

802w file

UNIT: 1st Bn, 318th Inf Regt, 80th Div.

PERIOD: 28th Dec 44 thru 25th Feb 45.

ACTION: ACTION NORTHERN LUXEMBOURG; CROSSING SAVER RIVER.

SOURCE: Capt Charles D. Cockfield, S-1,
1st Lt Edward C. Hueske, S-3,
1st Lt Dick A. Beanont, AT Platoon leader.

PLACE & DATE OF INTERVIEW: HUTTIGEN, GERMANY, 1st Bn CP, 25 Feb 45

INTERVIEWER: Lt R. Cochran.

MAPS: France & Belgium, (HOUFFALIZE Sheet #105)

Scale 1/50,000.

(ST HUBERT Sheet #106)
BITBURG
TRIER

CLASSIFICATION
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S. L. Clayton, Col CAC
SHEET 23
DOWNGRADING COMMITTEE 25 MAR 46

Note: From the 28th of Dec until 7th Feb 45 the 1st Bn did not participate in any large scale offensive.

On the 28th Dec 44 the 1st Bn, 318th Inf commanded by Maj Charles F. Gaking entrucked in HONEVILLE, BELGIUM for COLMAR, LUXEMBOURG (820355). The Bn reached COLMAR the morning of the 29th and remained in bivouac there until 31st Dec. On the 31st Dec the Bn moved to SCHIEREN, LUXEMBOURG (822382), remaining there until the 2nd of Jan 45.

On the 2nd of Jan 45 the Bn moved to ETTELBRUCK, LUXEMBOURG (825400) relieving the 3rd Bn which was in a defensive position there. Two companies were placed on the high ground overlooking ETTELBRUCK and one company remained in the town. The companies were interchangeable, one company remaining in town a few days then moving up and changing places with one of the companies on the high ground. D company had MG's placed to cover avenues of approach both into ETTELBRUCK and on the high ground. The 81 mm mortars were also in position to cover avenues of likely approach. There was active patrolling on both sides every night between the 2nd & 10th of Jan. On the 10th of Jan C company commanded by 1st LT Herman C. Park attempted to move up thru the town and take up a position in closer contact with the enemy. The company was driven back into town by a heavy concentration of artillery and mortar fire. C company lost

as a result of this action 3 killed and 12 wounded. There were no officer casualties.

The next day 11th of Jan A company commanded by Lst Lt Gorden D. Goerke moved thru the same route previously taken by C company and occupied the high ground south of BURDEN (818435). They ran into very little opposition and suffered no casualties. On the 13th Jan the 1st Bn was relieved by the 2nd Bn 318th Inf and moved to a bivouac area in NIEDERFUELLEN (785408) remaining there until the 21st Jan.

During the period from the 2 - 13 Jan the 1st Bn had the following casualties - 15 battle - including 3 killed, 12 wounded and 32 non battle casualties.

While in NIEDERFUELLEN the Bn occupied road blocks and sent out a few patrols.

On the 21st of Jan C company moved to the high ground northwest of BURDEN to clean out the "loop" (8344). Pockets of resistance had been by-passed in that area by the 2nd Bn which had been attacking thru that sector. This mission was accomplished with very light casualties.

On the 22nd the Bn moved from NIEDERFUELLEN. A & B companies with a platoon of HMG attached to each moved north of KEHMEN (7846) and cleaned out the woods as far as the Sure River. C company moved to SCHEIDEL (785451) in Bn reserve. There was virtually no opposition in this movement.

On the night of 22nd one platoon of C company moved up to the high ground previously cleared by A & B companies and outposted the ground overlooking the river. B company ~~moved down to HEIDERSCHIED~~ then moved to RINGEL (763477). Company A stayed in KEHMEN. The 23rd of Jan B company moved on down to HEIDERSCHIED (776445).

In this whole operation the only battle casualty was one sergeant

who stepped on a Schu-mine.

During the night of the 23rd the Bn received orders to move to WILTZ (70535). The Bn crossed the IP at 1530 24th Jan and moved into billets at WILTZ that night. At 2200 the Bn CO was called to Regt CP to get movement orders. Bn was ordered to protect the rear and flanks of the 317th Inf which was moving up. Order of march was C B A D Hq. The Bn moved out at 0815 25th Jan. They stopped first at ERPELDANGE (717546). C company with one platoon of MG's attached moved to ENSCHERANGE (7657). At 1730 the remainder of the Bn moved into ENSCHERANGE. The Bn closed into ENSCHERANGE after dark. Companies B & C outposted the high ground 1000 yards northeast of town, known as LOEH HILL. The first Bn was now attached to the 317th Inf Regt.

At 1045 26th Jan the Bn less one platoon of B company still on the high ground and one squad of the same company to form a roadblock at ENSCHERANGE, moved to PINTSCHE (773563). The remaining platoon and squad now closed up with the rest of the Bn. However one squad was now sent to WILWERWILTZ (764557) to form a road block.

At 0330 27th the 1st Bn 318th still attached to 317th Inf attacked with the mission of taking the high ground (807589) and (814586) two hills. This was accomplished with no opposition and no casualties. About daylight reached high ground. In the meantime the 317th Inf took BOCHHOLZ (793582) against light opposition.

During the attack there was a Bn of the 317th on both sides of the 1st Bn but no contact was established and their exact location was unknown.

At 0900 the 1st Bn with 8 medium tanks and 4 tank destroyers attached was ordered to take HOSINGEN (821587). Order of attack was to be column of companies, C company leading. As the leading elements

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of C company plus the tanks started across the ridge (825585) the enemy laid down a terrific artillery and mortar barrage. MG fire came in from the right and left flanks. C company could advance no further to the front. Two medium tanks were knocked out.

One platoon of C company, commanded by 1st Lt E. L. Saunders moved around north and east of HOSINGEN and entered the town. Lt Saunders, however, had no way of communicating with the rest of the company and as a result nobody knew he was in the town. The platoon fought their way through most of the town, killing & wounding about 15 Germans and taking 2 prisoners. Lt Saunders then found that his platoon was running out of ammunition and the enemy was bringing tanks and reinforcements into town from the northeast. They were rushing men into town by truck.

The platoon withdrew back to the high ground. The Bn then got orders to hold that ground until they were relieved by units of the 17th Airborne Div about 2300 27th Jan. The Bn then pulled back into BOCHHOLZ.

Total casualties during this action, C company 5 killed, 55 wounded 7 missing. This included one officer killed and one wounded. The remainder of Bn, 3 killed, 4 wounded.

Note: New map, Sheet #22 ~~ECHTERNAACH~~ (?) *BITBURG - SHEET 23 TRIER*

On the 28th Jan 45 the 1st Bn moved by motor to relieve elements of the 4th Inf Div in vicinity of HALLER (953367). The 1st Bn was billeted in HALLER until 7th Feb in regimental reserve.

At 1700 6th Feb the Bn received the order of attack across the Sauer River. The order of attack was to be 2nd Bn, 3rd Bn with the 1st Bn in regimental reserve to move on order.

During the day of the 7th the 2nd and 3rd Bns established a bridge-

head across the river (979414). However due to exceptionally heavy artillery and mortar fire the engineers were unable to construct a bridge. The engineer assault boats were continually riddled by MG fire and many were lost.

At 1700 the 1st Bn moved to the high ground (97340) on the near side of the river. The Bn remained in this position all night. At 0530 8th Feb the Bn S-3, 1st Lt Edward C. Hueske moved to the river and took charge of shuttling the troops across. Order of crossing was to be A, B, C, mortar platoon of D and Hq, one platoon of HMG was attached to A company and one to B company.

There were ~~fewer~~^{four} engineer assault boats left available for the crossing. These boats were under the control of the 166th Engr Bn.

Each company left the final assembly area equiped with some pole charges. However, most of the charges were dropped on the near shore/ after a mortar got a direct hit on one pole charge, and the men saw that they were going to have an extremely difficult time getting themselves across much less the cumbersome charges.

As the companies started across they received direct MG fire, artillery fire, and mortar fire. The enemy had also captured a 57 mm AT gun and were using that for direct fire from point north of the crossing.

The Bn commander (Maj Gaking) and the remainder of his staff moved to the river crossing about dark. The major took charge of getting the troops across. The remainder of his staff crossed at that time and set up the CP in a dugout on the knoll just across the river (982415). The crossing was completed about midnight with the loss of only 15 men.

Company A moved up and organized on the high ground (987420). The rest of the Bn spent the early morning hours of the 9th Feb getting or-

ganized for the coming attack.

At 0800 9th Feb the Bn attacked, A company on the right, B company on the left and C in reserve. Companies A & B still had a platoon of HMG attached to each. The objective of the Bn was to move up astride trail (985416) and attack north along trail. This would give the engineers more room to work and make it possible for them to get a bridge in. The 2nd and 3rd Bns were on the right and left.

Just as the attack started, the enemy started a counterattack. The Bn was in a fire fight all day of the 9th but gained no ground. In the meantime men from Hq company found a jeep in the mud at some point north of the crossing. The jeep was salvaged by Hq company and was the only vehicle that got across the Sauer River that day. It was later discovered that the jeep was abandoned by the 2nd Bn after being ferried across. On the second trip the ferry broke and was washed down stream along with its 3 occupants.

On the morning of the 10th the Bn once again attacked in same order A right, B left, C reserve and took high ground (985423).

The enemy fought mostly from dugouts and fox holes. There were some stone bunkers but these were used more for troop shelters. The Bn received heavy MG as well as mortar fire.

The Bn spent that night in a defensive position. Supplies and ammunition was hand carried up to the companies. Casualties were extremely high.

On the morning of the 11th the Bn again jumped off trying to consolidate gains and clear out woods (9943). Bn attacked in same order. ~~A & B~~ They moved about 300 yards and were pinned down; Remained here all day and night. Early on the 12th companies A & B moved about 200 yards and were pinned down by artillery fire. They also encountered heavy rifle

and MG fire. They withdrew to positions held the previous night.

C company was then committed around the right flank with objective of clearing woods (985447). The objective was reached but the company was ^{temporarily} temporarily cut off. The opposition, including tanks was heavy. A company moved up to help C, contacted them and both companies moved back.

At 0800 13th Feb the 1st Bn was relieved by the 3rd Bn. Relief completed at 1200. The Bn moved to the cross roads in the vicinity of (987425).

On the 15th Feb at 2000 the Bn received an attack order. At 2300 the order was postponed.

On the 17th Feb word came down that the original attack order would be carried out. Company C moved to the woods (985445) overlooking BIESDORF and relieved L company. Company A sent a patrol consisting of one squad into CRUCHTEN (98455) to see if the town was occupied. This patrol moved through the first 6 buildings in CRUCHTEN, took 2 prisoners and came back with the information that the town was definitely occupied. This information was relayed to the regimental CP for appropriate action.

On the morning of 18th Feb the attack commenced. The 3rd Bn was on the right, 2nd Bn on the left. The 1st Bn was to follow the 3rd on Regt order.

Leaving C company still in woods where they had relieved L company, the remainder moved to the vicinity of BIESDORF. At 1830 the Bn was ordered to attack north and sieze HOMMERDINGEN (985465). This required the Bn CO to manuever C company which was still in woods overlooking BIESDORF.

The Bn attacked, A company on the left, C company to move out of

woods on the right when A company came abreast of them. B company would fall in behind company C. A MG platoon was once again attached to each leading company. HOMMERDINGEN was taken at 0400 19th Feb without a fight. Five prisoners were taken. Company B moved on through the town and outposted the high ground to the north (985470). A patrol from B company was then sent to investigate the woods (992469). As the patrol started off the high ground it received heavy MG fire from the woods. The patrol withdrew back to the high ground.

At 2030 the 1st Bn moved to objective 11, the high ground (975495) just southeast of HUTTINGEN. Company A left, C right and B in reserve. Objective 11 was occupied before daylight the 20th of Feb without running into any opposition. However, as soon as it got light, the Germans discovered the 1st Bn on the high ground and opened up with SP guns, tanks, mortar and MG fire.

At 1000 20th Feb the Bn received orders to move on to objective 17 but could not move because of heavy fire. At 2100 the Bn received another attack order to jump off at 0230 21st Feb and seize the high ground ~~(976504)~~ south of METTENDORF (987505). By 0600 companies B & C had reached the objective and dug in. A company remained in Bn reserve at high ground (976504). The Bn CP remained at FREILINGEN (993477) but an OP was established on the high ground southeast of HUTTINGEN. From this OP it was possible to see B & C companies but not A.

As it grew light, tanks and infantry were discovered in the draw between the two leading companies and A company. This enemy force must have been there when B & C companies moved through ~~XXXX~~ because it is difficult to imagine the enemy infiltrating tanks during the night without any noise.

A company was in a bad position cut off from the other two companies,

but the enemy failed to take advantage of the situation, sending only a few squads against the company at a time. These squads were subsequently annihilated.

A company got the order to clean the woods between themselves and B & C and meet friendly tanks at cross roads (997492). However, A company was unable to move back to the crossroads. As it was the tanks did not show up anyway. E company of 2nd Bn was then ordered to move up the draw south of B company and clear out the enemy. E company moved about 200 yards was pinned down and withdrew.

A coordinated attack by A company then cleaned out the draw and A company advanced to high ground (988497). They occupied this ground and the buildings just south of METTENDORF at 0415 22nd Feb. At 0900 companies C & B sent out patrols into the draw to their rear and found it clear of enemy.

On the morning of the 23rd the 1st Bn tied in with the x 317th Inf on the right and the 2nd Bn on the left.

On the morning of the 24th Feb the 1st Bn 317th relieved companies A & B. At 1600 company F 318th Inf relieved company C.

The Bn moved back into Regt reserve in the vicinity of HUTTINGEN.

Casualties from 7th Feb thru 24th Feb:

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Missing</u>
A	14	81	16
B	4	65	33
C	12	59	36
D	2	19	0
Hq	0	3	0
Total	<u>32</u>	<u>227</u>	<u>85</u>