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303rd INFANTRY REGIMENT

" Elimination of the Rose Pocket "

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303rd Inf. Reg't. 97th Inf. Div.

" Elimination of the Rose Pocket "

Interview with: Capt. Abner E. Searcy, S-3, 303rd Inf.
Dusseldorf, Germany 19 April 1945

Maps: Germany 1/50,000 - Sheets: 59-60

Overlays and Sketches: 303rd Action in clearing of Siegburg and Glöck-
ner Werkes. (Taken from map Germany - 1/50,000
sheet 60)

Interviewed By: 1st Lt. Richard W. Swenson, 2nd Information and Histor-
ical service, 1st U.S. Army(Temporary)

The 303rd Inf. Regt., 97th Div. received Divisional orders to cross the Sieg River on 9 April 1945 with the mission of clearing Siegburg and moving north to the initial phase Line, a point some 2000 yards on the other side of town and facing a northwesterly direction. The Crossing point for the Regiment was from a point where the Autobahn crosses the Sieg River(646440), east to the railroad in vicinity of Buisdorf(650430). Midway between the Autobahn and railroad, the assault boats to be used in the crossing, were to assemble and from this point move down and upstream to their respective points of assault. The Regimental plan for the attack put the 1st Bn in the lead, completing the crossing at 1815 hours, followed by the 2nd Bn, with the 3rd in reserve and remaining on the south side of the river.

The Regiment, covering a frontage of ten miles, was notified of the proposed attack two and one half hours before the initial crossing was to be made. This meant that the Regimental staff had to plan, initiate

a movement order for the various Bns that would bring them to their proper points of crossing, arrange for the proper displacement of the assault boats and prepare for supporting fire from artillery and adjacent units.

During the artillery preparations it was necessary for the A and P platoon and units of the 2nd and 1st Bns to clear a path through friendly mine fields under a German artillery barrage consisting of 88mm guns, 81mm mortars, 60mm mortars, 20 and 40mm dual-purpose ack-ack guns. This enemy barrage resulted in the Regiment's premature losing of men and boats.

Crossing as planned, the regimental assault progressed with B Co. leading at 1815 hours, A Co. 1825 hours, C Co. 1835 hours, E Co. 1925 hours, F Co. 2040 hours and G Co. at 2135 hours. As the Germans had collected their defensive fire on the points of crossing during the 1st Bn's assault, the 2nd Bn suffered more heavily from direct small arms and 88mm fire, being well dug in on the north side of the river.

Once ^{on} the north bank of the river, the 1st Bn was to clear Siegburg east from the juncture of the Sieg River and Agger River (604449) to the center of Siegburg; the second Bn was to clear that portion of town east from the 1st Bn's right flank to the Autobahn inclusive, the Autobahn running in line with the axis of the Regimental attack. The 1st Bn, with A on the right, B on the left, the 2nd Bn with E on the left and F on the right, C and G in reserve, began the attack on Siegburg, reaching the center of town against resistance varying from moderate to light, at 100200 April, stopping for reorganization and

contact with adjacent units. The advance of the right flank progressed rapidly, the 1st Bn on the left being bogged down by B Co., who had in its sector, a hill, the dominating terrain feature of the Sieg River and the town, boasting a well built castle on the crest. This castle was used by the Germans as a hospital, or, at least, the Geneva Red Cross was pointed prominently on the top and sides. Assault on this building proved that it had been used as an O.P. for German artillery fire and was defended with positions dug on the sloping sides of the hill, necessitating a fire fight for occupation.

At 100630 April, the Regiment resumed its push through Siegburg, the 1st Bn advancing on the left and the 2nd Bn remaining on the phase line of 090200 April, in the center of town. E Co. was meeting stiff resistance from street fighting making it necessary to clean out the buildings from floor to floor. At 1030 all artillery and mortar fire ceased while a treaty was attempted, but the enemy, insisting on a fight, were cleaned out at 1530 after E Co. threw in the reserve platoon, charging forward, firing from the hip. The entire staff of the German Garrison in Siegburg was captured: 12 Officers and over 100 German E.M. The 1st Bn had now reached the Agger River line^{and} was receiving reports that G Co. was receiving heavy mortar and small arms fire from the direction of the Glöckener Werkes, 100 yards west of the Sieg-Agger River line. This was a revelation, as the supporting artillery had laid heavy preparations in the area all during the day of 10 April. (This is the first indication that the Werkes were occupied by a determined enemy force.)

110600 April, ~~XXXXXX~~ the 2nd Bn moved to the Agger River line in order that both the 1st and 2nd Bn could cross in support of each

other. The two Bns were to cross, less G Co., by-pass the Works, and move onto a line running southwest-northeast, and east of Troisdorf (590460). G Co. was to cross behind the Bn advance, cutting to the south and clearing the Glöckner Werkes.

The crossing began 110900 April, E and F Co. crossing in assault boats with the 1st Bn crossing just north on blown out bridges and by wading. Regiment had mortars and machine guns in supporting fire. at 1055 both Bns(-G Co.) were across the river and advancing on Troisdorf, having by-passed the Works on the left flank. At 1550, G Co. reported the factory area clear and that the Co. would push to the Sieg River, swing west, and clean out a village just west of the factory area, pushing on further west to the left flank of the Regiment.

At dusk, G Co. was completing the clearance of the small town when the enemy came from concealed pillboxes and underground positions in the Glöckner Werkes, hitting the Co. from behind. A radio message initiated at the Co.C.P. to the Bn C.P., reported that the Co. was surrounded and in serious need of help. Bn replied that G Co. should withdraw to the original line of attack(60254) and reorganize, the remainder of the 2nd Bn would come on line with them and help clear the factory. The Co.'s situation grew more serious and evacuation and withdrawal was virtually impossible. Through the alertness and keen observations of 1st Lt. Milton(NMI) Burgett and two Co.Aid men(names unknown), a route of withdrawal was found, but it only allowed two or three men to move at a time. 111100 April, Lt. Burgett had evacuated one platoon to the Co.'s original line, and by morning of 12 April, Capt. Thomas W. Milton, Co. Commander, had evacuated the remainder of

G Co., had evacuated the remainder of the Company.

On the morning of 12 April, the 2nd Bn pulled out of position east of Troisdorf, the 1st Bn spreading out over the bank, and moved on line with G Co. north of the Works; One platoon of medium tanks from the 13th Arm'd Div. in support. At 121300 April, the entire 2nd Bn attacked the Works, the 3rd Bn coming from reserve and taking up the positions vacated east of Troisdorf. After a short fight the garrison in the Works capitulated and yielded 100 Officers and men, plus a huge arsenal of weapons. In subterranean chambers a German field Hospital was found, the entrances made by sliding machine lathes. The prisoners captured in this fight did not represent the entire garrison that had so stubbornly fought for the factory. The remainder had withdrawn to new positions somewhere north of the Sieg River.

The factory area was now cleared of all resistance, the 1st and 3rd Bns, meanwhile, had pushed on north west, the 2nd Bn now becoming motorized reserve for the Regiment. Late in the evening the 3rd Bn linked up with the 13th Arm'd Div. at Porz, meeting more stubborn resistance and holding up the advance of the Regiment. Orders from Div. stated that the Regiment was to hold a line at Porz all night, 3rd Bn on the left and 1st Bn on the right.

130800 April the 303rd resumed their advance from the line at Porz; Div. had reported that all German resistance had collapsed and the 303rd was to take over the positions of the 13th Arm'd Div., the motorized 2nd Bn was to take over a line from Dunnwald(510670) to Dullbruck(536640). Telephone conversation with the D. C.P. indicated the 303rd need only to move into the positions being able to do so without a fight. The 3rd Bn was now moving north through Mulheim(490630),

the 2nd Bn moving up by vehicles and the 1st Bn moving up by foot on the right flank . The I and R platoon was to precede the 2nd Bn by ten minutes, moving out from Urbach(542539).

The I and R moved out from Urbach as planned, with Capt. Abner E. Searcy, Regimental S-3, going along. The route through Dullbruck was open and the platoon advanced without incident, going two thirds of the way to Dunnwald when 88mm and S.P. fire landed behind the vehicles, abruptly halting the advance. The fire let up gradually and the artillery fire ceased altogether, allowing the guide truck to move on as planned, Capt. Searcy retracing his steps to the Regimental C.P., asking for a situation report. He was informed that the road had been under fire for sometime, shells landing approximately every two minutes. The 2nd Bn motorized, was now approaching the location(519662) and Capt. Searcy ordered a halt and disbursement. Searcy now went to the Arm'd C.P.(13th) and requested information as to enemy activity in the area. He was told that mortars and artillery from the north had been falling in the area, but there was no physical contact with the Germans.

The 3rd Bn was now coming in from the west on the Regiment's left flank and ran into the heaviest concentration of 88's and S.P.s yet encountered by the Regiment. The 3rd Bn s-2 contacted the 13th Arm'd C.P. and requested a smoke screen be laid down in front of the 3rd Bn. The request was granted without delay and K Co. could now advance to Dunnwald, I Co. remaining in a ditch near the road, with E Co. going into position south of Dunnwald. Orders from the Regiment C.O. closed I Co. at Dunnwald~~xxxxxxx~~ just after dark 13 April. Meanwhile, the Executive Officer and M Co. had been cut off from the 3rd Bn by machine gun fire, so withdrawing to the southeast, they set up the 3rd Bn C.P.

with contact to the Regiment's supporting artillery. The 2nd Bn detrucked at (530650) and moved into an assembly area on the north edge of Dullbruck. The 1st Bn came up on foot and went into a defense on the northwest edge of Dullbruck. Through reconnaissance, 2nd Lt. Roy A. Anderson, platoon leader of the I and R platoon, discovered that by moving more than one or two vehicles forward at a time, it would result in enemy artillery and small arms fire. At 132230 April, the 2nd Bn, led by Lt. Anderson, moved north to Dunnwald and went into position on the north and northeast side of town.

On the morning of 14 April, the Regiment attacked with three Bns south and southwest of Dunnwald, headed for the town of Leverkusen. The 3rd Bn to move on the left flank with the Autobahn as the right flank, the 2nd Bn moving out on the right with the 1st Bn in reserve and following the 2nd. In moving to Leverkusen, the 1st Bn was held up by a chemical factory, formerly the I.G. Faben Co., and was held up by enemy fire. Just before dusk 14 April, I Co. was able to infiltrate to the south edge of Leverkusen, cleaning out two streets, I Co. pushed forward on the right, between Leverkusen and the chemical works. The 13th Arm'd Div. moved through the Regiment's front lines heading for the Dhunn River with the mission of securing the bridge for a regimental crossing. On approaching Manfort, the Armor was held up. The 2nd Bn was still held up on the right by low-bands of graying machine gun fire from the factories. The 13th Arm'd broke through the resistance south of Manfort and reached the Dhunn River, setting up a bivouac area between the 303rd Lines and the river paralleling the 303rd to the front. It was necessary for the Regiment to with-hold its fire for four hours so the Armor could safely clear the area.

150600 the 303rd planned to attack on to the Dhunn river with the 2nd Bn and 3rd Bn, 1st in reserve. The 3rd Bn moved into Leverkusen against intense 20mm flak guns, moving through the town and on to the Dhunn River, crossing at 1630 by wading through, both the river and small arms fire. The 2nd Bn could not advance fast enough to keep up the line as small arms fire from the town of Sand was taking casualties (510700). The 1st Bn was brought from reserve, moving around the right flank of the 2nd Bn and crossing the Dhunn river taking up positions that were supposed to have been occupied by the 2nd Bn.

With the town of Sand holding up the advance of the 2nd Bn, the 1st and 3rd Bns pushed on from the Dhunn river: the 1st moving north to Opladen with the 3rd pushing on to the Wupper River, cleaning out all of Opladen with the exception of the factories in the 1st Bn sector, and reached the Wupper River line at Dusk 15 April. As the 1st Bn moved up to the factory area south of Opladen, it was met with observed 88mm and S.P. fire. With B Co. on the right and A Co. on the left, the Bn worked its way to positions just south of Opladen, where it held up with the coming of darkness. The evening of 15 April found the 1st Bn on a line south of Opladen, the 2nd Bn completing the cleaning out of Sand, and the 3rd Bn on line with the Wupper River.

The morning of 16 April found the 1st Bn attacking the factory area south of Opladen from the west, the 3rd Bn crossing the Wupper River and advancing on, with the 2nd Bn coming in behind the 3rd as Regimental Reserve. The 1st Bn found the factory area abandoned, the Germans pulling out during the night and retreating north. The Divisional stop line was set for the 303rd as of 161200 April, on a line south of Dusseldorf at Hart-Immigrath, running northwest. By 1100

16 April the stop line was changed by Div. due to the general collapse of the Germans in the immediate sector and was moved north to the Brucker-Dussel River lines. The 2nd Bn was again motorized, with the 1st and 3rd Bns pushing on for the new line. The 2nd Bn on vehicles pushed through the lines of the 1st and 3rd Bns, moving northeast to Hilden without opposition and continued on to Benrath, cutting northwest to Dusseldorf, reaching the stop line at the Dussel-Brucke River Lines by dark. The 3rd Bn moved on to Hilden by foot and went into Regimental Reserve, the 1st Bn pushing on 2000 yards north of Hilden, getting into a fire fight on the high ground north of Hilden with mortars and 88's. The Bn withdrew to Hilden about dark, setting up a C.P. for the night.

17th April, with the 2nd Bn on the Regimental stop line, the 1st Bn pushed frontally and the 3rd Bn moving to the 1st Bn area, hitting the resistance from the west, 400 yards from Hilden.

At 1830 the resistance was knocked out and the 1st Bn moved to the Regimental stop line, the 3rd Bn moving into the area of Hilden as Regimental Reserve - the 2nd Bn still motorized and on the stop line.

181500 April the 303rd moved into Dusseldorf with 3 T.D.s of the 820th T.D. Bn leading, followed by 6 M-7s of the Regimental Cannon Co., and then the organic vehicles of the Regiment, Guided by 3 civilians, one on each T.D., the Regiment moved into the town without resistance, the initial objective, the Police Station. Without question or opposition, the Police of Dusseldorf drew in all defensive positions and all river outposts. The 2nd Bn occupied that

area of town formerly used by the German S.S. Troops, the 1st Bn moving to Eller and the Southeast part of town, remaining in Regimental reserve, with the Regimental Headquarters at Benrath.

At 19 April, the 303rd occupied the city of Dusseldorf without resistance, and from civilian leads, the 303rd chased down various and sundry officers and men of the failing German Army who were still hiding in town. With all soldiers cleared of Dusseldorf to the best of the Regiment's knowledge, and all weapons picked up, the Regiment settled down to Military Government duties in Dusseldorf Germany.

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