

Action of 1st Bn 317th Inf Regt, 7 Dec 44 - 31 Jan 45. Capt Emmett H. McCarty, Former CO A Co, now Bn CO; 1st Lt William J. Clark, Jr, Bn S-3. Interview at Ln Cl, MEDERWACH, LUXEMBOURG, 4 February 1945.

Interviewer: Capt D. G. Dayton.

MAP: 1/50,000.

The 1st Bn 317th came out of the line on 7 Dec and moved to ST AVOLD for a period of rehabilitation, training, and rest. The unit remained in ST AVOLD until 17 Dec, when it moved by motor to BISSERT, FRANCE (479383), into an assembly area. The Bn remained there until the 19th when orders were received to move north. The Bn crossed the IP at SARRE UNION at 1010 on the 19th and moved through LAIZ to GEMONDANGE, LUXEMBOURG (844221). The latter town was reached at 2230 on the 19th. On the 20th the Bn moved to GONDERANGE (927228) and began digging defensive positions to assist in the protection of LUXEMBOURG. The Bn was in regimental reserve at the time.

On the 21st at 1300 the Bn received orders from regiment to move to MELSDORF (844231). The Bn closed into an assembly area at 1800. On the 22d the Bn moved further north to LINTGEN (840261) and remained there until the following day when the Bn continued to advance to the northeast. The Bn moved forward in a column of companies -- A, B, Hq, C, and D. Stubborn enemy machine gun and rifle fire was encountered in the area northeast of FEULEN (785408) on the night of the 23d. Mission of the Bn at the time was to follow the 2d Bn in close support at about 1000 yards. Resistance was overcome and the movement continued throughout the night of 23-24 Dec.

When the 2d Bn reached a point about 500 yds north of PETIT WINDOLF (601430) the enemy opened up with small arms fire on the head of the column stopping it. The 1st Bn meanwhile closed on the tanks which were following the 2d Bn. The two Bns were held up during the night.

The 2d Bn dispatched two Companies around the right flank to attack

WELSCHHEID (802444) from the northeast. When the two companies got down in the deep gorge and moved toward WELSCHHEID the 2d Bn lost contact with them. Meanwhile it had begun to get light and the Germans, from the high ground to the northeast which they occupied, could look down the throats of the two Bns in their exposed positions. Their tanks and other emplaced weapons began to pour well directed fire on to the Bns. The 1st Bn attached B and D Cos to the 2d Bn to assist the latter while it consolidated its positions and gained contact with the two companies that had endeavored to reach WELSCHHEID during the night. The troops were moved into defensive positions which shielded them from the enemy fire. Artillery fell throughout the day. By the close of the day the 1st Bn had withdrawn into FEULEN. On the 25th (B and D had reverted to Bn control) the Bn moved through FEULEN and advanced north toward KEHLEN. The 3d Bn was already south of KEHLEN. During the day it was to attack to the northeast and take BOURSCHHEID (798468). The 1st Bn was to take SCHEIDEL (785457) and KEHLEN (780458). The 3d Bn was stopped on HOEHL HILL (778455). The 1st Bn sent one Plat of C Co to SCHEIDEL. The Plat met stiff resistance, but took the town and in so doing got quite a number of prisoners. Subsequently the remainder of the company organized the ground about the town. The 1st Bn (less Co C) was stopped short of KEHLEN. A Plat from Co A, however, which attacked KEHLEN from the southwest moved into the edge of the town apart, however, from the buildings. The Germans called out that they wished to surrender. The Plat leader had his men hold their fire. When this happened the Germans opened up with everything they had. Since the platoon was in the open it was practically annihilated by the enemy fire. The inability of the two Bns to proceed made it advisable to withdraw Co C from SCHEIDEL. Then, under the cover of darkness, the high ground southwest of KEHLEN was organized by the two battalions. On the 26th Cos B and D were left with the 3d Bn and the 1st Bn returned to FEULEN where they remained until the 28th. Then Cos A and C moved out and

relieved the 2d Bn in the defensive positions northeast of FEULEN. Subsequently they were joined by D Co which meanwhile had been released from the 5d Bn. B Co was held in FEULEN as Bn reserve. From the positions northeast of FEULEN patrols were sent out. Intermittent fire was received from the Germans. B Co relieved C Co on 3 January.

On 4 Jan at 1700, in a blinding snowstorm, the Germans, clad in white snow suits, counterattacked the right flank of Co B. The enemy got into some holes previously occupied by 2d Bn, but the attack was repulsed by artillery fire from the 315th FA Bn.

On the 5th of Jan the 1st Bn was relieved by the 3d Bn, 316th, and retired to FEULEN to await orders. The following day orders were received to move to HEIDERSCHIED (736445) and the Bn closed in the latter town at 1630. At HEIDERSCHIED the Bn passed into 80th Div reserve. The 7th of Jan C Co was given the mission of securing the bridge west of HEIDERSCHIEDERGRUND (726469). The 1st Bn remained at HEIDERSCHIED until the 10th when it moved to the vicinity of KEHMEN (760456) and there relieved the 3d Bn 317th in defensive positions. This sector was rather quiet but artillery fell from time to time. On the 14th a platoon of Co B moved down and occupied SCHEIDEL. The following day the remainder of the company moved into the town in the face of heavy artillery and mortar fire. Defensive positions in the vicinity of SCHEIDEL and south of KEHMEN were occupied until the 21st. On the 21st Co A attacked and took KEHMEN. Initially one platoon entered the town while the others covered with fire. The company took a number of prisoners and suffered only one casualty.

At 1800 on the 21st the 1st Bn was ordered to proceed to HEIDERSCHIED immediately. The Bn, less A Co, moved without delay. Late in the night A Co joined the Bn after it had been relieved in KEHMEN by elements of the 316th. At HEIDERSCHIED Co C was ordered to relieve E Co of the 319th Inf in LOUWOLE (753485) and

assigned to accomplish this mission. On the morning of the 22d the 3d Bn was ordered to move by motor to WILTZ (705537) arriving at 2030. An hour later the 3d Bn moved on to the 23d.

The 517th combat team attacked northeast of WILTZ on the morning of the 23d. The 3d Bn led followed by the 1st Bn. The 3d Bn was stopped northeast of WILTZ-WILTZ (755557) by heavy enemy fire. Since the Bns were advancing via the road in pursuit of the Germans, the stopping of the 3d Bn congested the traffic on the road. Therefore, the 1st Bn assembled in ERPELDANGE (716547) to await until the situation clarified. Later in the day the 1st Bn passed through elements of the 3d Bn, moved off the main route of advance to the north and while troops occupied the high ground south and southwest of ENSCHERANGE (749569) 2 Platoons of A Co moved in and occupied the town. Positions about ENSCHERANGE were improved on the 24th. An enemy mortar fire fell throughout the period. On the afternoon of the 24th, the 1st Bn received orders to attack and seize the high ground to the north and east of ENSCHERANGE (749569) on the 25th. In preparation for the attack the Bn CO, Maj James A. Craig, Jr; The S-3, 1st Lt David Morgan; the Bn S-3, 1st Lt William J. Clark; and the company commanders, Capt Emmett H. McCrary, Co A; 2d Lt Rufus T. Smith, Co B; 1st Lt Albert A. Iverson, Co C; and 1st Lt George G. Russell, Co D, went on a reconnaissance to the north in the vicinity of DRAUFFEL (761590). Elements of the 106th Inf, 36th Div, which had been stopped west of DRAUFFEL, were contacted and permission was obtained to pass through their sector to make the river crossing the following morning. The reconnaissance party had returned to the Bn CP (742565) and were preparing to issue orders for the next morning's attack when the enemy threw in a heavy mortar barrage. A mortar shell hit in a foxhole occupied by the Bn CO and the S-3. The CO became a casualty. Another one hit in an adjacent hole wounding the S-2 and the S-4. About the same time a mortar shell hit the Bn OP, wounding the intelligence sergeant, S/Sgt Jack Horn, and his assistant Pvt Music. Capt Richard J. Connors, the Ex O, took over the Bn.

While Lt Clark organized the Bn for the attack, Capt Connors went on his personal reconnaissance. The Bn was moved under cover of darkness to the rear of the 101st Inf just west of DRAUFFEL. Here the men bedded down along the sides of the road to await further movement. It was below zero. Men suffered; some weapons froze up. From here Capt Connors, Capt McCrary, and Lt Alverson went on a reconnaissance to find a spot to cross the CLERF River. No desirable crossing could be located for a foot bridge so it was decided to pass through the town of DRAUFFEL to a point where the river could be spanned by jumping. (This was made possible because ice had frozen on the fringes of the river.) On the completion of the reconnaissance the Bn moved through DRAUFFEL, jumped the river, then proceeded south along the road in the direction of ENSCHERANGE. En route to the objective the point of the Bn completely surprised German outposts and pulled them out of ditches where they were sleeping. A number of prisoners were taken in this manner. As the tail of the column cleared DRAUFFEL and jumped the river it was growing light. By this time the Germans in the vicinity of DRAUFFEL had been aroused and they began to fire on the rear elements of the Bn. The leading company, Co C, by this time had reached its objective, Loeh Hill (762575). The Germans here were taken by surprise and 34 prisoners were captured. Before any real resistance was offered the entire Bn was on the high ground. (A prisoner interrogated stated that the reason the Bn was able to take the objective was because the Germans had been taken completely by surprise. He said further that they thought the hill was such a good defensive position that the Americans should not try to take it.) Then, however, the Germans opened up with automatic weapons. The Bn CP moved into ENSCHERANGE and supplies and ammunition were moved across the river thereto. From here they were hand carried to the troops on Loeh Hill. Because of the extremely cold weather a number of men suffered from frostbite, but it was impossible to get blankets to them because the route of approach had been cut off by the enemy who remained in the vicinity of DRAUFFEL. The Bn consolidated

positions on Loeh Hill during the 25th. After dark the company commanders were called to the CP to warm up. (Capt Connors, Acting CO, was suffering from severe frostbite but held on.) While there, orders were issued to continue the attack. Co A was instructed to send two platoons, as a combat patrol, to ~~SEIBENALER~~ ^{Siebenaler} (175551) to secure the town for the arrival of the remainder of the Bn. The patrol moved out about 0100 on the 26, surprised the enemy in ~~SEIBENALER~~ ^{Siebenaler} and captured 31 enlisted prisoners and 1 officer. The patrol was joined by the remainder of Co A and the company occupied and organized the high ground to the north and east of the town. Once these positions were taken the remainder of the Bn moved up to ~~SEIBENALER~~ ^{Siebenaler} and the Bn was ordered to continue the attack. While A held the high ground (782509) the Bn led by Co C was to swing around to the north and move toward NEIDHAUSEN (803602) and DORSCHEID (807608), the final objectives. C Co was met by enemy small arms fire when it was north of the hill occupied by Co A. A MG platoon went into action and pinned down the enemy on the high ground (785595) while C flanked the pocket of resistance on the north. The remainder of the 26th was spent mopping up the woods southwest of NEIDHAUSEN. By dark the Bn had reached a point about 1000 yds southwest of the town. When they reached this point, Capt Connors ordered the advance continued. C was still leading. The Bn moved into NEIDHAUSEN from the west again surprising the enemy with a night attack. Fifty-one (51) prisoners were taken and twice that number killed or wounded. The town was mopped up and all around defense was set up, with MGs covering approaches to the town. A Co faced to the east, B to the south and west and C to the north and east. The Bn's advance had created a salient into the enemy-held territory and the complete surprise and capture of the Germans in NEIDHAUSEN had prevented the enemy from ascertaining this. Consequently, German troops from the surrounding towns, on which pressure was being applied by other friendly units, began straggling into NEIDHAUSEN. One group of about 40 or 50 Germans approached NEIDHAUSEN from the northeast. A machine gunner of Co A, who was

manning an outpost, waited until the group got to within about 20 yds of his position and then opened up. Approximately half the Germans were killed by the withering fire; the remainder were wounded or captured.

At 0300 on the 27th A Co was ordered to capture the town of DORSCHIED. A platoon patrol followed up by a Platoon which was to initially secure the town and defend the company. The patrol took the wrong road and went into the wrong town, MARBOURG (810625). Part of the town was taken when German organized a resistance developed. Most of the patrol and the follow-up platoon withdrew toward DORSCHIED (807608) but several men were pinned down in MARBOURG. The men who withdrew reorganized and extricated the men in the town. The remainder of Co A had meanwhile moved up and seized and secured DORSCHIED.

When A Co had taken DORSCHIED B Co organized the high ground (215605) to the east of NEIDHAUSEN. C Co contained NEIDHAUSEN. The companies maintained these positions throughout the 27th and during the night the Bn was relieved by elements of the 17th Abn Div. (NOTE: The 1st Bn 317th took DORSCHIED though the 17th Abn Div was given credit for it in the "Stars and Stripes.") The Bn then marched to ANSCHERANGE and from there moved by truck to MEDERNACH (910357).

From the 25th to 27th of Jan the 1st Bn was supported by TDS and tanks which, though available, were not employed. The Bn chose rather to make sneak attacks without the warning given by artillery and the noises of tanks and TDS. During this period the Bn only suffered two battle casualties. In the action the Bn took 154 PWs and killed more than a hundred. Capt McGrary and Lt Clark attribute the few casualties to surprise attacks at night.

