taken by surprise in the flank by the 3d Plat. Over 160 PWs in addition to the SP gun were captured and the town was occupied by approximately 1530 on 25 Dec 44. After taking TINTANGE, due to the losses incurred since the original attack on ETTELBRUCK, the attack and losses during the day, the foxhole strength of the Cos were as follows:

A Co 30 men
B Co 60 men
C Co 32 men

The total number of men available including elements from D Co. and AT Plat, was 187:

On the morning of the 26th at 0800 Bn jumped off in attack on HONVILLE. In support were 1 Co of tanks and 1 Plat of TDs. During the night of the 25th information was received that B Co 51st Armd Inf. Bn was to be attached to their command. A Plat from A Co was sent out to a rendezvous where they contacted a Plat from B Co 51st Armd Inf. Bn. Other than that no contact was had. The attack moved out with B Co on the left, A Co on the right, and C Co in reserve. The general situation was as follows: CCA 4th Armd Div advancing up the main road ARLON-BASTOGNE, with infantry elements in the lead; the 51st Armd Inf

Bn dismounted on the left and 1st Bn 318th on the right. Honville was occupied by 1630 on the 26th. The terrain was such that armed support could be used to great advantage, and the Bn took the town without any serious engagements.

At 0800 on the morning of the 27th, Bn jumped off in attack on Livarchamps. They received enemy fire from a woods on their right flank as they approached the town, but this was neutralized by artillery fire. The 6-barrelled Nebelwerfers were knocked out by artillery and four were captured in the vicinity of 565484. Livarchamps was occupied about 1200. The Bn moved out through Livarchamps to the high ground north of the town (557506). Defensive positions were maintained in the town and on the high ground during the night and the next day. At 1700 on the 28th the Bn was relieved by elements of the 35th Div, 3d Bn, 134th Inf. The Bn moved back to Honville, entrucked and returned to Colmar that night.