

UNIT: 3rd Bn 319 Inf

PERIOD: 4 Feb 1945 - 28 Feb 1945.

ACTION: Crossing of the Sauer River.

SOURCE: Capt Robert J. Bee, Jr, Exec Officer, 3rd Bn.

PLACE & DATE OF INTERVIEW: 3rd Bn Cp, ALTSCHEID, GERMANY, 2 Mar 1945.

INTERVIEWER: Lt R. J. Cochran.

MAP: TRIER (Sheet #22)
Scale 1/50,000

The 3rd Bn moved from a rest area just outside of LUXEMBOURG CITY to positions vicinity NOESDORF (). On the 4th Feb the Bn relieved units of the 10th Armd Div around KLEINRIESDORF (9342).

K company took up positions on the high ground (928-44). L company went into the houses (938435) and I company took up defensive positions along the high ground (938423).

The order was received during the day of the 7th Feb to cross the Sauer River. The 1st Bn would cross just north of WALLENDORF (96-43) and the 2nd Bn would cross just east of HOESDORF (938435). The crossing would be made on boats and bridges were to be built once the initial troops got across. H hour was to be 0300 8th Feb.

After dark on the 7th Feb the 3rd Bn started putting the assault boats in position for the 1st and 2nd Bns. I company was to carry the boats for the 1st Bn and K company would carry the 2nd Bn's boats.

White tape was put on the back of the helmets so the men would have no trouble distinguishing each other in the dark. This worked very well.

However in the confusion of carrying the boats down the steep, slippery banks, some noise was made; boats scrapping against trees and men slipping and falling. The Germans heard the men coming and dropped heavy artillery and mortar fire on them. The Bn suffered about 35 casualties putting the assault boats into position.

About 2200 8th Feb the 3rd Bn was ordered to cross the river at the same point that the 1st Bn crossed (958429). With I company leading the Bn started down the road running from KLEINSRIESDORF into WALLEN-DORF. Fifty caliber MG fire from units of the 318th opened up from somewhere on the right flank at German positions just across the river. The tracers from this fire lit up the sky exposing the 3rd Bn in bold relief against the skyline. The enemy laid down extremely heavy artillery and nebelwefer fire. I company especially was very badly hit. The Bn then withdrew to an assembly area in the vicinity of KLEINRIESDORF.

About 1400 9th Feb with I company again leading the Bn attempted a daylight crossing. Smoke was laid down in an attempt to screen the movement and one platoon of I company started to infiltrate across the river. The first assault boat, containing 8 men got a direct hit by artillery causing all eight to become casualties. The Bn again withdrew to the assembly area.

On the 10th of Feb the Bn remained in the assembly area. The enemy threw in several rounds of very heavy artillery. The Bn officers figure it was about 280 mm. This caused 7 casualties, six EM and one officer.

In the meantime the 1st and 2nd Bns were pushing ahead and 2200 11th Feb had pushed ~~sufficiently far into the~~ the enemy back from any observation points on the river. At 2200 the Bn again left KLEINRIES-DORF and marched up the road toward WALLENDORF, cutting left around the hill to the site of the 1st Bn crossing. The order of march was L, K, I, one platoon HMG went with L company and one with I company. The 81 mm mortar platoon and the CP group followed I company. Ten minutes before the Bn was to cross, the Bn commander, Lt Col

crossed the river. The 1st company was across the river at 2215 and the other companies followed at 15 minute intervals.

A bridge had been built halfway across the river and the Bn took advantage of the bridge then waded the rest of the way across in water about three feet deep.

After crossing the river the Bn went into position along the trail running just along the base of the cliff across the river. The men dug in and remained in this position order ~~MA~~ L, K, I, throughout the following day.

At 0400 12 Feb with L company still leading the Bn turned south then north and attacked the high ground (95-445). In the first 500 yards 9 pillboxes were taken. The men used ~~the~~ combined bazooka and MG fire to keep the slits closed then placed pole and pack charges. Most of these pillboxes were nothing more than bunkers with the enemy defending from trenches nearby. Out of these first 9 pillboxes L company commanded by 1st LT. DAVID KEISHBAUM took about 60 prisoners. About 1700 three pillboxes at the top of the hill still remained. One ^{TANK} platoon consisting of 3 tanks from the 702 tank Bn and 2 tank destroyers from company C 811 TD Bn were attached to L company.

Mounting his men on tanks, 1st Lt David R. Keishbaum commanding company L drove straight for the remaining pillboxes taking them with small losses. The men would ride up until they were practically on top of the bunkers, then jump off and place pole charges.

The company officers state that the tanks were an excellent morale factor.

The Bn stayed in position on this hill until 2300 13 Feb. At that time company K passed through L company with the mission of siezing and holding the next high ground (847456). They encountered heavy artillery

and some small arms fire but by 0730 14 Feb occupied the S and W of the hill. I company passed through L company at 0630 and joined K on the south slope of the hill. I company took about 23 and K company 40 prisoners. The Bn suffered heavy casualties, however, about 15 killed and 30 wounded.

The NW slope of the hill was held by a small group of fanatical Germans. This group included the CP of the 916 VG and occupied 3 bunkers. They were capable of throwing a terrific amount of small arms fire on anybody coming over the brow of the hill and their artillery observers were calling down heavy artillery fire. They had an especially large number of bazookas and faust^{ph}er^{one}s making it impossible for the tanks and TD's to give close in support.

About 0900 hours the Germans tried a small scale counterattack which was repulsed with light casualties.

On the 15th Feb one platoon from L company attempted to flank the enemy position by going around through the small woods on the E slope of the hill. This patrol ran into a mine field, consisting of S mines. Artillery also registered in. The platoon withdrew taking about 5 prisoners. They suffered 5 casualties.

At 0630 on the 16 Feb K company with one tank and one TD attacked the enemy position. They got to within about 50 yards and could see that they had killed about 17 of the enemy. They had captured 7 prisoners up until this time. Artillery and mortar fire was heavy as well as small arms fire.

The tank commander became a casualty at this time and his tank withdrew. The TD noticing the tank moving back, withdrew also. This broke up the attack and greatly lowered the morale of the men. At 0830 L company withdrew to the old position. One platoon of HMG was

with K. Total casualties for this attack were about 15 killed and 28 wounded.

On the night of the 16th the 3rd Bn was relieved by the 2nd Bn and returned to MOESTROFF (92-42) in Regt reserve.

The Bn stayed in MOESTROFF until 17th Feb orders were received to relieve the 2nd Bn. At 1830 the Bn moved by truck to WALLENDORF. From there I company moved by foot to AMMERDINGEN (937444). L company moved to the S crest of the hill (947456) into positions formally occupied by the 2nd Bn. K company moved to the right of L company. During the relief the enemy threw in intermittent artillery fire causing 3 wounded in the 3rd Bn.

The Bn remained in position all day of the 18th Feb. Two men from M company were killed by activated AT mines. Capt Bee stated that the enemy used mines extensively especially in woods and in formerly occupied communication trenches.

At 1630 on the 19 Feb the 53rd Armd Inf relieved the 3rd Bn. The Bn moved back to WALLENDORF where it remained in tactical reserve until 0415 20th Feb. At 0415 the Bn moved from WALLENDORF and occupied positions on the high ground ~~###~~ ^{#369} two miles NW of KEWINIG (964467). K company went on the north edge of the hill, I company stayed in the center and L company occupied the south portion. The Bn encountered moderate artillery and ineffective small arms fire. At 0900 L company pulled back into the valley south of hill 369 and started up the road to HUTTIGEN (968-49). About 300 yards south of HUTTIGEN L company ran into direct fire from 3 tanks causing 15 casualties. (5 killed and 10 wounded). They took 14 prisoners. L company received word that a Bn of the 318th Inf was in the vicinity so as a result had to be particularly careful of any target fired upon. The company estab

lished a road block consisting of one squad (964473) and the remainder of the men moved back to their former positions.

On the 21st Feb L company moved up to the highest point of hill #369 overlooking LAHL (962403). The company then moved into LAHL against light resistance consisting mostly of fire from 2 tanks which later backed down the road leading to BIERENDORF (962512). L company took 20 prisoners. K company then passed thru LAHL and moved down the road to HUTTEGEN which they found to be vacated with the exception of two Germans who immediately surrendered.

On the 22nd Feb companies I & K advanced against BIERENDORF. Company I passed thru BIERENDORF against no resistance. The two companies continued on to attack the crossroads (963524). They encountered heavy small arms fire and direct fire from 2 tanks. At 1900 the companies reached their objective and found the bridge just east of the crossroad intact. About 7 prisoners were taken. Casualties included 6 killed and 10 wounded.

At 0100 23 Feb CCB of the 4th Armd Div passed through the Bn. The companies remained in position along the road with L company in GEICHLINGEN (946513) until 1145 25 Feb when the Bn marched seven miles NE to WIEDINGEN (027578). They encountered no resistance.

At 1800 on the 25th Feb the Bn marched $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles NE to ALTSCHIED (037587) against no resistance. At 1900 one platoon of I company moved one mile east toward HAMM (057584) with the mission of reconnoitering to find if the bridges in HAMM were intact and if so to seize and hold.

Upon reaching the high ground just west and overlooking HAMM the platoon came under heavy MG and rifle fire. The bridges were destroyed but passable to foot troops so the platoon dug in on the high ground and conveyed this information back.

One platoon of L company moved to ECHTERSHAUSER (055-59) on the same mission, found the bridge totally destroyed and moved back. They encountered no resistance.

At 1000 on the 26th Feb the 3rd Bn left ALTSCHEID with the mission of attacking HAMM. The orders were changed enroute and the Bn moved back to ALTSCHEID where they remained until March 1945.

Although battle casualties throughout Feb were heavy non-battle casualties were extremely light until the last week in Feb. At that time about 30 men were evacuated for colds.

Casualties from 4 Feb until 18 Feb - River crossing and establishing bridgehead:

	Killed	Wounded	Missing
I	9	57	
K	8	27	2
L	5	12	1
M	2	7	
Total	<u>24</u>	<u>103</u>	<u>3</u>

Bn casualties from 18 Feb - 28 Feb:

Killed	Wounded	Missing
5	13	0

Non-battle casualties (33)

93
47

916 V.G.
ENEMY STRONG POINT
AND CP 916 Volk Gren.

← 12 FEB - 12 PILLBOXES
OVERCOME HERE BY
L COMPANY AND TANKS.

KLEINREISDORF
319 ROUTE OF MARCH DIRECTED

00
37

SHEET #22 TRIER
1/50,000