

INTERVIEW NUMBER _____

Unit: 3d Battalion, 134th Infantry Regiment, 35th Infantry Division.

Action: Period 9 November 1944 to 23 January 1945.

Source: Interview with Capt James A. Huston, Battalion S-3.

Interviewer: Capt Jacob Goldman.

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

Maps Series 4040, Sheets: 106, 121, 122, 137 and 152. Series 4471, Sheets: XXXV-13 and 14; XXXVII-12 and 13; XXXVI-12, 13, 14 and 15; XXXIII-13; XXXIV-14. Journals:

After Action Report.

Comments: The battalion commander during the period had returned to the states and was not available.

The person interviewed expressed difficulty in remembering the events because of the lapse of time. Reference was made to the after action report for purposes of refreshing his recollection and as a guide.

3d Battalion 134th Regiment

Interview with Captain James A. Huston , Battalion S-3 at
the battalion CP, Vellern, Germany on 27 May 1945.

9 NOVEMBER TO 17 DECEMBER

Prior to the jump off on 9 November the 3d battalion had been holding a defensive sector with Company K in Chambrey, Company I in Bois de Chambrey and Company L in reserve in Rettoncourt. The attack jumped off at noon 9 November with Company L moving out from Chambrey to the northeast with the mission of seizing the Hill in the vicinity of 0723. Initially, Company I supported the movement of Company L by fire from its position in Bois de Chambrey. But as Company L approached its initial objective, Company I moved east from Chambrey and Bois de Chambrey firing supporting fire. The attack met no organized resistance. The only casualties suffered were those resulting from the movement through anti-personnel mine fields. The battalion continued on toward the northeast through the Bois de Charmevaf until it reached the forward slope of the Hill 310. (0824). Here the three companies occupied positions overlooking the village of Coutures and tied in for all around security for the night. ~~10 November.~~

The following morning, 10 November, the 3d battalion followed the 2d battalion in column and advanced through the high ground of the Forest de Chateau Salins. The battalion suffered some casualties from artillery fire in the woods. In the late afternoon the battalion was assigned the mission of occupying the high ground

to the left of the 2d battalion in the vicinity of 0930. There was light opposition as the assault companies moved through the woods to secure the objective and when they finally reached the objective they were brought under some mortar fire.

On 11 November the two battalions continued the attack. The 2d battalion attacked ~~had~~ through the village of Gerbecourt. The 3d battalion continued the advance along the high ground to the left. In the early part of the day opposition was light. In the afternoon ~~the~~ enemy positions were encountered in the vicinity of 1030. The battalion attacked ^{THESE POSITIONS} with Company I on the right K ^{AND COMPANY} on the left, L in reserve. The enemy defended with tanks, small arms, mortar and artillery fire. New assaults were undertaken in coordination with the 2d battalion on our right. Company I pushed forward, driving the enemy before them. One platoon coming upon an enemy armored vehicle worked some men around to toss in some grenades. A violent explosion followed resulting in the injury of over half the platoon. By 1530 the assault companies had been able to drive the enemy from the positions to the immediate front and by 1600 were able to reorganize and make close contact.

Plans were being made for resupplying the companies on the positions then occupied. The supply problem always difficult enough in the wooded and rolling terrain was ~~always~~ made acute when undertaken during darkness.

Darkness was approaching when shortly after 1600, the order came to attack ~~for~~ the next hill. Approximately 30 minutes later Companies I & K jumped off. After a very short advance they again encountered stubborn enemy resistance. The advance of

Company K was stopped by machine gun fire from a farm house to its front. This obstacle was knocked out with a couple of well placed bazooka shots through the windows. The company commander of Company I was wounded, The executive officer took over and continued the attack, ~~and~~ As the company approached the objective darkness over took them. In spite of these difficulties Company I drove on to occupy the high ground which was its objective. Company K leading up on the ~~the~~ left experienced difficulty in contact with Company I. Some firing of signal shots as directed by radio was necessary before the two companies were able to tie in.

Meanwhile Company L, in reserve, had advanced some 500 yards. It was then decided to use it in carrying supplies to the forward positions. A supply point was established during the afternoon in the vicinity of the position occupied by the battalion OP, and rations, water, radio batteries, communication wire, dry socks, bed rolls and ammunition were brought to this position by 1/4 ton ^{Trucks} moving up over unimproved roads and muddy trails. From this position, ~~had~~ carrying for 1500 yards over rough terrain was necessary. The leading elements of Company L sent out to locate the forward companies had additional difficulties in contacting them. Once again signal shots and radio directions were necessary. A machine gun platoon of Company M was pressed into service to assist the carrying parties. Casualties had been fairly heavy for the assault platoons and supply and evacuation was not completed until 0400 the next morning.

In the morning of 12 November Company L passed through ^{Co's} I & K

to lead the attack. The 2d battalion was on our right. The enemy had withdrawn and evidences of heavy enemy casualties were all around the advancing troops. By mid morning Company L had reached the edge of the woods at 114316 and continued the advance across the open terrain to the Hill of Metz (125325). Companies K and I followed in column. The battalion reached the Hill by noon without ^{opposition,} finding evidence of recent enemy operations, of prepared defenses and of SP gun positions. Halting momentarily to reorganize and coordinate with the 2d battalion, which was moving from Vannecourt to Dalhaine, the battalion moved on to Cote de Bellange and in the late afternoon occupied the day's objective, northwest of Bellange. Company L occupied the hill at 143346 with a platoon outpost, established 300 yards to the north. Company K took up positions to the rear and on the knob to the west. Company I occupied positions to the right rear.

Almost immediately after these positions were reached, enemy direct fire opened up both on the positions occupied by the troops and on the town of Bellange and continued throughout the night.

On 13 November the Battalion was given the mission of seizing Rougement, a large hill dominating the entire area, and then continuing the attack to the northeast on the right of the highway. The situation was made difficult by a snowfall. The attack jumped off on time at 0800, after a highly effective 10 minute artillery preparation. The fire from the platoon of Company L occupying the outpost to the left of the main objective apparently led the enemy to believe that the attack was coming from that direction. As the leading elements of Company L were approaching the objective they were taken under extremely intense and accurate mortar fire.

Concealment was impossible for the troops moving across the open snow covered valley. The expertness of the enemy mortar barrages were shown by the perfect patterns left in the snow in our avenue of approach. Despite the mounting casualties, the advance continued and Company L quickly occupied the high ground.

The plan had called for the immediate continuation of the attack. However elements of the 4th Armored Division were moving up on our left along the highway and there was some question as to whether or not they planned to cross our front on a road running perpendicular to our line of advance toward Achain. The battalion was therefore ordered to hold its position until coordination with the armored units was completed. During the operation on the bare snow covered hill known officially as Rougement, but referred to by the soldiers later as "bleedy hill", the troops were brought under murderous small arms, artillery, mortar and tank fire. The Company Commander of Company L called his platoon leaders up forward to receive the order for continuing ^{THE ATTACK} to the next objective. Before he could finish an enemy shell burst ^{HAD} ~~making~~ everyone a casualty. ~~Refusing~~ Refusing to be evacuated, the company commander Captain Francis Greenleaf returned to his company to carry on with his executive officer. Meanwhile Company K came under small arms fire from its right and was experiencing great difficulty in moving up on the right of Company L.

The battalion commander went forward to contact the commander of the leading companies. He reached Captain Greenleaf and was going forward to make ^{A RECONNAISSANCE} ~~recon~~ from the positions of Company L when a shell from an enemy tank hit in the midst of the party. The

battalion commander, heavy weapons company commander, ~~the~~
artillery liaison officer and liaison ^{SERGEANT} sgt were casualties.

The radio operator was killed. The battalion commander Lieutenant
Colonel Warren C Weed was taken back to the aid station and
evacuated. Major Harlan B. Heffelfinger battalion executive
officer came up the hill to take over the command. The 137th
^{INFANTRY} coming up on ^{OUR} ~~the~~ left ~~of the battalion~~ now made contact with us.

We were unable to advance ^{to} Achain and received instructions
to continue ^{THE ATTACK} on the village of Rode. However these ^{ORDERS} were later modified
and in late afternoon the battalion advanced to commanding
ground northeast of Achain (165365) without difficulty, where it
took up positions for the night. ~~There were no casualties.~~

Once again difficulties of supply with hand carrying for long
distances presented themselves. The cold weather and snow had
brought with it a mounting toll of frostbite and trench foot.
Water-filled fox holes provided the only shelter. Hot chow
was out of the question but they ^{did} get hot coffee for
breakfast.

The next morning, 14 November the objective assigned to us
was the commanding ground called Lapotence which commanded the
approaches to the key city of Morhange. An enemy tank was
spotted on the high ground to the right of the objective and soon
began firing on our positions and those of the 2d battalion on ~~the~~
right in Achain. Our artillery liaison officer brought the fire
of an 8 inch gun on the tank. 40 rounds were fired with correct
being made as slight as 10 yards. Although no direct hits could
observed, there were several very near misses. The orders to move

on to the objective came in the afternoon. Through⁰ artillery and mortar preparations^{were} ~~was~~ fired and the smoke from artillery and mortar^{was} laid down to cover our advance. Company L with fixed bayonets moved across the valley, and on approaching the wooded area at the base of the objective opened up with marching fire. The advance never slowed. At the same time Companies K & I moved up on the left, directly up the crest of the bare hill and turned to the east. The objective was taken without opposition and the companies tied in defensively the following morning.

That night, plans were made for the attack on Merhange. The plan called for the 2d battalion to move out from Rede and occupy the low ridge at 185362. Then, after an artillery preparation the remaining two battalions were to advance into the city, with the main east west street the boundary between battalions. Deep snow was on the ground.

At 8 o'clock 15 November the 3d battalion moved approximately 400 yards to the east to occupy the high ground overlooking the eastern portion of Merhange. Here some casualties were suffered from 20mm fire. The 2d battalion moved out from Rede according to plan and was in position by approximately 0845. The artillery preparations were to begin^{at} 0900 with 15 minutes of smoke. ~~AX~~
^{Anti - Personnel} T.O.T. was to follow at 0915 and the preparation of ~~fire~~ ^{fire} to ~~last~~ continue until 0930. At 0900 word came that the smoke would not be fired, but that the TOT would be fired 0915. In good position to observe the results, the battalion waited to see the effect of its artillery. Promptly at 0915 the rear of the guns could be heard and the shells were on their way. Unfortunately however,

an error in calculations resulted in their hitting the very position occupied by the 3d battalion. Almost immediately the liaison officer was on his radio, and the battalion commander on the SCR 300 and the S-3 on the telephone, all crying for a cessation of the artillery. The fire was halted quickly and the battalions prepared to advance without artillery. Company K on the right moved into Merhange, with little opposition, made contact with the 2d battalion and continued the advance on the left of the main street. Company L on its left advanced along the high ground through the orchards and the buildings, after a few snipers had been eliminated. There was no further opposition during the 1500 yards through the main ^{portion} position of the city. At this time elements of the 4th Armored Division were again coming up on our left on the main highway immediately north of Merhange.

As soon as the eastern edge of the city was reached (209371) more sniper fire was encountered. Friendly civilians stated that there were enemy occupied positions along the railroad track to the east, and that enemy troops were observed leaving the city at 0930, the time when the artillery was to have been falling. The battalion suddenly came under ~~x~~ withering machine gun fire. The first thoughts were that a major counterattack was being launched. Officers had difficulty in keeping some of the leading ^{platoons in} position as apprehension was beginning to run through their minds. Shortly thereafter, the fire was recognized as being familiar American 30 Caliber. Immediately, ^{the} thoughts of the commanders turned to the friendly tanks that had been coming up on our left. Observation showed their suspicions to be correct. No communication was available to have the fire called off. Finally 1st Lt. Shields of the battalion

command group dashed in to a house came out with a white sheet and ran across the open ground toward the firing tanks. The commander of Company L contacted the tank company commander and found that the armor was to assemble around Bellevue which was also ~~Companies~~ L's final objective. The effective fire of the tanks was ^{turned} ~~used~~ upon the enemy with good results. The enemy occupying the positions quickly surrendered and Company L occupied its objective. Company K on the right moved out to occupy position along the railroad and in the vicinity of 215378. Company I remained in reserve ^{at} 208371.

The battalion now for the first time since the jump off on 9 November had shelter for the troops and time for reorganization and recuperation. Combat strength which had been reduced as much as 50 to 60 per cent was now increased with the arrival of reinforcements.

The regiment now reverted to Division reserve. On 20 November the battalion moved with the Regiment to Linstroff and on the 22d was attached to Task Force LaGrew of the 6th Armored Division. Early on the 23d, the battalion moved to Hellimer and later in the same day moved to ^A forward ~~assembly~~ ^{ASSEMBLY} position St Jean-Rehrbach. The battalion encountered some artillery fire during the march to this new ^{Assembly} ~~assembly~~ position.

On 24 November Company L attacked through the woods to the northeast of St Jean (395486) cleared the woods ^{and} established a bridgehead on the east side of a NAT ditch which ran across the entire front ^{and} ~~cutting~~ ^{cut} the main road at 400493.

A coordinated armor-infantry attack was planned for 25 November with Putzange as its objective. The plan called for Company

L to be teamed with a company of medium tanks on the left, Company K and a company of tanks on the right and Company I and a company of tanks in reserve, following Company K. The right ^{COMPANY} ~~was~~ to attack to the north to ~~contain~~ Diffembach. The tanks which were to move out in the lead initially, were to cross the AT ditch on the bridge and then deploy.

As soon as the attack jumped off, enemy heavy artillery ~~fire~~ opened up and ^{was} ~~soon~~ followed by direct tank fire. The AT ditch was so situated, that in order to cross the bridge, the tanks were forced to come under direct observation of enemy positions above Putelange. Although suffering losses, the tanks continued their advance and attempted to deploy. Mud however forced them to keep to the roads. Once in the mud they were easy prey for the enemy direct fire guns. At the same time mortar fire from Diffembach was covering the road and woods in the vicinity of 3949. Further from advance towards Putelange being impossible, the attack was turned to the right with the ^{MISSION} ~~objective~~ of taking Remering. The infantry of Company I on the right and Company K on the left both abreast ~~made~~ the change in direction, moved on through the armor and into the town of Remering, with slight ^{opposition} ~~opposition~~ and secured the town. Here they made contact with elements of the 1st battalion coming into Remering from the south west. Company L took up positions in the woods and the armored units pulled back to St Jeans for repair and resupply.

During the next two days, 26 & 27 November, the positions of the battalion were improved and reconnaissance ^{was} ~~made~~ ^{for} the swollen Maderbach River.

On 28 November the battalion was relieved by the 41st Armored Infantry Regiment. On completion of the relief the battalion reassembled in St. Jean Rehrbach and on 29 November moved by motor to Lelling as part of the Division in corps reserve. Here the battalion took up training with emphasis on attack of fortified positions.

On 2 December the battalion returned to vicinity of St. Jean Rehrbach and relieved elements of the 6th Armored Division in its zone. The battalion was in regimental reserve for the attack on Putelange and moved successively to Diffembach and Putelange.

On 5 December the 3d battalion followed the regimental advance through Ernestviller, Weustviller and Roth. From Roth the battalion moved out in column in the late afternoon to occupy Neufgrange.

During the night of 5-6 December, patrols were sent forward to the Sarre River. On finding Remelfing free of enemy, Company K was sent in to occupy the town.

During 6 and 7 November reconnaissances continued for crossing sites of the Sarre river. At the same time artillery observers were getting very effective results from observation posts in the ~~E~~ Company area at Remelfing. Enemy personnel, hardly more than 150 yards from our positions and on the other side of the river, could be observed throughout the day moving along trenches, bailing out water and attempting to rest. The battery commander of C Battery, 161 FAB, came forward personally to direct ^{the} fire. His success in bringing fire upon the enemy positions as well as ~~gaining~~ against enemy groups in movement was apparent throughout.

Initially the plan had been for the regiment to make the crossing of the river in the city of Sarreguemines with the 2d and 3d battalions

abrest. Unfavorable approaches, however, made this plan difficult. Reconnaissances revealed a partially destroyed railroad bridge across the river at 5224558. Company I moved up and occupied the woods on the high ground at 520550 overlooking the river on the 6th of December. On the night of 7 December the eve of the attack Lt Neuheff of Company I lead a patrol to the bridge site and personally crossed the bridge. On the basis of his information it was decided to cross the regiment in column of bns in the order of 1, 2, 3, on this bridge. The crossing of the river was to be completed prior to dawn. The battalion assembled in the area of Company I preparatory to ~~the~~ following the 2d battalion across the river with Company I in the lead. The 3d battalion was to move in column down the railroad track, make contact with 2d battalion and move across. One platoon of Company ^MK and the AT platoon were to be left in the vicinity of Remelfing to give supporting fire. After crossing the river, the 3d battalion was to swing to the right, roll up the enemy flank and capture Sarreinsming, where it was ^{intended} ~~extended~~ to set up a Bailey bridge.

The entire column succeeded in getting across the river without opposition. A company of tanks and a platoon of TD's were in direct support of the battalion from the high ground in the vicinity of 530542. Previously, the tank commander had been given a ^{SIR} 300 radio for communication with the infantry elements and a system of check points ^{HAD BEEN} ~~was~~ worked out whereby the battalion commander or company commander could immediately call for fire on key points. Lt. George N Kryder Commanding Company I, encountering little opposition, quickly led the advance to the approaches of Sarreinsming.

In the darkness ^{the} leading elements had been able to ~~continue~~ surprise ~~on~~ the enemy and reach the objective. After daylight ^{the company} ~~the~~ left flank was exposed to the commanding ground to the north. Now, however, the machine guns of the tanks opened up on this area ^{and} ~~laid~~ down a curtain of fire which secured this open flank. Under this protection Company I moved in to Sarreinsming and after a brisk fire fight captured 60 PW's and secured the town. Company K following closely between ^{the} 1st platoon of Company K and Company L was pinned down by small arms fire coming from the buildings at 528558. Guards returning with PW's from the defensive positions near the town in several instances picked up 3 or 4 times the original number ^{of PW's} from the trenches along the way.

The proximity of the 1st battalion made it impossible to ^{place} ~~place~~ effective artillery fire on the enemy holding up Company L and the last platoon of Company K, ^{which} ~~which~~ had been caught by ^{the} ~~an~~ enemy, ^{AFTER THEY} ~~had~~ finally become aware of the attack with the approach of daylight. While Company I consolidated its positions, Company L remained pinned down with very little opportunity for maneuver during the greater part of the day. In the late afternoon, they were able to clear out the buildings holding up their progress. These buildings had been cleared out repeatedly before only to be reoccupied and defended floor by floor. By evening Company L and ^{the} remainder of Company K were able to join the leading elements in setting up an all around defense in Sarreinsming. During the night the engineers constructed a large support raft and the companies were resupplied by this means.

On 9 December Companies K and L moved up to occupy Hill 271

(551552) in order to deny enemy observation on the bridge site. Patrols found the Grand Bois to be occupied. The bailey bridge meanwhile was completed.

On 10 December, the battalion continued its attack. Companies and K in column moved to the edge of Grand Bois while Company I mounted tanks at Sarreinsming and followed the highway north to the rifle range at 546561, where, one tank was disabled by a non-metallic mine. The enemy in the woods were cleared out and contact was established with the 1st battalion on the left. The attack continued to the northeast through the woods across the main highway to the high ground vicinity of 55576. Here Company L and Company K took up defensive positions for the night. Company I remained in reserve along the main highway. Enemy artillery fire continued throughout the day on our positions.

On 11 December in the face of heavy artillery and small arms fire, Company I, pushing through Companies L & K, moved into Blies Ebersing on the Blies River with little opposition. The other companies followed.

At approximately 2100 the Regimental S-2 informed us of civilian reports that the Blies River was fordable for foot troops at a point near 566589 because of a sand bar. The water was described as being about shoe top in depth. We were to dispatch a patrol immediately to determine the exact location and reconnoiter its suitability as a crossing site. Lt. Parris of Company L led the patrol through the almost impenetrable darkness to the site. At 2300 the battalion S-3 was called to the regimental CP for an order. The 1st battalion was to cross the river at Frauenberg in engineer assault boats and attack Habkirchen, Germany from the north while the 3d battalion crossed the river at ()

the ~~same site~~ and attacked Habkirchen from the southeast. No additional assault boats were ~~available~~^{available} and ^{the} 3d battalion was to cross by wading. Results of the Company L patrol had not yet been received. When the question was raised on an alternate plan in case the patrol found the river unfordable, it was agreed to furnish 8 engineer rubber reconnaissance boats. Engineer tape to mark the approaches and rope to secure the boats for use in shuttling were requested. Shortly after midnight Company L reported that the patrol had found the river unfordable. One man stepped in and found the water completely over his head. This information was related to regimental headquarters. The order to make the crossing and attack remained in force. We were to cross the battalion on 8 ~~rubber~~ rubber boats. ~~The~~ Company A of the 60th Engineer was to furnish two men to assist in watching the boats and were to deliver the boats as soon as possible to the 3d battalion CP in Sarreinsming. A plan was made for the A & P Platoon to inflate the boats, secure the ropes and furnish men to assist the shuttling. Company L was to lead the crossing, set up security on the opposite shore and furnish three men at each site on the opposite shore to pull boats across. These crews then would shove ^{off} Company K and Company I across in the darkness and so the assault on Habkirchen would be made. The regiment had been promised that 11 battalions of artillery would be available to form a ring of fire to protect our bridgehead. Request was made to have smoke on hand to screen the high ground opposite the crossing in case it became impossible to complete the crossing prior to daylight. This too, was said to be available.

At approximately 0300 12 December the engineers arrived with the boats and other equipment. Reconnaissances indicated that ^{the} bridges were out at 570565 and 559589x making it impossible to get vehicles closer than 600 yards from the river from either direction. It was decided that the best route for taking the boats down in the darkness would be by way of Neunkirch and Felpersviller. It was nearly 0330 when the S-2³ set out to lead the A & P platoon with the boats down to the crossing site. The battalion commander left shortly ^{there} after to contact the commander of the 1st battalion at Felpersviller in order to coordinate the attack.

The first obstacle was encountered at 540560 when the truck carrying the boats was unable to get ~~passed~~^{by} the tank destroyer which had been disabled by a mine at that point and remained there blocking the road. Turning around, the party returned to Sarreinsming to make their way with out benefit of prior reconnaissance on an alternate route. They moved out of Sarreinsming in a northeast direction toward Grand Bois and then down to the main Neunkirch highway, and finally northwest to the railroad track where they took the road into Felpersviller. They were still without benefit of reconnaissance or guides. The night was so dark/~~that~~^{it} was impossible to see the road. They made their way through the town of Felpersviller, found the road to the east and reached the location planned for detrucking at 556588. By the time the boats were unloaded it was approximately 0430 and the difficult task of inflating them and securing the ropes remained. Already the companies were forming at the crossing site nearly a thousand yards away. While the S-2 supervised the work in making the boats ready, the S-3 went down to contact the companies

and found them in formation ready to go^{up} awaiting the boats. He guided back parties who were to carry the boats down to the river. After the 8 boats were inflated the ropes which were to be used for towing were found to be tangled ~~together~~ and presented further difficulties.

Meanwhile as the hour approached 0530 the company commanders were becoming impatient/aware that it was going to become difficult to complete the crossing of the entire battalion with such meagre equipment before daylight caught them. The approach to the river was an open meadow. There was no cover or concealment other than the buildings at Blies Ebersing 400 yards away. On the opposite bank the enemy had the advantage of high hills from which observation and fire would command the entire area. The artillery was notified to be prepared to use smoke. It was 6 O'clock before the carrying parties were able to return over the long and difficult route with the 1st boats. Already traces of dawn could be seen in the east. It was recommended that the attack be postponed, but word was received that the 1st battalion, using assault boats, already had troops across ^{THE RIVER} below Habkirchen and that our attack must go on. The first boat was put into the water and almost immediately control was lost in the swift current. It was ~~impossible~~ impossible to paddle the light craft directly across the stream.

With the coming of daylight the company commander of company K moved his troops back to the edge of Blies Ebersing in order to give them cover until Company L had cleared. A call was put in for the artillery to lay down smoke on the high ground at 570552. One round burst in the area desired but not more than two

rounds followed and the information came back that no more smoke was available. Daylight and a bright, clear morning found Company L still in the open, completely exposed. Immediately, enemy machine guns and mortars opened up. The remaining boats which had been put into the water had also gone out of control. No one had been able to cross. There was nothing left for the company commander of Company L to do but to disperse his men and get them back into the cover of Blies Ebersing. Insufficient time for reconnaissance and preparation, insufficient equipment and insufficient support had made the effort futile. It might, however, have served as a diversion to permit elements of the 1st battalion to make their crossing in the assault boats and command a foothold in the town of Habkirchen. The troops remained in Blies Ebersing during that night, and the evening received instructions to assemble in reserve in Felpersviller. The column moved southeast out of Blies Ebersing to the railroad track. Guides from the battalion intelligence section met them at the crossing of the railroad and Felpersviller road and guided the companies to their respective areas in Felpersviller.

At 0200, 13 December, we were instructed that the 1st battalion was receiving a strong counterattack in Habkirchen, and that the 3d battalion was to move as soon as possible to Fraunberg prepared to cross the Blies River by foot bridge and attack to the north east of Habkirchen. The battalion commander and the S-3 went forward to Fraunberg to contact the CO of the 1st battalion. A forward assembly area was selected and members of the intelligence section of the Battalion guided our troops into this area. It was learned that Companies B & G had been able to get across and that much of Company B had been lost in the enemy counterattacks,

although the situation remained critical.

The plan called for the ~~1st~~ battalion to cross the river ^{pass} on the foot bridge to the north of Habkirchen, move to the east across Mandelbach Creek and seize the high ground at 5760. It was found however that the foot bridge had been damaged and had to be repaired before it could be used by foot troops. Time did not permit this. Engineer assault boats were brought and plans made to cross the battalion by boat. Company L would lead the crossing and come in on the left to assist Companies B & ^C Company I would follow and make the swing to the high ground, followed by Company K. By the time the troops and boats were in position the hour was growing late. ~~again~~ Company L moved to the crossing site and was able to make the crossing without loss. The Engineers had some difficulty in returning the boats but Company I, following, was able to get its leading elements across.

Soon to wild screams, the flash and boom of bazookas and the green tracers of machine gun ^{fire} gave ^{the} signal that the enemy was making another attack against one of the few buildings remaining to the battalion. Company I had two platoons across and cross fire from machine guns began to play on the crossing site. Dawn was approaching and further crossing was now impossible. The elements of Company I landing just as the Germans were making the counter attack were immediately drawn into battle and were unable to swing ~~to~~ the high ground. Company L and elements of Company I then occupied buildings adjacent to those of Company B and set up a defense.

Casualties were mounting. ^{The} Company commanders of Company I had been hit by machine gun fire. Evacuation of wounded was

was impossible. However late in the afternoon an informal truce was arranged under direction of ^{THE} commander of Company C during which both sides sent medical men out to collect their wounded.

During the night of 13 December the engineers were able to repair the foot bridge and Company K crossed to reinforce the troops defending Habkirchen. The two remaining platoons of Company I in Frauenberg were retained as a reserve and to furnish security to the flanks. The two platoons of Company I in Habkirchen were attached to Company L under Lt. Brigandi. All efforts to advance beyond the buildings north of Mandelbach Creek into the principal sections of Habkirchen were unsuccessful. Direct fire, artillery and machine guns ^{FIRE} continued against the buildings occupied by our troops. During the day of 14 December friendly tanks and TD's on hill 275 were able to fire with effect on positions in the town occupied by the enemy. ^{During the} ~~At~~ night of 14 December the Engineers continued their work on the Bailey bridge while Company K was brought back across the river to make a maneuver ~~for~~ the high ground at 5760 from the other direction. During darkness Company K, attached to the 2d Battalion, moved to the south east, ~~to~~ cross^{ed} the river in the vicinity of Bliesbruch, and moved up the high ground to the northwest. It was able to gain complete surprise, and in one instance, as they marched up in column through enemy territory, an enemy platoon not recognizing them fell in on the rear of the column to march up with it. On discovery of the error, a short skirmish ensued resulting in a batch of PW's for Company K. The bridge at Habkirchen was finished during the night. The tank commander and commanders of the leading companies went forward to make a reconnaissance,

and plans were effected, to continue the assault with the use of tanks the following morning.

When the leading tanks rolled across ~~at~~ dawn of 15 December the crisis had passed. The bridge across the Mandelbach Creek was found to be intact. Company L moved out across the stream and found that the enemy had withdrawn from the town. The remaining platoons of Company I ~~re~~joined the leading elements and the two companies moved forward to the southeast edge of Halbkirchen and awaited orders. Contact was made with Company K and the battalion CP followed up.

However, with little time for reorganization, the order came to continue the attack to the northeast. ^{The} Companies moved up the high ground ^{and} advanced through the woods at 574602 ^{THEY} ~~and~~ were taken under small arms fire in the woods. Companies I and K attacking abreast were able to reach the far edge of the woods, where they tied in for ~~the~~ the night.

On 16 December, the battalion, attacking with the 2d battalion on its right, was to move through the woods at 580610 swing to the east into the Bannholz woods and then, coordinating with 2d battalion was to move north through the Rheinheimerwald. The 137th Infantry was attacking the high ground on our left. The battalion moved out in a column of companies in the order of Companies I, K, and L and met no opposition, although tank fire was directed against the road southeast of Bebelnheim. 58-63. As the troops were passing through the woods at 580610 they were taken under withering machine gun fire and direct tank fire with violent tree bursts and were pinned down. We soon realized that once again the violent machine gun fire ^{and} ~~was~~ the familiar sound of American 30

caliber. Frantic calls went back to the battalion CP to get the fire stopped. The liaison officer was hit by machine fire. Casualties of all the companies were mounting especially from the tree bursts. Communication with the regimental CP was temporarily out. The S-2 in his vehicle raced to the left to contact ^{THE} 137th Infantry. It was soon discovered that the tank company in direct support of the 137th Infantry was firing out of its zone into our area. The liaison officer succeeded in getting the fire stopped and the battalion continued its advance.

~~As~~ The attack continued ~~the bitter battle~~ ^{of} in Habkirchen. ~~and~~ artillery fire and friendly tank fire had taken their toll. Company K moved out with less than 60 men and 3 officers. Company I had 30 men and 2 officers. Company L had 11 men and two officers. The objective remained the same. There was no decrease in zone.

As the battalion moved into the Bannholz woods, it made contact with the 2d battalion and swung to the north. Although meeting small arms resistance, it ran into what was probably the heaviest concentrations of artillery ^{fire} which it had ever encountered during the war. Accurate concentrations of battalion and battery strength were firing continuously into the woods. The discharge of the batteries could be heard very plainly. Casualties continued to mount. The acting commander of Company I was killed ^{AND} the battalion was becoming depleted.

On 17 December, the 3d battalion was relieved by the 1st battalion 137th Infantry. Intense artillery fire continued in the vicinity of the bridge at Habkirchen. The battalion returned to an ^{assembly} ~~easy~~ area in the vicinity of Felpersviller.

PERIOD JANUARY 18 -23

Note: (For the interview of this period the Houffalize map was not available.)

The 3d battalion relieved the 1st battalion and elements of the 44th AIB then in the woods approximately 5 kilometers south of Bourcy. ^{Note} ~~where~~ they held defensive positions, actively patrolling to the front.

On 21 January, the battalion moved out through the woods to the northeast. No enemy was encountered, but the advance was slowed by waist deep snows making it necessary to frequently relieve the leading men in each platoon. By 1300 the battalion had reached its objective at the far edge of the woods. The 2d battalion was on its left. A platoon of medium tanks and a platoon of light tanks which had been attached to the 3d battalion for the attack took up positions along the north edge of the woods where they could get ahead of the advancing troops if necessary.

Adequate supply routes were not available to the troops, as their position at the far edge of the woods was away from any

roads. Thus light tanks were pressed into service to carry supplies and cross the two miles of snow to the companies.

Snow plows were devised to clear the way for jeeps, but even so, the jeeps were only able to go part of the way. The only means of transportation available to the battalion other than the tanks was its weasel. This proved indispensable in carrying up supplies and ⁱⁿ evacuation.

On 22d January the battalion moved on tanks of the 16th Tank Battalion to ^{AN ASSEMBLY AREA} ~~assembly~~ in Hagchiville. On the 23d the 3d battalion as Task Force Wood, ^{ATTACHED TO} the 6th Armored Division, advanced approximately

6 kilometers to the northeast to occupy Basbellain. Enemy artillery and mortar fire covered the hill ~~over which the battalion moved~~ over which the battalion moved and during the night fired into the town. On the 25th the battalion was relieved by elements of the 17th Airborne Division and reassembled in Hachiville.

PERIOD 29 DECEMBER TO 4 JANUARY

On 28 December this battalion relieved the 1st battalion of the 318th Infantry in the vicinity of 555505, and received instructions to work in close cooperation with CCA of the 4th Armored Division. At this time the 4th Armored Division was attempting to secure the Arlon-Bastogne highway. General Earnest of CCA told the battalion commander that Lutrebois (56-53) was the key to the local situation and that we would have to take it. The battalion ^{made} plans to attack north through the woods and swing to the north east to take the town of Lutrebois. Elements of the armored infantry held positions in the vicinity of 553534.

On 29 December the battalion moved out in a column of companies with Company L leading, followed respectively by Companies I & K. They crossed ^{over} ~~through~~ the wooded Hill to the east of Lesange Chateau without opposition and by afternoon Company L had reached ^A position overlooking Lutrebois on the high ground at 561528. Company I and K were in position to the southeast.

The town of Lutrebois lay in a valley between the high ground occupied by Company L and the wooded Hill to the east, Hill 540 occupied by the enemy. The enemy strength in Lutrebois itself was ^{revealed} ~~not~~ known, but reconnaissance ~~revealed~~ that in order to reach the town it would be necessary for the troops to move from the woods and cross ^A snow covered slope under observation of the commanding ground

to the east. 4.2 chemical mortars were placed in direct support of the battalion for this attack so that effective smoke screen could cover the advance.

Under cover of this screen Company L began the advance into the town while Companies I and Company K, changing direction to the right, moved abreast to cross the valley to the south of Lutrebois and occupied the woods at 570530. Companies I and K made their crossing without opposition and took up their positions. Meanwhile Company L launched its attack and meeting small arms fire in Lutrebois made contact with the enemy. It became necessary to build-up the smoke screen to follow successive platoons to follow the leading men into the town. An enemy vehicle was wrecked by rifle fire as it came driving through the streets and several PW's were captured. As soon as the town was cleared, one platoon was sent to secure the high ground in the vicinity of Hill 540 to the northeast. This platoon moved on out promptly crossed open ground into the woods and successfully gained a foothold on this commanding ground. ~~When~~ Suddenly small arms fire started to stream in from all sides. The enemy permitted ~~the~~ ^{the} platoon to close in on its strongly held positions and was now attempting ~~to~~ its capture. With the help of artillery fire on the heights and ~~the~~ ^{its} own small arms fire, the platoon was able to extricate itself and set up a defense around the edge of the town, ~~itself~~.

On the following day, 30 December at 0300, an entire enemy regiment counterattacked. ~~The~~ ^A call came from Company K that they were receiving a counterattack from the right front. Soon Company I reported troops moving across their front. A few minutes later

A MESSAGE

came ~~the same~~ from Company L that Lutrebois was being attacked. One enemy element by-passed our troops to the northwest another to the southeast, ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~the~~ ^{third} started through the town itself. Before dawn our troops in Lutrebois reported that they were cut off. Remaining on the high ground overlooking the town at 561529 was the headquarters group of Company L and one platoon of heavy machine guns in direct support. ^{THE} Light machine guns at the northeast edge of the town were ~~putting~~ ^{sending} out streams of fire. Soon Company L reported that their headquarters and the machine gun positions were under enemy attack. Regimental headquarters was notified of the situation and word was received that Company E from the 2d battalion would move north through the woods at 5652 to counterattack in relief of Company L. However in the dark woods recognition was difficult and the company was unable to make an effective attack. The battalion AT guns in the vicinity of the heavy machine gun platoon had originally been man handled into position and it was now impossible to get them out. As a result they had to be abandoned. ^{THE} Heavy machine guns continued ^{to} fire until the enemy actually reached into the positions of the Company L headquarters group, and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy as they approached the open ground. It soon became impossible to hold any longer, ~~and~~ ^{and} the commander of Company L formed ~~up~~ the elements which remained and with a machine gun platoon withdrew to the west ~~and~~ following the highway south to a position opposite the battalion CP, ^{He then} set up a defensive perimeter in the Chateau at Lesange 55517.

Meanwhile Company K reported enemy tanks ~~were~~ approaching on the road from the right. The tanks moved along the road through

the woods and halted. The German staff car accompanying them pulled up and stopped. Its occupants dismounted. The riflemen of Company K opened fire, hitting most of the members of the party. The order was given to cease firing, however, since the enemy had not yet discovered their positions. The enemy tanks, within 50 yards of Company K, swung their guns around in the direction of the Company and after firing a few bursts from their machine guns, turned back to their original position and continued the advance.

By now Captain Campbell of Company K was directing artillery fire on these enemy tanks. The enemy tanks advanced along the road beyond Lutrebois, turned to the southwest and began to deploy. Captain Campbell counted 29 tanks as they went by his position at 572528. Some of them were later disabled by this artillery. In addition to the effective fire of the artillery including the 155mm ~~gun~~, a platoon of tank destroyers of the 654th TD battalion, in direct support of the battalion, and armored elements of 4th Armored Division in position in the vicinity of 553538 opened fire with deadly effect. As one column of enemy tanks approached the woods abandoned by the headquarters of Company L, its flank was exposed to the 4th Armored Division tanks and seven tanks were disabled. Artillery fire, mortar fire and rocket firing thunder bolts which had entered the fight, after a call two or three hours previously, accounted for a total of some 25 enemy tanks.

Enemy infantry elements, however, continued their advance to the southwest, through the woods, in effort to reach the Bastogne-Arlon highway. With the approach of the enemy infantry our CP defense was tightened. The A&P platoon, the returning elements

of Company L and machine gun platoon, the returning members of the AT platoon and stragglers were formed into an all around perimeter defense around the CP. Our battalion CP was sharing the Chateau with headquarters of the AIB of CCA of the 4th Armored Division. The local security was strengthened by the presence of some half-tracks in the vicinity. ~~Some~~ ^{the enemy} small arms began to crack around the CP. Some men standing at the windows were wounded. Enemy artillery continued to fall in the vicinity. 81mm mortars in position at 555513 were now being brought under enemy small arms fire. ^{Our} Artillery fire was directed on the woods just vacated by our own elements. The mortars shortened their range to 300 yards. 50 and 30 caliber machine guns began opening up to cover the woods. Men from the A & P platoon worked around to knock out the enemy machine gun which had been neutralizing our mortars. ~~AN ENEMY CAPTAIN WAS KILLED BY THE BACK YARD BY MACHINE GUNS~~ ^{AN ENEMY CAPTAIN WAS KILLED BY THE BACK YARD BY MACHINE GUNS} The enemy had reached within 400 yards of the vital Bastogne-Arlon highway. A captured map revealed their plan to call for one battalion to turn north and attack to the right of the highway toward Bastogne and two battalions to continue to the west and cut the Bastogne-Arlon Highway in the vicinity of 548520 and then swing to the north to attack abreast against Bastogne. However after a successful defense at the CP the enemy was able to make no further advance. That night Company I and Company K, now almost completely isolated, were withdrawn to positions in the vicinity of 564525. Company L was depleted to a strength of approximately 20 men.

On 31 December a coordinated attack was planned with the 2d battalion. However, when their Company F made the initial

attack in the morning and ran into withering machine gun fire and ~~the~~ order was given to hold and consolidate present positions.

An enemy pocket still remained between the left flank of Company I and the Armored Infantry to the north west. In the afternoon of 31 December all available artillery and mortar fire was brought to bear on the enemy positions and an effort made to reestablish contact between Company I and the Armored Infantry. The attempt was unsuccessful.

The 3d battalion was again ordered to attack and recapture Lutrebois. Company I and Company K moved out to the north about noon and made contact with the enemy pocket and after a brisk fire fight and the capture of some PW's were able to gain a foothold in the first buildings of the town.

On 1 January Company K overran an AT gun at the edge of the town and the companies were able to continue their attack through the town as far as the creek. Meanwhile the Armored Infantry of CCA made efforts to regain contact to the north and worked together with ^A task force from the 2d battalion to clean out the remaining enemy pocket. The woods ^{W.C.C.} was cleared and our AT platoon was soon able to recover its ^E weapons which were found still intact. There was evidence in the woods of how very effective our machine gun and artillery fire had been in the initial attack ^{IN} and the woods against the enemy.

The 2d battalion then moved across the valley to the south to the west edge of the woods previously occupied by Company I and K, and ^{Aided} ordered in clearing the town. A few men from Company L who had hidden when the town was taken by the Germans were released, but the major portion of the company had been captured.

Again an attack to the northeast to get into the wooded hill failed. Company K had gained a foothold, only to lose it when the enemy, dressed in American overcoats, counterattacked. The 3d battalion now held its position, while the 1st battalion of the 320th Infantry, attached to the regiment, attempted to seize this ground by an attack through the edge of the woods from the north, but was unsuccessful. The 1st battalion also had troops to the north, but there was no physical contact between the four battalions now involved.

Finally, the regimental commander decided to attack with three battalions from the northwest, leaving the 2d battalion with the mission of holding its present position and that of the 3d battalion. With 1st battalion, 320th Infantry on its right, the 3d battalion, 134th Infantry, attacked at 0700 27 January to the southeast from the woods at 566545. The attack was preceded by a perfect smoke screen in front of the woods, laid down to cover the advance across the open ground and 15 minute preparation of direct fire by supporting tank destroyers. The tank destroyers moved out with the infantry at 0700. The heavy fire power and the psychological effect of the approaching armor enabled the rifle companies to quickly advance into the woods. The enemy was quickly routed. The battalion moved to its objective along the trail at 574535. The 2d Battalion, 320th Infantry, attached to the 6th Armored Division, attacked on our left.

The attack on the following day, 3 January, called for another change in direction in which this battalion advanced between the two battalions of the 320th Infantry and attacked to the northeast. The attack advanced against light opposition until it reached the

vicinity of 600545. Here, on a broad, open plateau the troops came under heavy artillery and small arms fire. Light tanks attached to the 2d battalion of the 320th Infantry on our left cooperated with us very effectively in assisting the advance of this battalion. By rapidly shifting their positions and firing their machine guns and 37mm guns against the enemy positions, The tanks enabled our troops to advance to more favorable positions before being pinned down. Darkness fell and preparations were made to continue the attack to the northeast the next day. Movement in the woods was extremely difficult. Trails were covered with snow. Routes were difficult to plot on the map. Arrangements were made with supporting artillery for the use of signal flares by the attacking companies. By direct contact between the forward observer and the liaison plane the coordinates of the flares could be reported. A wire crew laying a 110 wire followed the reserve company. This step was as necessary for the making of a trail as for the communication which it gave. The companies moved out with Company K on the right, Company I on the left and Company L in reserve, and advanced through the woods without opposition. The first battalion of the 320th Infantry was relieved from its attachment to the regiment. The 2d battalion of the 320th Infantry turned to the northeast and held up in position while the 3d battalion continued its advance and in the late afternoon occupied the division objective at 520555. A supply route was opened up from the Bastogne highway and the battalion held this position until pinched out by the contact of the 6th Armored Division coming from the north and the 90th Infantry Division advancing from the southeast.