

INTERVIEW NUMBER _____

Unit: 1st Battalion, 320th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division.

Action: 8 November 1944 to 17 January 1945.

Source: Interview with Lieutenant Colonel William Walton, Battalion Commander,
and Major Malcolm Kulmas, then commanding officer of Company A.

Interviewer: Capt Jacob Goldman.

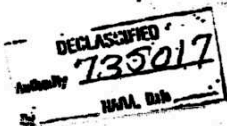
Place and Date of Interview: Battalion CP at Munster, Germany, on 22 May 1945.

Maps: Series 4040, Sheets: 106, 121, 122, 137 and 152. Series 4471, Sheets:
XXV-13 and 14; XXVII-12 and 13; XXVI-12, 13, 14 and 15; XXXIII-13; XXIV-14.
Journals:

After Action Reports.

Comments:

Persons interviewed expressed difficulty in remembering events
because of the lapse of time. Reference was made to the after action reports
to refresh their recollections and as a guide.



1st Battalion 320th Regiment

Interview with Lieutenant Colonel William Walton, Battalion CO,
Major Malcolm Kulmas, then CO of Company A,
at the CP in Munster, Germany, on 22 May 1945. ~~Major Malcolm Kulmas~~
TO

PERIOD 7 JANUARY, 17 JANUARY

The period between 7 to 10 January was spent ~~in~~ fighting in the woods in the vicinity of 570533. The direction of the attack was southeast. The entire battalion was committed. Enemy resistance was very stubborn with the enemy using infiltration tactics. Supply and evacuation were very difficult; most of it was by hand-carry^{ed}. The only vehicle that could be used was a "weasel". Litter had to be mounted on skis in order to evacuate the wounded. There were several cases of frostbite. Generally speaking, however, the men withstood the rigors of extremely cold weather very well. During the night of 10 January the battalion was withdrawn to a reserve position in the vicinity of 563546 preparatory to an attack^{THE} next morning.

On the morning of 11 January, we attacked with the 3d Battalion, 134th^{Infantry}, on our left along a road running northeast from Luttrebeis. Prior to H-hour a heavy smoke screen was prepared by the 4.2 mortars, the 81mm mortars and the artillery. Several casualties were suffered because the 4.2's failed to lift on time. The attack progressed very well and after stiff fighting in very heavy, wooded terrain the battalion reached its objective by the middle of the afternoon. Control was very difficult due to the fact that there was a shortage of aerial photographs, Only one ~~was~~ available to each battalion. In order to overcome this handicap we reproduced the photo for each company by drawing in the outlines of



the woods, and these improvized maps proved very valuable in helping the companies locate themselves on the ground. During the night a large combat patrol, led by an officer, was sent out with the mission of seizing the high ground at 620538, ~~and~~ ^{they were} ~~if~~ they were successful in gaining their objective, ^{to} remain in place until the rest of the battalion could move ~~to~~ that location. The patrol was frustrated from completing its mission by heavy enemy fire encountered just a few hundred yards away from their starting point.

On 12 January we resumed the attack, with the 3d Battalion, 134th Infantry, on our left. The attack was successful, the objective being beached by mid-afternoon.

At this time the battalion reverted to control of its own regiment and was ordered to assemble in Bastogne where it closed after a foot and meter march at approximately 2000. This was the first night in about 10 days that the men of the battalion were able to spend the night in houses and that they had an opportunity to get warm.

At approximately 1300, 13 January, the battalion was moved from its reserve position to a forward ^{assembly} ~~assembly~~ area about 2 miles north of Bastogne where we were ordered to be prepared to attack on an hour's notice. The attack never took place because of the failure of other units ~~in~~ ^{reaching} their objective. As a result, the men had to spend another night out of doors in extremely cold weather.

On the morning of 14 January we attacked ~~on~~ the left of the regimental sector, with 101st Airborne on our left, with the mission of cleaning out several small clumps of woods in that area.

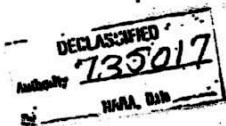


During this period we received very heavy artillery and mortar fire and probably the heaviest nebelwerfer fire that we had yet encountered. The battalion completed its mission by dark, tied in with the 101st Airborne on our left and prepared to attack towards Oubourcy the following morning. During this day's action two companies of the battalion assisted the 3d Battalion, their ~~att~~ ⁱⁿack on a clump of woods to the east, which was a known enemy strong point. The attack was preceded by an air strike. Using direct fire from our tanks and TD's, we reached the woods with little opposition and found several knocked out enemy tanks and SP guns as well as some enemy dead and wounded. It was apparent, however, that the enemy had withdrawn from this particular woods, prior to the attack, leaving only a few stragglers in that vicinity. Despite the heavy bombardment, ~~one~~ one German soldier crawled out from his fox hole uninjured. The woods in which this soldier was hiding, had been reduced to what resembled a bunch of candles sticking out of a cake.

On the morning of 15 January, we attacked the town of Oubourcy. There was no artillery preparation, because we wanted to surprise the enemy. From information brought back to us by our patrols the previous night, we knew they were strongly entrenched in and around the town and that several enemy towed AT guns were present. For this reason, the tank company, which consisted of only 8 tanks was ordered to remain in its present position until the rifle companies reached the outskirts of town. In order to get all the troops across a very open and flat piece of ground between



the line of departure and the town of Oupbourcy, we attacked with three companies abreast, prior to daylight, with Company C ~~was~~ on the left, Company A in the center and Company B on the right. Each company had a section of heavy machine guns attached. The mortars were in position to deliver fire on call. ^Due to confusion resulting from awakening the men and forming for the attack in the darkness, we were about 15 minutes late in crossing the line of departure, with the result that the troops were caught in early light, ~~several~~ several hundred yards short of the town. As a result, the enemy began to shell us very heavily and took us under withering machine gun and rifle fire. Company A, however, had made much better progress because of the fact that they had dropped all equipment except their firearms and rifles before leaving the ^{assembly} ~~assembly~~ area. Due to this sound thinking on the part of the CO of Company A, his company was able to travel much faster in the deep snow and had reached the first few buildings on the outskirts of town capturing an AT gun on the outskirts of town. The advance was so rapid and so suprising, ^{TO THE ENEMY} that the gun was ~~captured~~ ^{captured} loaded and its crew picked up while they were moving from the town to the gun position. Meanwhile, Companies B & C, still pinned down in the open terrain, ^{were} ~~was~~ ordered by me to infiltrate into the town the best way they could, while Company A continued to press the attack on the town in an effort to complete ^{THE BATTALION} ~~our~~ mission. The tanks, which had been left near the line of departure, were brought forward to the outskirts of the town at high speed after daylight and they greatly assisted in the capture of the town. The coordination with tanks and the infantry during this fight was the best that we had had thus far, and it would have been impossible to accomplish our mission



without the aid of the direct fire which the tanks gave us.

In the ensuing fire fight it was disclosed that the town was held by an entire German battalion and was also the site of the battalion CP. Because of its strategic location the enemy had used it as a strongpoint. By this time we picked up quite a number of PW's. Since we were unable to evacuate our casualties through normal channels because of direct fire from our left flank, these PW's were used as litter bearers, and helped us very much in

evacuating the casualties, several of whom were seriously wounded, including the company commanders of both ~~A and C~~ Companies. ^{B and C.} The town was captured by mid-afternoon. In the taking of the town, Company A had borne the brunt of the attack. It suffered two casualties, 1 killed and 1 wounded. Both ~~B & C~~ Companies ^{B and C} suffered heavier casualties, due to the fact that they were pinned down on open ground by small arms fire and then subjected to the heavy shelling described above. The entire enemy battalion, including the battalion commander and staff, were killed or captured with exception of a few men of their heavy weapons company who were in position on the far side of the town and were observed retreating in the woods to the east by a rifleman who ^{DIRECTED} ~~placed~~ artillery fire on them. During the night we sent patrols to the outskirts of Michamps preparatory to an attack the next day.

The diary of the enemy battalion commander captured at Oubeurey described his fear of our surprise artillery fire. He also expressed the fact that his supply problem was very difficult and that his supply Sgt who was apparently some miles to the rear could not leave any of his equipment unguarded, because it would be stolen



by SS troops. As it later turned out, the battalion commander was one of our emergency litter bearers as were other members of his staff. I questioned the battalion commander that evening in the CP after his job of carrying litters was finished, and ^{it} was apparent that he believed the ~~story~~ ^{story} that Americans would kill all PW's. This fact was very apparent when he failed to answer my questions and I said to the guard in charge, "Shoot him on back to regt". When I said "shoot" he evidently understood a little English, his eyes grew big and he started trembling. ~~He~~ ^{He} was taken on back to regiment, ~~where they attempted~~ where they attempted to gain more information from him.

At 1145, 16 January, we jumped off from the present positions to the town of Michamps. An artillery preparation preceded the attack. The ^{2d} Battalion ~~(2d)~~ was on our left. By mid-afternoon the entire town was in our hands. We would have captured the town earlier, but an air strike intended for the town of Bourcy caused us to be subjected to several direct bomb hits while we were on the outskirts of Michamps. This action caused approximately a two hour delay in our capture of the town. However, no casualties were suffered by the misdirected bombs, although it did cause our troops to be wary about future air support.

We continued the attack through the woods to the east but met heavy small arms and artillery fire. Because of approaching darkness, we tied in with the 2d Battalion on our left and dug in for the night.

On the morning of 17 January, we resumed the attack in the face of enemy small arms, mortar, artillery and direct tank fire and gained positions dominating the Bourch-Longvilly Road. No



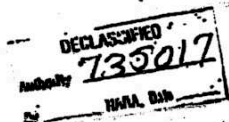
sooner had we gained ^{the} ~~these~~ positions, ^{when} ~~when~~ we were alerted for relief by the 134th Infantry. During this action a great deal of confusion was caused, because the unit on our right had reported that they held positions in advance of their actual location on the ground. These faulty reports which can be attributed to the lack of accurate maps and aerial photographs had been a handicap in all previous operations and had been the cause of our suffering unnecessary casualties.

During the fighting of the past two days, our supply and evacuation routes were not only under constant enemy artillery and mortar fire, but the roads and trails were impassable because of the heavy snow. Again we had to resort to hand carry. Extreme difficulty was experienced in evacuating casualties, since the enemy would fire on our medical peeps even though they displayed the red ^{cross} ~~cross~~ flag. During the attack on Oubourcy, the aid station, when ordered to displace forward, had to crawl in the snow over a distance of several hundred yards in order to reach their next location. Their equipment was carried on their backs.

The high ^h light of this three-day action was the splendid coordination between tanks of the 6th Armored Division and our infantry. The tanks and infantry moved forward together, and we attribute our success in this action to this fact alone.

^{TO}
PERIOD 5 JANUARY, 6 JANUARY

In the early afternoon of 5 January the battalion was relieved from attachment to the 137th Infantry and attached to the 134th Infantry. I reported immediately to the CO of the 134th Infantry and received the assignment of helping to clear the supply routes of his 1st Battalion. After a meter and feet march to an ^{assembly} ~~assembly~~ area in the vicinity of 563547, Company B was committed ^t to accomplish



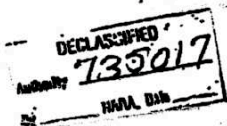
this mission. Due to early darkness the company commander had little or no time to make^a reconnaissance of the new area. That night, regiment ordered this battalion to move southeast toward Lutrebois, make a 90 degree left turn and attack southeast at daylight the morning of 6 January. No time was had for an opportunity to reconnoiter this ground. In order to facilitate^{te} our movement toward the town of Lutrebois, guides were furnished from the 134th Infantry who were to take us to a particular section of woods from which we could launch our attack. The guides took us to the wrong place with the result that we were unable to attack until midday. This incorrect action on the part of the guides from a strange unit resulted in very much confusion^{and} was entirely responsible for the delay in the attack.

By early afternoon one platoon of Company C had moved across the open, flat terrain under heavy automatic and rifle fire to the edge of the woods at 567535. After dark the entire company had moved up and was later followed by the remainder of the battalion.

^{To}
PERIOD 7 NOVEMBER 21 NOVEMBER

On 7 November the 1st Battalion was in the town of Gremercy in regimental reserve. The battalion here received the order for the attack the following day, which provided that the battalion was to remain in reserve and begin the move to its reserve position in the forest of Gremercy at 0300, 8 November.

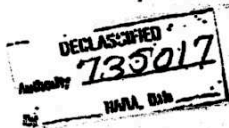
At about 1000, 8 November, the battalion moved to a forward reserve area in the vicinity of 2605 and at about 1730 was ordered to attack between the 2d Battalion on the right and the 3d Battalion which was at the time engaged in cleaning out of the town of Fresnes (05-27). The attack started at 2000 hours with 3



Company ^C on the right and ~~B~~ Company ^B on the left. The initial mission was to secure a railroad station just outside of Fresnes where approximately a platoon of enemy had set up machine guns to sweep the right flank of the town of Fresnes. Companies C & B secured their objective and remained in that position until the following morning.

Company A moved from the assembly area to the town of Fresnes at 0600, 9 November, assisted the 3d Battalion ⁱⁿ cleaning out the town and took several PW's out of the farm buildings, in which the 3d Battalion had spent the previous night. In one instance, the farm building, in which the CO of Company A issued the attack order to his platoon leader, was found to contain 7 German soldiers about 1/2 hour after the order was issued. The attack was to continue into the southwest position of Chateau Salins. Companies C & B continued the attack in the same formation as used the previous night, but were held up about 400 yards short of the forest by enemy rifle fire and ~~the~~ very heavy enemy mortar concentrations. Company A was committed at approximately 1230 hours and was able to clear the enemy from the edges of the forest of ^C Chateau Salins by attacking across ^{the} front of Companies B & C under cover of the woods. After the enemy had been cleared from the edge of the forest, Companies B & C continued their advance and were able to penetrate the forest to the vicinity of 069287.

The attack continued on 10 November. Company ^{1st} C & B moved forward with the mission of taking Mesnival (0730). Approximately one company of enemy supported by approximately 5 enemy tanks were held in the farm, and the two assault companies were unable to gain much ground. Extremely heavy artillery fire was placed on the



farm during the entire day. At one time during the day enemy tanks were able to penetrate our lines and destroy one of our TD's in position with the reserve company. During the night, a small enemy force was active behind our lines and overran Company B's CP, killing the company commander.

At 0630, 11 November, the 1st Platoon of Company A passed through Company B and cleared the Mesnival farm of all enemy with little opposition. The battalion commander then moved his CP to the farm and issued the order for the continuation of the attack. The attack proceeded at about 1330, with the mission of completely clearing the western portion of the Forest de Chateau Salins of enemy. The battalion advanced in column of companies, Company A leading, and Companies B and C following in that order. No opposition was met until the lead Company reached the vicinity of 088317. At that point a platoon from Company A attempted to cross an open clearing in the forest and encountered heavy machine gun and rifle grenade fire. Some members of the platoon who had penetrated farthest were captured. It was beginning to get dark. The battalion stopped, reorganized its line and remained there for the night.

At about 0800 the morning of 12 November the battalion continued its attack, still in a column of Companies in the order of Company A, B, and C respectively and reached the northern edge of the Forest de Chateau Salins without contacting the enemy, after which it continued the clearing of the eastern edge of the forest. During the entire attack of the Forest de Chateau Salins the problems of supply and communication were very difficult. There were few roads through the forest and old fire breaks had to be

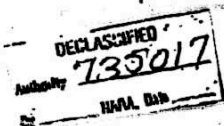


used for vehicular traffic. The forest was very dense, and we had difficulty with by-passed groups of enemy who made travel in our rear hazardous. At one time the battalion surgeon, Captain Rowell, while trying to bring a medical peep forward, was pinned down by machine gun fire several hundred yards behind our lines. He fell down pretending to be dead. A German walked over and kicked him and then left. The night of 9 November was spent on the north edge of the Forest de Chateau Salins.

Before this offensive began we had received orders that all infantry troops were to leave their over^{shoes in} shoes in rear areas, ~~pile~~ However, this battalion, being in regimental reserve, kept their over~~x~~ shoes, because of the extremely muddy conditions within their immediate area. When the battalion was committed, the men continued to wear their overshoes despite the order of higher headquarters. The casualties due to frostbite was, as a result, very low.

On 13 November the battalion moved to Chateau Brehain (1134) where it remained for three days while the regiment was in division reserve. On 17 November the battalion moved from Chateau Brehain to an ^{assembly} area in Merhange (20-37). The order was issued at Merhange for continuation of the attack at 0800 the following morning, through the sector of the 134th Infantry which held positions along the main railroad running northwest to southeast to the east of Merhange.

On 18 November the 1st Battalion attacked in the left half of the ^{320th Infantry} ~~320th~~ sector with the main road between Merhange and Sarreguemines as the left boundary of the battalion, as well as the regiment. Companies C & B were assault companies with Company



C on the left. The attack went forward smoothly, meeting only sporadic fire from 88mm guns. As the forward companies reached the vicinity 230398, extremely heavy artillery and mortar fire temporarily stopped the advance. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel J. T. Walker, was wounded and the executive officer, Major ^{William} Walton, assumed command of the battalion. The enemy held the very high ground in the vicinity of Berig Vintrange and his excellent observation of our rates of advance. Thus, the battalion commander ordered that all units of the battalion should move to the village of Vintrange (24-41) during the hours of darkness and continue the attack from that location the following morning.

At 0800, 19 November, Companies A & C resumed the attack from Vintrange, but were held up almost ~~during~~ the entire day, by heavy machine gun fire from Hill 265, just south of Bertring. During the night the battalion commander ordered Company B to move forward during darkness so as to by-pass hill 265 and occupy the town of Linstreff 27-41 by daylight. Company A was to remain in its present position and in early daylight take Hill 265, and then rejoin the remainder of the battalion at Bertring. The attack proceeded successfully and by daylight the next day, ~~the~~ 20 November the town of Linstreff belonged to us. There was no opposition in the town, but Company B received heavy enemy artillery on its left flank.

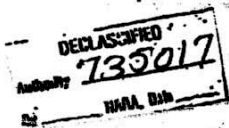
The battalion attacked from Linstreff at about 1200 on 20 November, with the mission of taking and securing the town of Erstreff (308420). During the day, Company B cleared the town, and Company C cleared the woods just northwest of the town. Enemy artillery fire fell both in the town and woods. Some enemy



small arms fire was encountered in the woods. On the morning of 21 November the attack began with Companies B & A in the attacking echelon. All the woods east of Erstroff were cleared, and Company B captured Maison Rouge Farm. The battalion remained in these positions through the night of 22 November. During 20 & 21 November we had encountered extensive German mine fields and roads could be used until they had been thoroughly cleared by the engineers. Our own A & P platoon was kept busy sweeping our communication routes and repairing roads ^{so} that they could be used for supply and evacuation. We were also seriously hampered by mud which made most of our roads almost impassable and necessitated long carrying parties for supplies and evacuation.

On the morning of ~~the~~ 23 November Companies A & B resumed the attack with the mission of taking the town of Petit Tenquin 36-43. Both of the attacking companies were held up at approximately 345435 by artillery, mortar, automatic and small arms fire coming from the town. We ^{man} ~~threw~~ heavy supporting fires into the town, and ^{the} two leading companies finally moved into the town by 0100, 24 November. The Germans were just moving out, and our lead companies captured one of their vehicles, completely loaded, which had not yet pulled out of the town.

By 1500 ~~the~~ 24 November, the battalion had finally been able to move all its elements to the town of Petit Tenquin. This move had been made extremely difficult, since the many bridges in the area had been blown, and we had to wait each time for engineers to complete the bridge. In addition, it was necessary to use our maintenance truck and its winch to move vehicles over some difficult spots in the roads.



The battalion changed its direction of attack, and at approximately 1800, Company B moved southwest from Petit Tenquin to take the village of Petit Rohrbach. The objective was reached without opposition, but it was necessary for the attacking company to wade several hundred yards through waist deep water covering the fields, which resulted from the dams in the area being blown by the retreating enemy.

The next morning, 25 November, Companies C & A joined Company B at Petit Rohrbach and prepared to attack the towns of Uberkinger (3942) and Kappelkinger (3941). There was a large flooded area between these two towns and Petit Rohrbach, and it was necessary for some men to work in water over their heads to construct a foot bridge by which the attacking companies might cross. Company A entered the town of Uberkinger just before the enemy, who were approaching it from the other side. A meeting engagement took place in which Company A destroyed by bazooka fire one panzer tank, one fully loaded half-track, one German command car and one American jeep which had previously been captured by the enemy and used by a German officer. About 25 PW's, including two officers, were taken, and about the same number of enemy soldiers killed. During this entire action we suffered no casualties. Kappelkinger was taken later without incident.

In bringing supplies to our companies at Kappelkinger and Uberkinger, it was necessary for our vehicles to make a run of several miles through the 26th Division sector, since all the bridges in our area had been blown.

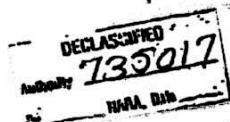
Later in the day Company B was moved east to the town of Hazembourg (4441) and Company C to Wentzville (4142). The battalion

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was relieved in these positions by elements of the 26th Division, and moved into a division ^{assembly} ~~assembly~~ area in the vicinity ^{of} Vahl where we remained until 2 December.

On 2 December, the 1st Battalion moved from its assembly area to a new assembly area at Insming (37-40). The regiment attacked on 4 December. The 1st Battalion was in reserve. Early in this attack, the 1st Battalion moved from its assembly area in Insming to an assembly area ⁱⁿ Hillsprich (39-46) where it was committed at about 1230 hours to clear and secure the towns of Didering ⁽⁴³⁻⁴⁶⁾ (43-46) Bettring and Ballering (44-47). Here again, it was necessary ^{bridges} to cross many flooded areas and streams over which all ~~bridges~~ had been blown. In moving up for this attack, German artillery was very heavy, and at one point registered several accurate hits in the center of our battalion column, causing many casualties. Company A ~~and~~ secured the towns of Didering and B ettring before darkness. After these towns had been occupied by Companies B & C, Company A moved out and seized the town of Ba llering, without opposition, just before midnight. It then placed a road block on a main highway running through the town of Ballering, which it was believed might be used by enemy troops seeking to withdraw their forces from the north. At about 0200 on 5 December a column of enemy armor attempted to pass through this town on its way to Sarralbe (48-44). One half-track of this column was destroyed by bazooka fire from the Company A roadblock and another half-track disabled by an AT mine. The remainder of the enemy armor withdrew after firing a few rounds into the town.

During the same day, 5 December, the battalion CP moved to Ballering while ^{A and B} ~~B & A~~ Companies continued the attack through the



forest of Sarralbe. By darkness the attacking companies had reached the vicinity of 480-497. The battalion CP moved to a farm house in a forest clearing and issued orders there for a night attack to take the town of Willerwald (48-97). Company A attacked south at about 0200, 6 December, and occupied the town of Willerwald without opposition, finding that elements of the 35th Division reconnaissance had been in the town since 1500 the previous day.

During this action supply wrecks were non-existent. All battalion vehicles moved across muddy fields, and our battalion maintenance crews were kept busy all night extricating our transportation from mud holes. We again found extensive mine fields and, no road could be used until after it had been thoroughly swept for mines.

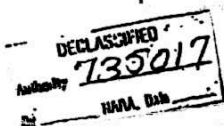
During the morning of 6 December we were ordered by Division ^{patrol} to send out and seize a bridge across the Sarre River in the vicinity of Herbitzheim (52-46), a distance of about 2 miles in front of our front lines. A patrol was sent out from Company C, and soon returned with the information that the bridge had been blown and that no enemy had been contacted in that area. Later that day, Company A & continued the attack through the forest north of Herbitzheim, completely cleared it of the enemy and reached the west bank of the Sarre River. The battalion remained there during the entire day of 7 December, reconnoitering for crossing sites along the Sarre River. ^{IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE BATTALION CROSS THE RIVER} in the vicinity of Dieding (551515) at 0500, 8 December. Company A was to cross at a blown railroad bridge without assault boats. Company C was to cross the river just south of the town, and Company was to cross to the west of town. Enemy extensive ground works



covered all approaches to the town and controlled the river and its west bank in all directions. The crossing was made on time. The enemy garrison had not expected it, and most of the ^{ENEMY} troops were in the basements of houses instead of in their trenches. As a result, we were able to secure a foot-hold on the west bank of the Sarre River. Company C was given the task of cleaning out the town of Dieding. There were several hours of very heavy ^{and} strong fighting and many casualties were suffered. During this fighting a forward aid station moved into the town but was unable to evacuate casualties across the river for several hours because of the extremely fire at the town, the crossing site.

Meanwhile, Company B by-passed the town, moved about 400 yards west of it, with the mission of taking the high ground overlooking the bridge site. During its advance, the enemy counterattacked from the high ground with tanks and half-tracks, and ^{the} Company B Commander, Captain Charles F. Gilford, instructed his company to withdraw to the railroad cut while he personally remained several hundred yards in advance of them to direct artillery against the approaching enemy. From the cut the company opened with all of its fire power, and with the aid of artillery fire and other supporting weapons, successfully repulsed the counterattack.

On 9 December Companies B and C moved from the high ground around Dieding to the town of Wilsviller (58-54). There had still been no bridge completed in the 320th sector, and it was necessary to cross the Sarre with our heavier equipment at Sarralbe in the 26th Division sector. Our anti-tank guns, dispatched over this route toward our forward positions, were turned back by a 26th Division officer just a few thousand yards short of their objective with the

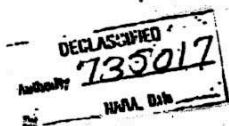


information that 35th Division trucks could not use 26th Division bridges. This matter was called to the attention of the regimental commander who communicated with the 26th Division Commander, and our troops were again dispatched and reached our front line in the early hours of the following morning.

On 10 December, the battalion CP moved to Wifsviller while Companies A & C cleared the woods just north west of Wifsviller, and assaulted two groups of farm buildings on the high ground overlooking the Blies River, the border of Germany. Extremely heavy artillery fire had been placed on this area by the enemy. The area surrounding these farms were heavily booby trapped by the enemy, but our artillery preparation which preceded the assault exploded most of them before our troops crossed the ground.

On 11 December Companies B & C attempted to reach the south bank of the Blies River, but small groups of enemy were still present on the south bank and together ^{with} the enemy on the high ground across the river impeded our reconnaissances for crossing sites.

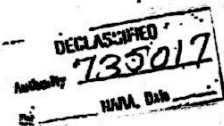
On 12 December the 1st two men from the Division crossed the Blies into Germany. They were S/Sgt Alvin C. Hammens and S/Sgt James W. Johnson, both of Company B. Further ^{reconnaissances} ~~reconnaissances~~ were made for crossing sites, and engineer units were contacted to furnish assault boats for the crossing. On 13 December assault boats were carried to the south bank of the river and left there ^{where} ~~where~~ they were in plain view of the enemy. It had been thought that the enemy would look for and expect a crossing at the site where the assault boats were located, and that a crossing at another point and by another method would take them by surprise.



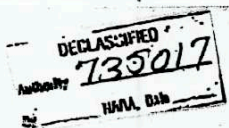
This assumption was correct. On 14 December Company^{ies} B & C by-passed the enemy holding the high ground north of the river, crossed the river into Germany by using a foot bridge some distance to the west of the assault^{Bears}, and were able to secure a firm foothold. This footbridge later ^{proved} ~~proved~~ to be one of the only crossing points of the river for several days and was used by other elements including the 134th Infantry.

Once across the Blies, the 1st Battalion was instructed to take and secure that part of the town of Bliesbruck (5957) which lay north of the river. The town was cleared by Company A on 17 December after heavy fighting. It was then possible to erect a pontoon bridge across the Blies at that point.

Up until this time all supplies to our front line troops ~~was~~ ^{were} ~~made~~ ^{hand} carrying exclusively. The regimental S-4 had sent us a weasel to be used to carry supplies across the river. We were instructed that the weasel was guaranteed to float, but contrary to instructions the weasel ended up at the bottom of the Blies River. The battalion continued the attack north from Bliesbruck, that same day toward the town of Reinheim (595600). The 1st Battalion was the only battalion ^{to} of the regiment ^{to} cross the Blies River, since the river at this point ran north and south, and the ^{had} remainder of our regiment was to our west. By approximately 0200, 18 December, Company^A had penetrated Reinheim, capturing 3 houses at the edge thereof. Fighting continued until just before daylight when the enemy withdrew from the town. At one point during this fighting the company commander of Company A, Captain Norman C. Carey, had ^a ~~to~~ hand ~~to~~ hand struggle with a German SS Sgt whom he met in the room next to his Company CP. The German surrendered as a PW.



On 19 December the 1st Battalion, in Reinheim as regimental reserve, was instructed to occupy a position at Lehauf farm (60-61) with one company, to protect the left flank of the regiment. This farm was believed to be clear, since one company of the ^{3d} Battalion had previously occupied it. However, it was found that the farm had since been developed by the enemy into a strong point. As a result, a two day assault was necessary before we were able to retake it. The farm was finally taken on 20 December by a force consisting of the entire battalion supported by a platoon of tanks and a platoon of TD's. A large mine, setting in from the farm, presented a difficult problem. This mine was occupied by several thousand civilians, inhabitants of the vicinity, with their livestock ~~and~~ ^{other} their furniture and supplies. Some German soldiers, in addition to civilians, would infiltrate into our main lines during the night and attempt to return with information for the enemy forces. The route to the farm from the battalion CP was open to enemy observation from the mouth of the mine, and in order to carry supplies during daylight, it was necessary to cover this open space by smoke shells from our mortar platoon. At approximately 1600 21 December, the battalion was relieved by elements of the 87th Division, and it moved by foot to the town of Wilsviller, where trucks transported it to an assembly area at Hirbach. The battalion reached Hirbach on 23 December and moved to a new assembly area in the city of Metz where it remained until 26 December. [¶] During this period 8 November ^b to 21 December, the battalion suffered fewer casualties than any other battalion in the regiment, despite the fact that it was committed in action during almost the entire period and fought against ~~in many cases~~ ^{heavy opposition,} extremely ~~difficult supply routes.~~



The entire period was characterized by extremely difficult supply routes. Roads were heavily mined and mud and terrain also served to impede our progress.