



INTERVIEW NUMBER _____

Unit: 2d Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division.

Action: 9 November to 18 December 1944.

Source: Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Charles Roecker,
Battalion Commander at the time of the action.

Interviewer: Capt Jacob Goldman.

Place and Date of Interview: 3d Battalion CP at Vellern, Germany, on 27 May
1945.

Maps: Series 4471, Sheets: XXXV-13 and 14; XXXVII-12 and 13; XXXVI-12, 13
14 and 15; XXXIII-13; XXXIV-14.

Journals: None.

Comments: The person interviewed expressed difficulty in remembering events.
The after action reports were used as a guide and to refresh his recollection.

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2d Battalion 134th Regiment

Interview with Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Charles Roecker,
Commanding Officer of 2d Battalion, 134th Regiment, CP Vellern,
Germany on 27 May 1945.

At 1300, 9 November, the 2d Battalion, 134th Infantry, jumped
off as part of the general offensive, with the initial objective,
the ridge at 0827, 1000 yards away. It was a frontal assault by
Company H on the right, Company G on the left and Company E in
reserve. A section of heavy machine guns were attached to both
Companies F & G. The attack was opposed by mined and beebie trappe
fields, ^{withering} small arms and automatic fire and artillery fire. Accord-
ing to G-2 reports, an estimated 3 companies of infantry held the
line in front of the battalion. The attack was successful and the
objective seized by 1800. The battalion reorganized, consolidated
its positions and went into ^A defensive position for the night.

On the following day, 10 November, at 1300, the battalion
attacked in column of companies, generally northeast in its zone,
along the eastern edge of Forêt De Château Salins. It was a
regimental attack with the 2d Battalion leading, followed by the 3d
battalion. The 1st Battalion was in reserve. The ^{2d} battalion reach
the vicinity of 085278 where it met determined resistance by
enemy troops which were ^{AR} apparently retreating from the attack of the
320th Infantry which was ^{moving} due east in the Forest De Château Salins.
Our regiment was coming up behind them. The enemy was sighted
digging in on a ridge approximately 700 yards ^{across} of open terrain ^{from} of
our leading company.

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An attack was launched ^{at} approximately 1330 by Company G after a 15 minute artillery preparation, and it was ^{supported by} in ~~the~~ advance by the combined fires of all the machine guns available in the battalion. Using assault fire, Company G ^{and} overran the objective, secured it with the loss of one man. Approximately 40 Germans were captured, another 15 wounded and the remainder withdrew. Company E then moved up on the left of Company G and Company ^{F AND} went into reserve. The 3d Battalion, coming up on our rear, moved up on line with us on our left. These positions were consolidated, and because of the direct fire from the enemy tanks to the front, the battalion remained in that defensive position for the night.

On 11 November the Battalion attacked ^{northeast} in its zone along the edge of the forest of Gremercy with two companies abreast, Company G on the right, Company E on the left and F in reserve. ^{After} Clearing the town of Gerbecourt without resistance, the battalion continued to advance until approximately 1500, when it was stopped by strongly entrenched enemy ^{positions} in the vicinity of 108305.

~~When~~ At 1630 the ^{Battalion} 2d and the 3d Battalion on its left launched a coordinated frontal attack on this position. The advance was made with Company G on the right, Company E in the center, ^{and} Company K on the left. The objective was seized with little difficulty and the battalions went into defensive position for the night.

This night will illustrate the unsatisfactory policy of attacking when there is only an hour to an hour and a half of daylight left, where the attack could easily have been held up until the following morning. The resulting consequences were that neither battalion managed to get into a solid defensive position and

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were not resupplied until approximately 0200 the following morning, putting them in constant danger of not being prepared to meet a counterattack should it have come in the early hours of the night. It also proved the difficulty of supplying in darkness. During that night the supplies, including ammunition, water, and food, were hand-carried approximately 1000 yards, thus depriving a part of the fighting unit of the rest which is normally necessary in order to continue the attack the following day.

On 12 November at approximately 0900 the battalion attacked along the edge of the Forêt de Château Salins northeast toward Bellange (1534). The first intermediate objective was the vicinity of 113318, and this point was reached without opposition by approximately 1130. The enemy was fighting a delaying action, holding a pre-arranged position during daylight and pulling out during the night to a new previously prepared position.

Company G was then dispatched with the mission of seizing the town of Vannecourt (13-32). No resistance was encountered in this town, although there was evidence that the enemy had left very recently. For example, several German ambulances which drove into the town expecting to find their aid station there, surrendered.

A combat platoon was immediately dispatched from Vannecourt to Dalhain (1433) to determine whether it was occupied by the enemy. The town was found unoccupied, and the 2d Battalion moved in route column from Vannecourt to Dalhain.

A combat platoon was then dispatched to the town of Bellange to determine the degree of enemy resistance there. The remainder of the battalion moved out in column of Companies, with Company E leading, followed by Companies F and G, respectively advancing behind the

Combat platoon at an interval of approximately 600 yards. A small enemy rear guard opened fire from Bellange as the forward elements approached the town, but it was immediately pushed back; ^{AND} ~~the~~ the battalion moved into Bellange, the final objective, and set up a defensive position for the night, approximately 600 yards ahead of all other units in the regiment. During this operation Captain George ^C Greech Commanding Company G, was wounded.

The holding of Bellange was difficult, not only because of the counterattack policy of the Germans, but because it was located in a valley, and the high ground on the far side was still under enemy control and observation. Therefore, from the time the battalion entered the town to the time it left the town the following day, it was under severe mortar and artillery fire, and a great many casualties were sustained.

The following morning, 13 December, the battalion attacked with the initial mission of seizing the town of Achain (1635). The battalion moved out with two companies abreast, ~~of~~ Company F on the right, Company G on the left and Company E in reserve. Withering small arms ^{fire} overtook the battalion as it crossed over the open ground. Company F received heavy casualties, and lost every officer in the Company and was very seriously disorganized. Company E was committed on the left of G at that time. By 2200 one third of the town was in our hands, and 150 PW's were captured. House to house fighting continued throughout the night and by 0900, ~~in~~ 14 December, the town of ACHAIN was cleared of all enemy. Determined enemy resistance in the battle for Achain cost the battalion 106 men.

At 1000, 14 November, the battalion attacked with the initial ^{mission} of seizing the town of Rode. The town was entered without opposition.

Numerous casualties ^{were} sustained by the battalion, ^{from} However, by heavy mortar and artillery fire, including time bursts, both before and after it entered the town. The battalion remained in Rede, that day and was ordered to attack the following morning, 15 November, with the mission of seizing the town of Merhange (20-36). Company A of the 1st Battalion was attached to the 2d Battalion ^{for this} ~~of this~~ operation.

At 0900, 15 November, the battalion jumped ^{off} from the vicinity of 185363 after an intense artillery preparation fired on Merhange ^{and} ~~move~~ across approximately 700 yards open terrain. Encountering no opposition, it moved through the town of Merhange toward the eastern edge thereof where it ran into light opposition consisting mainly of automatic fire. The resisting enemy was forced by the battalion beyond the railroad track east of Merhange, which was the Division objective, and the battalion ^{went} ~~went~~ into a defensive position.

During ~~the~~ period 8 to 15 November, 85 men were evacuated as non-battle casualties. The large number ^{were} ~~which~~ due to the continual exposure to adverse weather conditions which caused numerous cases of trench foot and respiratory ailments. During this operation the battalion was not equipped with over shoes, although it rained and was muddy continually. The men withstood some of the hardest exposure in fighting that could be experienced.

From 15 November to 21 November, inclusive, the battalion remained in the town of Merhange with the regiment as Division reserve and on the 22nd November was attached as part of the regiment, to the 6th ~~Armored~~ Division and moved to a new assembly area in the vicinity of Linstroff (2741).

On 24 November, the 2d Battalion moved to a new assembly area ^{Division} reserve to the vicinity of Hillsprich (40-46).

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On 26 November the 2d Battalion was committed to the southeast of Hills^Prich, with the mission of seizing the towns of Castviller, (41-46), Hirbach, (43-46) and Hising (43-44). Company E was to seize Hirbach and Castviller, Company G was to seize Hising. The towns were taken without ^{opposition} ~~expectation~~ and the positions were consolidated. Bridges were constructed and plans were made for the crossing of the Maderbach River, but the move was called off because of the fact that the regiment was to be relieved ^{by} elements of the 6th Armored Division. Relief was effected on 28 November, and the 2d Battalion, moving as part of the 134th Infantry, closed into an assembly area in the vicinity of Lixing (4662) where the battalion started to train for future operations.

During the period 1 to 3 December, the 2d Battalion moved to an assembly area at St Jean Rehrbach (3847) where it reconnoitered for crossing sites on the flood swollen Maderbach River. ^{At} On 0500, 4 December, ^{the} 2d Battalion attacked ^{across} ~~across~~ the Maderbach River with 2 companies abreast to seize the high ground east of Puttelange (4150). ^{was made} The crossing, in complete darkness in order to effect complete surprise. The battalion encountered light opposition and used the policy of moving very fast, to the objective. ^{They waded the Maderbach through water} ~~The Maderbach~~ up to their necks ^{by-passed} ~~was waded~~ and everything ^{cleared the area in the rear of} ~~was by-passed~~ in order to seize the objective. The reserve company ~~cleaning up~~ the assault companies. ~~near~~ The Battalion objective was seized by 0600, numerous PW's were captured asleep in their fox holes. Only one man was lost in this operation. This attack illustrates the advantage of well made plans in ^{surprising} the enemy and lessening the ^{casualty} ~~casualties~~ rate of the attacking force.

The 2d Battalion continued the attack at approximately 1300

that same day, seizing ^{EO} the town of Guebenhouse (42-53) and cleared the woods to the northeast thereof against scattered small arms fire.

On 5 December, the Battalion jumped off with the mission of sweeping the Furstwald woods. It moved ⁽⁴⁴⁻⁵³⁾ by route march with no enemy opposition to the Bois de Welferding (4955). The battalion was then ordered to seize Sarreguemines. ⁽⁵¹⁻⁵⁷⁾ It ~~attacked~~ ^{attacked} at 1500 with Company G on the right, Company F on the left ^{and} Company E in Reserve. Company G, entering the town from the right, met moderate resistance consisting of scattered arms fire and firmly ^{entrenched} entrenched itself in the outskirts of town. An 88mm gun, intact, and its crew were captured. Company F, entering the town on the left of Company G, encountered heavy 20 mm ack ack fire and was badly disorganized. However, it was able to ^{gain a} foot-hold in the outskirts of town. Company E was then moved into the town, so that ^{now} brought the 2d Battalion ^{was} firmly entrenched in ~~the edge~~ ^{THE EDGE} of Sarreguemines.

The following morning, 0900 6 December, the battalion ^{jumped} moved off, cleared the town of Sarreguemines to the Sarre River with little ^{then} opposition and set up a defensive position. Reconnaissances were made for possible crossing sites.

At 0530, 8 December, 2d Battalion crossed the Saare River behind 1st Battalion on ^{an old railroad bridge} and moved in on the left of the Regimental sector pushing forward on the far side of the Sarre River to approximately 533563, where it went into a defensive position on the left of the regimental sector.

In the afternoon, following an enormous enemy mortar and artillery barrage, ^{eleven} between enemy tanks pulled up directly in front of 2d Battalion. It appeared to be an enemy counterattack but was

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~~a~~ barrage of eleven

positions

stopped by ~~an~~ FA battalion ~~barrage~~ on the German artillery, and tank
 The tanks, however, remained in the vicinity and fired direct fire
 at the 2d Battalion positions throughout 8th ~~19th~~ December. The 2d
 Battalion was in a precarious ~~by~~ position during this period, as the
 enemy occupied that part of Sarreguemines, east of the Sarre River.
 Severe artillery, ~~and~~ small arms ~~fire~~ ^{and} mortar fire was ^{constantly} received from
 the east, north and west upon the battalions' positions ^{constantly}
 and numerous casualties were suffered. The CO of Company E,
 Captain Byron ~~Blackburn~~ ^{Blackburn} was killed and Captain Vaughn, commanding
 Company F, severely wounded. The strength of each company was ^{reduced} to
 approximately 30 men. Company F had 22 men and 2 officers left. The
 great number of ^{casualties} ~~casualties~~ suffered ^{was} ~~were~~ due to the battalion being
 caught in the woods underneath the ^{heavy} enemy barrages of artillery ~~and~~
 mortar fire.

The attack was continued by the regiment on the afternoon
 of 9 December and ~~the~~ 2d Battalion went into regimental reserve, and
 moved to an assembly area in the vicinity of 545565 where they
 remained for the night. On the evening of the 10th December the
 battalion ~~moved~~ still ⁱⁿ ~~as~~ regimental reserve, ^{moved} into the town of
 Blies-Ebersing (57-58). On 13 December the 2d Battalion crossed the
 Blies River against very little enemy opposition and seized Hill 30
 (575-596), and on the morning of 14 December found themselves entrenched
 on top of the hill with enemy between them and the friendly troops.
 The enemy, hastily discovering their situation, moved out of their
 positions, while heavy ^{enemy} artillery fell on the 2d Battalion positions.
 It is estimated that 600 rounds fell in 30 minutes upon the hill
 where the 2d Battalion was entrenched. The battalion suffered 44
 casualties and ~~were~~ ^{was} reduced to a fighting force of approximately 80

men and ^{four} officers. The battalion continued to probe toward the front, until 18 December, when it was relieved by the 1st Battalion and moved into an assembly area in the vicinity of Habkirchen as regimental reserve.

Clothing worn and equipment used by the 2d Battalion during this operation was not the type that should be used in winter fighting. The clothes were insufficient, and the overshoes were not in anyway liked by the men, since they impeded movement. Evacuation during this period was very satisfactory. However, during the time of the crossing of the Sarre River and the period the battalion was under heavy barrage on the far side of the Sarre River, every company aid man in the battalion was lost, resulting in a severe drain on the battalion aid station.