

UNIT: 1st Bn, 319th Inf, 80th Inf Div

PERIOD: 17 Dec 44 to 25 Jan 45

ACTION: Reducing the Bulge

SOURCE: 1st Lt William P Sweaney, S-2, 1st Bn, 319th Inf Regt

PLACE AND DATE OF INTERVIEW: 1st Bn CP KEHLEN, LUXEMBOURG, 2 Feb 45

MAPS: Scale, 1/50,000; France and Belgium Arlon Sheet 137, Wiltz Sheet 122; Luxembourg (sheet 22 and 23)

INTERVIEWER: 1st Lt S J Tobin

INTERVIEW conducted with unit records.

The 1st Bn 319th Inf moved from MERIEBACH to ROHRBACH on 17 Dec 44. At the time the Bn was in regimental reserve and was training and making preparations to attack the SIEGRIED Line. The Bn remained in ROHRBACH during 18 and 19 Dec continuing its training program. On the 19th they had heard about the big GERMAN breakthrough in the First US Army sector, and had been told of the possibility of their unit being moved to assist in checking the Germans. Movement orders came and the Bn left ROHRBACH at 2000 on 19 Dec. They moved north to STEINSEL, LUXEMBOURG, going by way of SAR RE UNION, METZ, and the City of LUXEMBOURG. March conditions were excellent. The weather was clear and cold. Full headlights were used except in the towns themselves. Traffic organization through towns was handled very efficiently and the move progressed without incident and the unit arrived at STEINSEL at 1400 20 Dec 44. The Hq located in STEINSEL and the companies in the surrounding towns. At the time, 20 Dec, the 319th Regt was in division reserve. Orders were received at 2100 on the night of the 20th to proceed to the vicinity of BROUCH

and VICHTEN. Early on the morning of the 21st at 0700 the Bn moved out on foot towards its objective. Regtl transportation available moved the Bns to their objectives, the 1st Bn advancing on foot until transportation became available to it. About 1100 orders were received changing the mission, and directing them to move back to STEINSEL. They ate dinner on the side of the road, and at 1230 proceeded back to STEINSEL. They were nearing STEINSEL later in the afternoon when orders were again changed and the original mission to move back to BROUCH - VICHTEN were received. The Bn arrived finally at BROUCH at 1700 after marching 17 miles. The regiment moved on to a line north of BROUCH with the 3d Bn on the left and the 1st Bn on the right. 1st Bn put C and A Cos on the line with B in reserve. The Bn was in position by 1900. They improved their positions and remained during the night. At 2100 an attack order was received stating that they were to proceed north through the remnants of the 28th Div which consisted mainly of the 109th Inf Regt with other elements of the Div attached, and attack the south flank of the German salient. The jump-off time was to be 0600.

At 0600 on the 22d, the unit moved northeast to BISSEN and from there generally cross country through woods and the rough ground generally toward the north and west from BISSEN. At 1130 they contacted the 28th Div (1st Bn 109th Regt) which was holding a line generally east and west through MICHELBUCH. The CO of the 109th had been contacted at BISSEN. The Bn had attached at the time 1 Plat of TDS (4 TDS of the 610th TD Bn) and 4 medium and two light tanks of Co C 702d Tk Bn. The woods and the nature of the terrain

prohibited the use of armor with the advancing infantry, and Lt William P Sweaney took the vehicles around to the left through VICHTEN and brought the armor up the road from VICHTEN to contact the infantry elements of the Bn at MICHELSBUCH. Just outside the town they ran into a small enemy patrol killing 5 Germans and capturing three. Contact was made with the 1st Bn at 1145. At 1230 Bn received the mission of taking over OBERFEULEN and NIEDERFEULEN. The Bn proceeded northward from MICHELSBUCH on the road with the tanks and infantry operating together. Near MERZIG, they had a short engagement killing 15 enemy and recapturing one of our 57mm AT guns and taking several PWS. PWS were identified from the 1st Co of the 915th PGR.

Meanwhile the 3d Bn had been actively engaged at MERZIG and driven the enemy out. The 1st Bn had moved up along the road to a position east and south of OBERFEULEN. The enemy trains and other vehicles which the 3d Bn had driven out of MERZIG were coming along the open ground toward OBERFEULEN. The tanks and TDS and the AT plat of the 1st Bn found themselves in an excellent position to shoot up the enemy transport. The enemy transport consisted of 1 Btry 4 light artillery pieces (horse-drawn, with 4 horses on each gun), 15 horse drawn wagons and a number of trucks. The entire column was wiped out--only one vehicle escaped. Approximately 30 enemy were killed and approximately 40 captured. The trains were the Regtl HQ units, and had all the radio and signal equipment were with the trains. The action was of about an hour's duration lasting from 1500 to 1600. OBERFEULEN and NIEDERFEULEN were occupied shortly after without any serious resistance. The Bn set up defenses around both towns--the Bn CP being located in NIEDERFEULEN.

On 23 Dec, the Bn mission was to continue the attack to the north and take the towns of KEHMEN and SCHEIDEL. The attack jumped off at 0700, generally following the road north to KEHMEN. As the Bn came out of the woods, they could see an enemy column of approximately 24 tanks moving down from BOURSCHEID to KEHMEN. The tanks and TDS attached to the 1st Bn fired at the enemy column, knocking out 2 tanks before the enemy could withdraw to BOURSCHEID and back over the hill to the southeast. The 905th FA Bn fired several missions on the town of BOURSCHEID. The action and the resultant delay took approximately two hours and the units moved on towards KEHMEN. The Bn estimated that there was one enemy company supported by 8 tanks in the town of KEHMEN. They deployed their forces to attack the town with B Co and C Co on the line, A in reserve. One HMG Plat was assigned to each of the leading Cos. They advanced to the high ground south of the town, and held up until 10 tanks of the ^{737th} 735th Tk Bn, which had been with the 28th Div, were brought up by the Bn S-3, Capt Cyrus E Addams. At 1700 they were all set to hit the town. The Bn had two medium tanks and 4 TDS of its own in addition to the 10 tanks of the 735th. They lined the armor up along the road overlooking the town and attacked with A Co on the right and B Co on the left. C Co stayed in the vicinity of the crossroads (774454) to protect the rear. Under the supporting fire of the 735th Tk Bn and the TDS the medium tanks and infantry went into the town. The attack was successful, the enemy withdrawing. They moved in taking over the town shortly after dark (1745). Twenty PWS were captured, three enemy tanks were knocked out, and one of ours lost to bazooka fire. The Bn stayed in the town that night and set up defensive positions. The 10 tanks from the 735th returned to NIEDERPEULEN.

On the morning of the 24th, orders were received to withdraw and the mission was to take RINGEL. The unit moved out along the road westward from the town at 0515. Just about daylight they reached the crossroads leading to RINGEL at 751452. Meanwhile the 2d Bn was receiving an attack in strength supported by tanks and 90mm AT guns mounted on halftracks. The tanks fired on the 1st Bn from the road southwest of HEIDERSCHEID pinning the unit down for the moment. The armor with the 1st Bn backed down into a draw to avoid the fire of the German tanks, one tank getting stuck and two being knocked out. The Bn received orders at 0845 to discontinue the mission to RINGEL and hold in its present position protecting the approaches to HEIDERSCHEID. About 0930 the 1st Bn TDS knocked out the enemy tank at 742442, and the 2d Bn in HEIDERSCHEID, with the help of Div Artillery, repulsed the attack on their positions (2d Bn). The 1st Bn stayed in defensive positions around the crossroads at 752452 the rest of the day. The 317th on the morning of the 24th at 1100 moved up to the vicinity of KEHMEN (they caught hell up there too).

On the 25th at 1500 the 1st Bn moved into HEIDERSCHEID for a days rest. They stayed in HEIDERSCHEID all day the 26th, and at 1715 on the 27th moved out to RINGEL to relieve the 2d Bn, the relief being completed by 1900. Enemy activity was limited to sporadic artillery and mortar fire.

On the morning of the 28th at 0930 an enemy barrage of Nebelwerfer and artillery fire coming from vicinity of BOURSCHIED fell on the town. There were approximately 300-400 rounds in the barrage. The enemy launched a counterattack of undetermined strength, but were driven back by artillery and small arms fire. Casualties from artillery

caused severe losses to the enemy. A PW identified from 2d Bn 312th Regt estimated the enemy strength to be 500. Another attack came at 1400, immediately following another artillery preparation of like intensity. This was again broken up by severe artillery fire. There were approximately 20 PWs captured after the 2d attack. A PW's statement said that after the 2d counterattack the remnants of the 2d Bn 312th Regt were formed into one company. The 1st Bn losses for the day were approximately 8 killed and 10 wounded. The enemy continued harassing fire on the town chiefly artillery and mortar fire. No enemy activity was observed during the rest of the day and the following night.

On the 29th after an artillery preparation of approximately 500 rounds, the enemy launched another attack at 1430. This attack was broken up by artillery fire and small arms fire with severe losses to the enemy. Over 20 PWs were captured in the attack. The Bn maintained its positions during the night of the 29th; enemy activity was limited to sporadic artillery fire. At 1930 on 30 Dec, the 2d Bn of the 312th relieved the 1st. The 1st moved back to HEIDERSCHEID and stayed in reserve during the 31st Dec - 1 Jan. At 1915 on 1 Jan 45 the 1st Bn relieved the 2d Bn in RINGEL. Very little enemy activity was noted during the period 2 and 3 January. At 1900 on 3 January the 2d Bn relieved the 1st and it pulled back again to HEIDERSCHEID, remaining there during 4 and 5 Jan.

At 1500 on 5 Jan orders were received to attack on the morning of 6 Jan with the mission of crossing the SURE River and taking GOESDORF. The 3d Bn mission was to take DAHL. At 0445 on 6 Jan the Bn moved out in column of Cos, C, B, and A, crossed the bridge over the SURE River

by means of a treadway, and continued in the direction of GOESDORF. The artillery had fires prepared on call for GOESDORF. On the way up to GOESDORF they surprised two German outposts along the road: the first at 0630 and the 2d at 0640, capturing 3 and 2 PWs, respectively. The leading company moved up halfway through the town of GOESDORF before they were fired on. House to house fighting took place and the town was cleaned up by 0830. Fifteen enemy were killed and 51 PWs taken. They were members of the Bicycle Rcn Bn of the 79th VG Div. 1st Bn losses were 2 killed and 17 wounded. 1st Bn remained in town while the 3d Bn moved on up and took DAHL. The 1st Bn was to move to DAHL and relieve the 3d, the 3d to move on and take NOCHER with the 2d Bn moving up to GOESDORF. The 1st Bn moved out from GOESDORF at 1000. A Co met fire from the high ground southeast of DAHL. A Co drove the enemy off the high ground and set up positions where they had driven the enemy off. B Co set up on the north and east of the town, C took the south and east portion. Severe resistance was met and the Bn was ordered to remain in the vicinity. Meanwhile the 3d Bn had attempted to move out at 1630; however, they met heavy MG fire and so they also remained in the town. At 0245 on 7 Jan a 5-minute enemy artillery preparation was received. A short time later another barrage of about 10-minutes durations was received. The outposts around the town received small arms fire and enemy infantry attacked from the northeast and northwest. The Bn fired flares from their 60mm mortars and the resulting illumination enabled the Bn TPs to knock out two of the five supporting tanks. The enemy continued the attack for approximately 2 hours before being driven off by the combined artillery and small arms fire. Action ceases approximately 0545. No enemy act-

activity was observed throughout the remainder of the day.

On the 8 Jan the enemy fired very heavy artillery preparation of about 45 minutes duration lasting from 0430 to 0515. The enemy infantry attacked from three directions, northeast, northwest and southwest, supported by 8 tanks and three assault guns. There were approximately 400 infantry (PW's statement) elements of De Fuehrer Brig (1st and 2d Bn). 60mm mortars again fired flares. Bn TPs and tanks knocked out six of the enemy tanks along the northern approaches to DAHL. 1st Bn losses were one TP and one tank retriever. The attack was again broke up by combined artillery and small arms fire, and enemy activity for the next period, 8 Jan to 25 Jan, was limited to patrol activity and intermittent artillery fire.

On 25 Jan the Bn moved to MOISTROSS, east of DIEKIRCH, where they relieved the 3d Bn, 8th Infantry, 4th Division.