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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY C, 18TH INFANTRY (1ST INF. DIV.)
IN THE ATTACK ON CRUCIFIX HILL, 8 OCTOBER 1944 (RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(AACHEN OFFENSIVE)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: COMPANY IN THE ATTACK
ON FORTIFIED POSITION

Captain Bobbie E. Brown, Infantry

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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of Company "C", 18th Infantry, First United States Infantry Division, in the capture of Crucifix Hill, Aachen, Germany Offensive, during the period 8 and 9 October, 1944 (Rhine-land Campaign), and is the personal experience of the company commander, Company "C".

In the initial landings in Normandy, the First Division was one of the assault divisions. It landed on D-Day and rapidly pushed to Caumont. When the American Forces broke out of the beachhead in July at St. Lo, the First Division was one of the divisions rushed through the gap to exploit the breakthrough.

Following the breakthrough at St. Lo, the Division swung wide and was able to help close the trap on the Germans in the Falise pocket. After the Falise pocket action, the First Division raced across France, by-passing Paris, toward Soisson, the famous battleground of the First Division in World War I.

From Soisson the Division swung north towards Mons, Belgium. Here in September the First Division dealt the Germans a severe defeat, having captured over 17,000 prisoners and killing nearly 5000 Germans as they attempted to evacuate Belgium and France and occupy the Siegfried Line east of Mons near Aachen, Germany. Following the Mons pocket action, the First Division turned towards Aachen, where it was assigned the mission of penetrating the Siegfried Line.

TERRAIN FEATURES

The country surrounding Aachen may best be described as rolling hills interspersed with woods and higher ridges. Small towns and villages were numerous in the area. These towns were generally in the lowlands and some

were only a few thousand yards apart.

The villages are all of masonry and stone construction. These had been bombed considerably before we got there, and most of them were nothing but heaps of rubble. In some villages, the rubble was so high that tanks could not get through it.

Southwest of Aachen was the Aachen State Forest. This was very thickly wooded, the trees averaging 25-35 feet in height. The slopes were very steep throughout the forest.

CRUCIFIX HILL AND THE SIEGFRIED LINE

The Siegfried Line, extending along the 18th Infantry's zone of action, consisted of a solid, intricately-fashioned front of strong points defending the West Wall of Germany. Such a strong point was Crucifix Hill, so named because a large crucifix stood at the top of it. These strong points were comprised of specially dug antitank ditches, mined areas, natural and artificial obstacles; fortified houses and sheds and garages; well-concealed concrete installations of pillboxes and emplacements; dug-in tanks and tank turrets used as stationary pillboxes; trenches, foxholes; slit-trenches and large open emplacements for MG nests, 88mm guns, AT guns, automatic weapons and heavier artillery.

The ditches and mine areas were the first barriers. The ditches, 12' wide, 4' deep, were 75 yards in front of the dragon's teeth. The dragon's teeth formed a belt 50' wide, with a concrete wall on both sides. On our side they were 2'7" high; toward the enemy they were 4'10" high.

Behind the dragon's teeth and on commanding ground covering all approaches to the antitank ditches and concrete barriers, were a series of concrete installations of pillboxes and emplacements. The pillboxes averaged 87' in circumference, 6' in depth from top to bottom inside, and were expertly and completely covered, excluding the turrets, with brush and long grass.

The bunkers were normally 20-30 feet by 40-50 feet, and 20-25 feet in height, of which at least half was below the ground. The walls and roofs

were 3 feet thick, reinforced with steel. Many bunkers had storage space for great quantities of ammunition; bunks for the defenders; steel doors; and ventilator systems. Surrounding the bunkers were trenches with MG nests, AT guns and open earthworks for heavier artillery.

Also present were tank turret pillboxes, which were flanked by MG positions. These tank turret pillboxes were usually situated near crossroads with rotary fields of fire in all directions ranging from 250 to 500 yards of open, commanding observation. These turrets were 19' in circumference, 2'6" above the ground and were 3" thick (steel) with 6 apertures and 6 peep holes.

Such was the organization of a strong point. Most of them, including Crucifix Hill, were supported by artillery and high velocity direct-fire weapons.

PRELIMINARY PREPARATIONS

Six days prior to the attack the battalion was placed in a reorganizing area, 8000 yards ^{Southwest} ~~southeast~~ of Aachen. Here the battalion was reorganized into small assault groups for the next attack on the Siegfried Line. We received replacements, which brought the battalion up to TO strength.

The battalion commander and his staff drew up an assault training program, and the next six days were spent at hard training. The battalion was trained on dummy pillboxes. The dummy pillboxes were abandoned enemy tanks and built-up mounds of earth. We were also trained to reorganize from small assault groups to the normal defensive positions. For the next mission Company "C" was assigned the task of capturing Crucifix Hill. For this assault the Company was deployed as follows:

- A - Ranger Platoon was assigned the mission of flank security.
- B - 2d Platoon was the base platoon and was to assault on the left of the trail leading west from Verlautenheide, the trail inclusive to the 2d Platoon.
- C - 1st Platoon was to assault along the right, and to use the trail to guide by.
- D - The 3rd or Support Platoon was to support by fire from position,

in an old cemetery west of Verlautenheide and be prepared to come forward on call. We had maps of the area we were to assault with the know pillboxes marked on them. Each small unit knew what bunker or pillbox it was to assault and just where they fitted into the company picture. This type of training was very beneficial, and it paid off in the end; it should be stressed from the highest to the smallest unit commander. (1)

Orders were received on 7 October 1944 calling for a series of continuing attacks by the 2nd, 1st, and 3rd battalions of the 18th Infantry Regiment, in that order. First the 2nd Battalion, using Eilendorf as a base, was to seize Verlautenheide. Immediately upon its seizure and organization, the 1st Battalion was to jump off from the town for its assault on Crucifix Hill. Following the capture of the "Hill", the 3rd Battalion was to be in Regimental reserve during the capture of Verlautenheide and Crucifix Hill. Their complete leapfrog maneuver would deny the Aachen garrison a route of supply, and when contact could be made with units of the 30th Division pressing down south of Wurselen, it would be isolated from the rest of Germany. (2)

It was planned that the 2nd Battalion would seize Verlautenheide and block to the Northeast; they would assist by fire the attack of the 1st Bn on the objective. The 1st Bn would seize Crucifix Hill, 900 yards west of Verlautenheide, and cut, by fire and mines, the Haaren-Zuiweden road northwest of Crucifix Hill. The 3rd Bn was to seize the low ridge and Hill 192 northwest of Eilendorf and then be prepared to seize Haaren on order. (3)

The 1st Bn plan called for the unit to assemble in Verlautenheide with the least possible delay, and prepare to attack on order. "C" Company along the ridge line west from Verlautenheide was to seize Crucifix Hill. "A" Company would attack on the left of "C" Company, seize pillboxes 17, 18, 19, 20, and open emplacements to tie in with "C" Company at the trail south of pillbox number 33. Company "B" was to remain in battalion reserve in Verlautenheide. They were to be prepared to assist either assault

(1) A-1; (2, 3) A-2, Chapter 10.

Infantry. (4)

The supporting fires for the battalion were as follows:

- 1 Battalion Light Artillery, 32nd FA Bn.
- 4 Guns, 155mm in Eilendorf.
- 1 Platoon M-10 634 T.D. in Eilendorf.
- 1 Platoon tanks, 745 Tank Bn in Eilendorf.
- Battalion 81mm Mortars.

(5)

The Tank Destroyers were in position in Eilendorf in direct fire positions. The Artillery was emplaced, initially, in indirect fire positions. The 81mm mortars went forward. All of the direct supporting fires could fire on the south side of Crucifix Hill, and keep up the fire until assault groups signaled to lift fires for the final assault. (6)

Detailed observations were made daily on Crucifix Hill and vicinity by all the officers of the Bn, from 2d to 7th October 1944. Most Platoon Sgts and squad leaders went on the same reconnaissance daily. (7)

All plans were completed in the present area, and at the time we didn't know on what day the attack would take place. At the Bn C.P. we had access to late aerial photos of Crucifix Hill and vicinity. (8)

On 7 October 1944 Captain Edward W. McGreoger, Bn S-3, and myself made a day-long study of the objective area from the forward OP's of "K" Company, 18th Inf, and "E" and "F" Companies of the 16th Inf north of Eilendorf. We returned to the Bn C.P. about 1800 hours on the 7th October. The Bn had been alerted to the fact that the attack would take place on 8 October 1944 with H hour set at 0400. The Bn M.T.O. had picked up trucks from the Engineer Combat Group, which had relieved the 1st Bn in Aachen State Forest on 2 Oct. These trucks were convoyed to the battalion bivouac area. (9)

The battalion entrucked at dark. The Bn, with attached units, left the assembly area at 2000, and traveled east by truck and attached tanks to a detrucking point in Brand. This point was reached at 2300 hours. The 26th Inf was ordered to turn over all motors on trucks and tanks, to deceive the enemy of the 18th Inf move to Brand and Eilendorf. (10)

The Bn detrucked in Brand and remained there until 0045. They then moved in a column of companies to Eilendorf, and took cover in cellars to wait for the 2d Battalion to capture Verlautenheide.
(4, 5) A-3; (6) A-1; (7, 8, 9) A-3; (10, 11) A-1, A-3.

THE ASSAULT

At 0400 hours, 8 October, a friendly artillery barrage, consisting of eleven Bns of Artillery, pounded Verlautenheide and Crucifix Hill for one hour prior to the attack of the 2d Bn on its objective. After the 2d Bn had taken Verlautenheide the 1st Bn would pass through the town to seize and secure Crucifix Hill. The 2d Bn captured its objective by 0700. The 1st Bn was ordered to start its approach march to its forward assembly area in Verlautenheide, about 0800. The battalion commander ordered the battalion to move out at once.

The battalion commander and forward command group arrived at the forward assembly area in Verlautenheide at 1000 hours. As soon as I, Captain Company "C", arrived I reported to the battalion commander and explained to him the situation of the company and its condition. The company had been shelled all the way up from Eilendorf, and I reported the company's casualties. The Bn commander wanted to know if we could attack at once. Captain McGreoger stepped up and said it would take Brown some time to get his company forward to his assembly area, which was to be the cellars in Verlautenheide. (12)

My Executive officer, Lt Van Wagner, had pushed on up to where I was in Verlautenheide where I was looking for cellars for the company. At this time the enemy was shelling the town heavily. Lt Van Wagner had with him the company command group and part of two platoons. (13)

We placed them in cellars, and Lt Van Wagner and I returned by way of the approach march route about 600 yards, and got the rest of the company rolling again. The company was quickly reorganized and put into the cellars so as to keep each assault platoon together.

I had my artillery and 81mm mortar observers get on a housetop, where they could observe the objective area. I also placed the H.M.G. on house-tops so they could have a good field of fire. I put out a covering force and had all platoon leaders join their platoons to await my return from my ground reconnaissance.

(12) A-1, A-3; (13) A-1.

I had a 536 radio sent to the FA observer so as to keep contact with him, and took with me a 536 radio, walking west toward Crucifix Hill. (14)

I was out about 400 yards from Verlautenheide when I received MG and rifle fire from south and southeast; the enemy also started dropping mortars near me.

I hit the ground and crawled in the direction of the small arms fire and again several bursts of MG fire came in my direction. I withdrew to a small cemetery in Verlautenheide where I had my covering force. One of the covering force opened fire and three enemy put up their hands and surrendered. I took the prisoners to my C.P. where I discovered that the Ranger Platoon had twenty-two prisoners in a cellar. The man who found them was Sgt David Cooper, who was later commissioned. (15)

I got all the platoon leaders together and gave our plan of attack. The 1st Platoon would attack on the right trail leading to Crucifix Hill and be assigned their pillboxes by number. The bunkers or pillboxes had been previously numbered. The 2nd Platoon would assault on the left of the trail, and were assigned their pillboxes.

The Ranger platoon would act as left flank security, and was assigned one pillbox. They were to engage the enemy who fired on me while I made my reconnaissance. I would then be able to locate the pillboxes for them. They were also to block the rear of Crucifix Hill.

The H.M.G.'s and my Support Platoon were ordered to go into position to support the attack, and come forward on call.

The 60mm mortars would go in position west of Verlautenheide and move forward with the H.M.G.'s and my Support Platoon.

The 81mm mortar observers and the artillery observers were to follow the 1st and 2nd Platoons.

All platoons had a 536 radio, and I had an extra 300 radio that belonged to the Ranger Platoon. This radio was left with my Executive Officer to enable me to have double contact with him. I checked to see that every one

(14, 15) A-1.

knew the signals to lift fires or to call for fire. Finally watches were set, and the time was 1140 hours. All platoon leaders were directed to return to their platoons and give their men the instructions.

At "H" hour I would give the signal to move out from my position with the 2nd Platoon. The Ranger Platoon on the left would move out when they saw the 2nd Platoon move. The 1st Platoon would do likewise on the right. (16)

My Executive Officer and Communications Sgt were present when the orders were issued. I returned to the Bn C.P. When I got there a message was coming in from Regiment. When the message was cleared, it was found that we were to hold the attack on Crucifix Hill until 1330 hours. I gave the Bn commander all information about the enemy, and also informed him of my reconnaissance and plan of attack. He had no comments to make.

I returned to my C.P., and gave the attack time to my platoon leaders, and told them I would lead out in front of the 2nd Platoon with my 300 radio operator and runner. I told them that we would move out on the double since there was no cover from our jump-off to the "Hill". This movement would keep us from being in the open as short a time as possible. The terrain in front of the 1st and 2nd Platoons was open and flat while that before the Rangers was rolling. I made a check with the battalion commander to see if any change had been made in the plans. (17)

At the time of the jump-off the Ranger Platoon came under fire from two strong points about 200 yards west of the cemetery. The firing was also coming in front of the advance of the two assault platoons, but we kept pushing to the base of the "Hill". As we hit the base of the objective both platoons came under heavy MG and rifle fire from the objective area. My runner, radio operator, and I jumped over the embankment to an old trail well below the enemy fire. At this time my 536 radio operator got a message that Lt Cameron of the Ranger Platoon had been wounded, but he was still going, and was assaulting the assigned pillbox. They were also engaged

(16) A-1; (17) A-3.

with two other enemy strong points. I called the 1st and 2nd Platoons with my 536 radio and learned that both platoons were pinned down and could not move. (18)

I ordered Lt Marvain, the 2nd Platoon leader, to throw some pole and satchel charges over the bank. I was going to see if we could use them to knock out the bunkers covering the assault platoons. I was only ten yards from the platoon, but well below the fire holding them up. The first charge to come down was a satchel charge. (19)

I picked the charge up and crawled to the pillbox and ran up to the aperture. At the same time an enemy rifleman opened the door and started out. However, when he saw me, he dashed back into fortification no. 23. I jumped at the door and tried to slam it shut; however, the excited enemy had left his rifle in the doorway. I opened the door at the same time I pulled the fuze on my charge and tossed it inside the bunker, slammed the door, and jumped back over the embankment as the pillbox and its occupants were blown up. (20)

My radio operator got another message from the Rangers stating that Lt Cameron had been wounded the second time, and that his platoon had destroyed pillbox number 22. (My two assault platoons were still pinned down, and now we were receiving both artillery and mortar fire. My runners and I picked up more pole charges and satchel charges, and moved near pillbox number 26, and fired a yellow smoke grenade signal on the south side of the pillbox for the 155mm in Eilendorf to lift fire, so as to make the final assault on the bunker. (21)

This time it took both the pole charge and the satchel charge to do the job. This pulled the fire from part of the 2nd Platoon. At the same time I received a wound in my knee. When I returned to my runner he told me that he had a message from the Ranger Platoon. Lt Cameron had been hit for the third time, and this time he had been killed. Sgt Wills, the platoon Sgt, was in command, but could not move his platoon because of (18, 19) A-1; (20) A-4, A-5; (21) A-1.

small arms and artillery fire. I could not contact the battalion commander to give him the situation; but part of the 2nd Platoon and one assault group had moved around with me on an old trail. The squad leader had been hit, and his second in command could not move out with this assault group. (22)

They had a flamethrower, so I assigned them to one pillbox number 29, and with the help of a good rifleman to keep the aperture closed another pillbox, bunker number 24 was soon neutralized. This relieved the pressure on both assault platoons. I realized now that I had been wounded again-- once on the wrist and once on the chin. This probably happened when we were working on the last pillbox. (23)

With pillboxes number 23, 22, 26, 29, and 24 neutralized this took the grazing small arms fire from my assault platoons. As a result both the 2d and 1st Platoons moved to their assigned pillboxes and were neutralizing them in good speed.

From my present position, I saw three pillboxes go out at one time from actions of the assault platoons. At this time I sent my runner back to my Executive Officer with an oral order to move up all the remaining detachments and support platoon to pillbox number 26, and to proceed to the Bn C.P. and let the Bn commander know the situation. (24)

It was now 1410 and my 300 radio made contact with the battalion. We were nearing the crucifix, but it had been shot down. Lt Snyder of the 1st Platoon had been wounded but was still fighting. I moved over with Lt Marvain, who was 2nd Platoon leader, and we rushed down the hill to a small cemetery near pillbox number 39, which was to be his left sector. Pillbox 39 was not manned, but nine enemy lay dead around the bunker. (25)

I got a hand signal from Lt Snyder, who said that all pillboxes had been cleared out in that area. My radio operator contacted the battalion and told the commander that the hill had been taken. At this time I noticed

(22) A-4, A-5; (23) A-4, A-6; (24, 25) A-1.

the enemy was withdrawing from the front of the Ranger Platoon. I could also see our support platoon moving up. I called artillery observer, and he brought fire on the Jerries who were trying to form south of Crucifix Hill. I also contacted Sgt Hamneck, who was in command of the 3rd Platoon, to have one squad work over to the rear of the pillbox near the Ranger Platoon to block the draw 100 yards south of the Hill. (26)

At the same time I got a message from Sgt Wills, who said that he had completed his mission, but that he had eight men wounded or missing. I ordered him to get his platoon organized, and to meet me at the base of the "Hill" at once. I returned to the assault platoon leaders to see how they were coming with our hasty defense plans. I showed Lt Snyder where we wanted the H.M.G. to go in position before returning to the base of the "Hill". At the rendezvous, I met Sgt Wills, of the Ranger Platoon, and Sgt Hamneck, of the 3rd Platoon, and assigned them their sectors and got set for the expected enemy action. (27)

We expected a counterattack at any time. I had a few words with my Executive Officer and showed him where to place the mortars. I took my runner, 60mm and 81mm mortar observers to their OP's and had my communications Sgt lay wires to all platoons and OP's. It was now 1530 hours, and our casualties were being evacuated to the battalion aid station in Verlautenheide.

I returned up the "Hill" to our OP's and began to register points, and pick out our final protective line. The artillery and mortar concentrations were coordinated with this FPL. At 1730 hours I left to inspect my LMG section.

I returned to Lt Marvain near pillbox 39 and decided to let him have one squad from the support platoon to occupy pillbox 39 and 40. We were then receiving heavy artillery and mortar fire, as well as some machine gun and sniper fire from positions north of the "Hill". I alerted all rifle

(26, 27) A-1.

platoons along the line as well as the observers, that Sgt Almeter and I were going out front to the north of our positions, and for everyone to keep his eyes open for machine guns and snipers. They were informed that we would be out about 200 yards, and across our entire front. (28)

We got about 300 yards northeast of the cemetery at pillbox 39 when we came under heavy small arms fire. At this time I got shot through the shoulder, and Sgt Almeter got hit in the stomach. He fell to the ground. I picked him up to his knees and asked him if he could crawl back with me to pillbox 39, where I could get aid for him. We were nearing pillbox 39 when Lt Snyder saw the shape we were in. He rushed up the trail, and gave me a hand with Sgt Almeter. Lt Snyder was down there checking with Lt Marvain on our defense plans. I got a man from Lt Marvain to help me get Sgt Almeter to the Company C.P. at pillbox 26. The Aid man administered some emergency aid to Sgt Almeter, and with the P.W.'s we had at the C.P., we removed some bunks from the pillboxes and had the P.W.'s act as litter bearers to carry our casualties back to the Battalion Aid Station in Verlautenheide. (29)

It was then about 1830 hours. When I got to my C.P. the Battalion S-3 was there and wanted to check my final protective fires for the battalion. He also told me that "B" Company had moved into the gap along the ridge line from Verlautenheide. I had the Aid man do some first aid work on me, and the 1st Sgt had some hot coffee. As you know, these pillboxes have stoves in them. (30)

I returned to the Battalion C.P. with Captain McGreoger and got all the orders for the night, then returned to the Company C.P. to check on all defenses for the night, and put out some additional listening posts and waited for the expected counterattack that did not come off until 0400 9 October. The enemy attempted to retake Crucifix Hill by storm. Three waves of Infantrymen and assault engineers moved up the northern and western

(28) A-1, A-4; (29) A-1; (30) A-1, A-3.

slopes. The men of the company held their small arms fire until the Jerries were almost upon m. Then, as the enemy was silletted by our artillery flares and W.P. shells, they opened up with a murderous grazing fire that piled the onrushing Germans in front of their foxholes. (31)

The H.M.G. Section, Company "D", commanded by Lt Yarbor (yardbird), particularly distinguished itself. The gunners, swinging their guns with free traverse, blazed away at every enemy in sight. The enemy (or whatever shattered remnants were left) withdrew as suddenly as they had attacked, leaving behind forty-odd dead within our "bloody rock" throwing distance; also leaving thirty-five prisoners. Over one hundred dead could be seen out in the path of the artillery and mortar fire. (32)

Sixty men and officers from the 18th Infantry died on the battlefield that day, and more were to follow in the face of the desperate enemy counterattacks. It was rugged going; but Crucifix Hill no longer looked down our throats, upon our front lines, or rear areas. (33)

Company "A" failed to gain its objective, thereby leaving Company "C" on Crucifix Hill exposed in all directions except to the east. This compelled Company "C" and the attached Rangers to defend in three directions, north, south and west, totaling approximately 1700 yards about the hill.

[Later on in the morning, two (2) self-propelled 155mm guns were emplaced north of Eilendorf to engage the enemy strong points still holding out against Company "A" in the vicinity of pillboxes 17, 18, and 19. The guns succeeded in smashing two (2) pillboxes completely and laid deadly fire on the rest of the enemy in the area.] (34)

The battalion commander ordered me to have my support platoon assist Company "A" by attacking the pillboxes from the rear or west side. This succeeded in dislodging the enemy from many of his positions. Heavy casualties were inflicted upon the enemy, and 12 prisoners were taken; (35) thus completing the "Bn" mission. Company "A" tied in with Company "C"

(31) A-1, A-3; (32) A-1, A-2; (33) A-2; (34, 35) A-1, A-2, A-3.

by fire near the trail on the south side of Crucifix Hill about 1300, 9 October 1944; however, I think, if Company "B" had been ordered to push up south of Crucifix Hill within Company "C"'s zone of action in the late evening of 8 October, and assaulted the pillboxes from the rear, or west, which were holding Company "A" up, it would have saved time and lives. The mission of the battalion would have been completed much faster, and would have closed the rear of Company "C", thus allowing them more men with which to meet the enemy threats from the north and northwest.

This completed one of the most difficult and important missions ever assigned the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, of the 1st U. S. Infantry Division.

The total number of casualties from Company "C" in the attack on Crucifix Hill in the Aachen Offensive, 8 October 1944, (Rhineland Campaign), was as follows: (36)

Company "C"	<i>Ranger Pl.</i>	Enemy
K.I.A.	<i>K.I.A.</i>	K.I.A.
0 - Officers	<i>1 - officer</i>	150 - Officers and Men
5 - E.M.	<i>3 - men</i>	
W.I.A.	<i>W.I.A.</i>	W.I.A. (Prisoners)
2 - Officers	<i>0 - officers</i>	1 - Officer
33 - E.M.	<i>6 - men</i>	20 - odd E.M.
Captured by Enemy	<i>Captured</i>	Captured
None.	<i>None</i>	1 - Officer
		75 - E.M. or over (37)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In making a study of this operation, it will be seen the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, was assigned a most important mission. The battalion was under observed heavy mortar and artillery fire. As the reader can see, Crucifix Hill stands over 239 meters, or over 777 feet high, plus about 60 feet for the Crucifix that stood on the hill, making a total of about 837 feet--several hundred feet higher than our approach march

(36) A-1; (37) A-1, A-2, A-3.

route from Eilendorf to Verlautenheide. This was a daylight maneuver for the battalion. As for the part of Company "C", with the Battalion Ranger Platoon attached, it should be noted they were given a frontal attack mission on a hill that was studded with pillboxes.

It also will be seen that Company "C" was given at least a two-company sector to attack and hold at all cost, and that the left flank and rear were open to the enemy until closed the following day.

It will also be noted the element of surprise, that we have been taught to use as a primary rule, was not included in this operation.

The 1st Battalion moved up too soon from Eilendorf, following so close to the 2nd Battalion that we got caught in the enemy's barrages on our approach march. It can easily be seen that the success of this battle during the first five (5) minutes after the jump-off was when the enemy in front of the Ranger Platoon put his fire on them and let the two assault platoons get to his rear and flanks. The enemy failed to open fire with his MG and rifles from Crucifix Hill, thereby letting two assault platoons cross about 700 yards of open terrain, and still be organized, and letting the main effort get at the base of the hill. [Although the two assault platoons got pinned down, we have been taught that as long as any member of the assaulting force can maneuver you are not pinned down, and in this case Never do nothing; think fast and act correctly. Also, it will be noted that shell craters cut down the field of fire of the enemy and offered cover for the assaulting forces.

It was also learned that the enemy holding the hill was punch drunk from our preparation shelling on the hill prior to the attack. The above information about the enemy being punch drunk from our shelling was gotten from P.W.'s who were captured on the hill. Some of the P.W.'s had swollen eyes, and their skin was a light navy blue color, caused from the concussion of our shelling prior and during our attack.]

The advance was so fast, and the direct fire from Eilendorf so effective and heavy that the enemy was confused.

It will also be noted that in many cases it was the individual on the spot who made the quick decisions and carried them out.

To sum up the results of this battle it will be noted that the advance from Eilendorf, against observed heavy artillery and mortar fire, disorganized the company and we suffered heavy casualties--but it succeeded in carrying out its mission.

It will be noted that with well-trained soldiers when their leaders are killed or wounded the next subordinate takes over if he was well-trained and present during the briefing periods.

In the case that the squad leader and his second in command are wounded if a soldier is properly trained and instructed he can and will carry out the mission.

LESSONS LEARNED

1. Rehearsals for assault missions pay dividends.
2. Communications are a must in any type of operation, but are of primary importance in assault missions.
3. Complete coordination must be made to use to the maximum the supporting fires.
4. All infantry soldiers should know how to use demolitions.
5. All men must know the mission of their unit, and be able to take over if their leaders become casualties.
6. If surprise is not possible, speed and fire power become most important.
7. Every leader must be able to make hasty terrain evaluation, and make quick decisions on that estimate.
8. In combat THREE things are of vital importance: RECONNAISSANCE; COMMUNICATION; LIAISON.

The first must be made by the unit's commanders before an engagement to insure for his unit its proper route to the line of departure, its correct deployment, and its proper direction. And further, these essentials

must be continuous throughout the action. The SECOND and THIRD can only be maintained by constant effort on the part of every commander. Training is most important. Let the reader look back to the six (6) days from 2 to 7 October 1944 when the entire battalion was organized in small assault groups, and training both individual and team groups were carried out. The Battalion Rangers were organized to operate both as a team with Company "C" and to carry out its independent missions.

It will also be noted that assigning each assault group a particular pillbox in the planning phase, will save the commander time which can be better utilized to plan the employment of his command to meet the ever-changing situation on the battlefield.

THE FIRST U.S. INFANTRY DIVISION MOTTO IS:
NO MISSION TOO DIFFICULT
NO SACRIFICE TOO GREAT