

Interview Number 2

Unit: 117th Infantry

Action: Rhine River Crossing and establishing bridgehead.
24 to 29 March 1945

Source: Major Julius W. Singleton Jr. , S-3

Interviewer: 1st Lt. John E. Henderson

Place and Date of Interview: Waldeslust (382372) Germany
28 March 1945

Maps: Germany, GSGS 4414, Sheets, 4304, 4305, 4306, 4404,
4405, 4406. Scale 1-25000

Journals: None used in interview.

COMMENTS Interviewer feels that very little information gained from conversation with Major Singleton. He was willing to be interviewed, but the information obtained was spotty and details could not be procured. For location of objectives, see map attached to master cover sheet.

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28 March 1945. Interview Major Julius W. Singleton, S-3, 117th Infantry at Waldeslust (382372) Germany with Lt Henderson.

We moved the regiment into assembly area near Wallach (200335) on the evening of 23 March 1945. The 1st Battalion made the initial crossing, taking Ork (218339) with Companies A and B abreast. 150 prisoners were captured there.

The 2d Battalion went through Ork and took objective Polly (240345), and from there went into Katie (245353).

Ginny (265350) was captured by the 1st and 2d Battalions, the 2d on the left and the 1st on the right. Following that the 1st and 3d Battalions captured Sue (290360). In that attack we employed the 3d Battalion on the left and the 1st Battalion on the right, clearing the objective by 0600A 25 March 1945.

At 0900, using the same formation, we took objective Anne (315375). It was ours by 1500A. Company B went on in and captured the town of Hunxe (332388).

At 0200A 26 March, the 1st and 2d Battalions jumped off for objective Sally (355375). As soon as that capture was effected, the 3d Battalion passed through the 1st, and together with the 2d Battalion on the right went on to objective Lilly (395375). That objective was cleared by nightfall. By that time we had moved ahead of the rest of the division, and our flanks were exposed.

The next objective was Marie (420376) which we attacked at midnight, using again two battalions abreast, 3d on the left

2 -1-

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and 2d on the right. We were on the objective by 0445A 27 March 1945. After we were secure on the objective we had a lot of trouble. Our flanks were exposed, we had by-passed some opposition. Also the enemy forces to our front and flanks built up for a counterattack in strength which we broke up with artillery.

At 2200A 27 March, K Company, reinforced with a platoon of tanks, attacked to take objective Jojo, which includes the town of Besten (415393). They had the objective by midnight. The 2d Battalion at the same time sent patrols into the woods east of objective Marie, the patrols returned with the information that there were no enemy in the woods.

We have encountered more opposition here than in the Roer River operation, and the terrain in the present campaign is a greater obstacle than the flat open terrain between the Roer River and the Erft Canal.

We have used a lot of air support in this operation. Until we reached objective Anne we had an air liaison officer with us.

Until we reached objective Sally, our chief opposition consisted of weak infantry units, isolated defenses built up around AA weapons. At Sally we encountered elements of the 116th Panzer Grenadier Division, and since that time our opposition has been more intense.

This morning we were passed through by the 8th Armored Division.

Total Prisoners of War to date, 1,086.

Interview Number 15

Unit: 3d Battalion, 117th Infantry

Action: Rhine River Crossing, establishing bridgehead.
24 March 1945 to 29 March 1945

Source: Lt. Colonel Samuel T. McDowell, Commander.

Interviewer: 1st Lt. John E. Henderson

Place and Date of Interview: Lemgo, Germany, 6 April 1945

Maps: GSGS 4414, Sheets, 4304, 4305, 4306, 4404, 4405, 4406
Scale, 1-25000

Journals: None

COMMENTS Colonel McDowell was very cooperative in piecing together the sequence of events

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6 April 1945. Interview, Lt. Colonel Samuel T Mc Dowell, Battalion Commander, 3d Battalion, 117th Infantry at Lemgo, Germany with Lt. Henderson.

Our first participation in the river crossing operation was to carry the boats down to the edge of the water for the 1st Battalion, which was the assault battalion. It was during the hours of darkness on the morning of 24 March 1945. Things were pretty quiet and there were no casualties.

Our crossing was uneventful since it was hours after the assault landing. We used mainly LSVP boats, crossing a company at a time, K Company being the first to cross. By 0900A we were all across and in an assembly area in Ork (218339). We went from there into an assembly area in Spellen (224353).

We jumped off from objective Kate (238348) during the night, went through Ginny (263350) without opposition and on into the northern half of Sue (290360) while the 1st Battalion took the south half.

In Sue we got an awful lot of fire from the AA guns to our front and in the sector of the 119th Infantry. The fire from there was really wicked. We put a lot of artillery into there and it must have been good artillery for the 119th took more than 100 prisoners out of the area, 60 of them wounded.

On the morning of 25 March we went from Sue to Anne (315375) We got hit pretty badly with the AA fire and small arms from the edge of the woods.

On 26 March we went into Sally behind other elements of the regiment, and jumped off from there to Lilly (395375), taking the northern half of it. Enemy fire was quite intense in Lilly.

On the night of 26 March ^(MIDNIGHT) we took the northern half of Objective Marie (420376). Just about the best defenses that we have encountered were on the hill between Lilly and Marie. It was just laced with communications trenches and dug in positions. AA aircraft weapons in a ground role were employed there, tied in with the defenses of elements of the 116th Panzer Grenadier Division. One thing that made it difficult; On objectives Lilly and Marie we were in front of all other elements of the division, and we were absorbing all the fire the enemy could throw, and it was about the most accurate fire we have experienced.

On the night of 27 March Company K went from the northern part of Marie to take Objective JOJO (445393). That would have been a daylight move but the intensity of the enemy fire would not permit us to attempt it in the daytime. The same holds true for the attack from Lilly to Marie.

After K Company had gotten on Jojo they cleared the enemy out of the high ground southwest of Jojo.

In this job we had a Company of the 743 Tank Battalion, a platoon of the 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion, and our supporting artillery. I had an air strike placed on the Gutshof Glucking (294372) I never did get up to

SECRET

3

see the results, but the air corps reported they had knocked out three tanks, and there was an ammunition dump there that exploded. At least we didn't get any trouble from there.

Interview Number 72

Unit: Company K, 117th Infantry

Action: Rhine River Crossing, establishing a bridgehead.
24 to 29 March 1945

Source: Captain Henry C. Abbes, Commander

Interviewer: 1st Lt. John E. Henderson

Place and Date of Interview B650650 Germany, 6 April 1945

Maps: Germany GSGS 4414. Sheets 4304, 4305, 4306, 4404,
4405, 4406. Scale 1-25000

Journals: none

COMMENTS During interview several platoon leaders came in and out of CP, occasionally being on hand to offer clarification of certain points.

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6 April 1945, Interview, Capt Henry C. Abbes, Commanding Officer, Company K, 117th Infantry at B650650, Germany, with Lt. Henderson.

At 0745A, 24 March 1945, with a platoon of machine guns we crossed the Rhien River. K Company was the first of the battalion to cross. The others followed in order L, I, and M. We used five LSVP boats for the 3d and 2d platoons. The supporting weapons and the support platoon followed in alligators. Things were generally pretty quiet. There were some shells on the near shore while we were making preparations for crossing but none while we were on the water. We moved directly to assembly area in Ork (218339).

About 1100A we moved into Spellen (224353) using the group of houses at 229353 as our assembly. The other companies moved in behind us.

We had been informed long ahead of time as to our missions. We knew that the first objective would be Ginny (263350), and our final objective would be the autobahn in objective Anne (315375).

At 0230A, 25 March 1945, we jumped off in an attack from a line of departure on the highway (253354) to go through Ginny into Sue (290360). Our company was on the left with L Company on the right. Each leading company had a platoon of tanks. The 2d Platoon rode the attached tanks, the other platoons followed on foot. At the power line (266354) in Ginny, the men dismounted, the 3d Platoon came abreast on the right, the 1st Platoon was echeloned to the left rear. Two tanks moved with

12
-1-

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each forward platoon. We got into Sue at 0500A. There had been no opposition in Ginny except a few small arms along the railroad. We took three prisoners, continued into Sue without opposition, taking three prisoners there.

Our opposition in Sue came the morning when we jumped off at 0900A for Anne. This opposition was in the form of stiff AA fire from the area of 290367. Our line of departure was the woods (281364 to 286360). The formation was the same as that used the night before, K on the left, L on the right, I Company following at our left rear. We were pinned down in the open field as we started to cross it. One man was killed and four were wounded. Our supporting tanks fired from the line of departure into the AA emplacements. Sgt Wester saw one of the gun emplacements and designated the target to one of the tanks. The tank was able to knock it out. The enemy abandoned the guns and withdrew north into the 119th area.

I Company, who was following at our left rear was originally supposed to follow us to the edge of the woods in Anne, and then drive north to take Dot (298385), but the plan was altered. Dot was taken by the 119th while our entire force continued to the east.

We got into trouble at the intersection (298368). The enemy was heavily entrenched along the woods line on the objective, and we were harrassed by a tank firing from the direction of Hunxe (332388), and mortar fire from the right front. There was just nothing to do but advance and get out of that fire. I

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set my light machine guns up at the intersection to spray the woods to our left front, and ordered the company to advance. One of the tanks became bogged down. The others refused to move. We continued the advance without tank support.

We took 27 prisoners from the edge of the woods. After we had passed that line there was no more difficulty. The defenses were only at the edge of the woods. We moved up and cut the autobahn. We had our defenses established and were dug in by 1500A. The afternoon and evening were very quiet.

At 0500A, 26 March we followed the other battalions to the east in a column of companies, taking our tanks with us. Formation was L, I, K. We encountered some artillery while going through Hunxe. We followed the highway south into objective Sally (355375). There was a heavier concentration of artillery as we were going through the woods. Going from Sally to Lilly (395375), the 2d Battalion was on the right of us. At 383382 we deployed from a column of companies to two companies abreast, I on the left, L Company on the right and this company in reserve.

We got into a lot of trouble on the objective.

As we got to the edge of the woods we got fire from AA emplacements on the hill. There were tanks in Besten (415393) and tanks in the woods at 402378. The enemy was dug and diggin in on the high ground. There were no enemy on the objective itself, but those that faced us were looking right down our throats. With that opposing us it was decided that the attack on Marie (420376) had better be a night affair. The two

leading companies, I and L sent their assault platoons to the edge of the woods, clearing out the little prongs extending to the east. This was at 2300A. The attack was supposed to commence at 2400A, but it was postponed until 0100A 27 March.

On this attack we were the reserve company. We had no opposition and I think that the leading companies had little resistance. We established a defense of the objective. L Company set up a line from 423383 to 425380. I Company, 416378 to 420385 to 422384. One platoon took over the gap between I and K Companies and the remainder of the company was extended eastward from 411377 to tie in with Company I.

The following morning we sent a patrol into the southern part of the objective in an attempt to contact the 2d Battalion who were supposed to be in defensive position there. Apparently they had gotten lost around the airport. We did not contact one platoon of Company G. It was the only platoon of that battalion on the objective, and so far as that platoon knew, there were no others around them.

That same evening this company made an independent attack on Besten. A heavy artillery concentration from 2100A to 2130A poured onto the objective. The 1st platoon was to attack on the left and the 3d platoon on the right. Our line of departure was the trail at 414386 to 420386. From there each platoon sent a five man patrol armed with panzerfausts and automatic weapons into the town at 2200A. They entered the town, met no resistance, and informed me of the situation by SCR 536. The

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leading platoons moved into town. The support platoon took up positions along the road 414388 to 419388. The light machine guns were attached to the left platoon. Our mortars were in position just behind the line of departure.

We took about 25 prisoners out of the town. Only a couple of them offered any resistance. After the town had been cleared out the forward platoons took up perimeter defense directed to the north and the support platoon moved up behind and tied in at the rear.