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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY F, 30TH INFANTRY
(3RD INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE CROSSING OF
THE RHINE RIVER NEAR WORMS, GERMANY,
26 - 27 MARCH 1945
(CENTRAL EUROPE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Rifle Platoon Leader)

Type of operation described: RIFLE COMPANY IN AN
ASSAULT RIVER CROSSING

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index	1
Bibliography	2
Introduction	3
The General Situation	6
The Rhine River and the Enemy	8
The 3rd Division and 30th Infantry Plans	9
The Plans of the 2nd Battalion and Company F	10
The Company Attack	16
Analysis and Criticism	40
Lessons	43
Annex A - Extracts from Written Statement of 1st Lt. Arthur H. Nusbaum	45
Annex B - Extracts from Written Statement of 1st Lt. Joseph J. Obadowski	46
Map A - Seventh Army and 3rd Division through France	
Map B - XV Corps at the Rhine	
Map C - 3rd Division and 30th Infantry Plans	
Map D - Company F Crosses the Rhine	
Map E - Burstadt	
Map F - Burstadt to Lorsch	

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INTRODUCTION

Company F, 30th Infantry, 3rd US Infantry Division, made an assault crossing of the Rhine River near Worms, Germany at 0230, 26 March 1945. This narrative will explain Company F's preparation for the crossing, actual crossing, drive inland, and reorganization after the beachhead had been secured.

The Rhine crossing can best be explained by first tracing the actions of the 3rd US Infantry Division from the invasion of Southern France in August 44 to the training period near Nancy, France, in February 45.

On 15 August 44, the Seventh Army landed on the coast of Southern France. (See Map A) The 3rd, 36th and 45th Infantry Divisions comprised the assault elements. (1) After seizing the beachhead, the three divisions began a powerful drive northward through the Rhone River Valley. The 3rd Division drove quickly through Montelimar and Besancon and reached the Vosges Mountains on 12 September 44. (2) After a bitter struggle through the Vosges Mountains during the months of October and November, the division captured the key city of Strasbourg on the Rhine River in early December. (See Map A) The 30th Regiment of the division had little rest in Strasbourg. On 13 December the

(1) A-3, p. 201; A-5, p. 127; (2) A-3, p. 238.

30th Regiment was ordered to the Colmar area to assist and later relieve the 36th Division. (See Map A) (3) The 7th and 15th Regiments and the remainder of the division troops joined the 30th Regiment on 17 December 44.

The Germans had strong defenses on the plains near Colmar. (4) Their maneuvers in the "Colmar Pocket" were a part of the counter-offensive staged in the Ardennes. It was during the Colmar operation that the 30th Regiment suffered a serious reversal.

During the night of 23-24 January 45 the 30th Regiment crossed the Ill River, a small stream north of Colmar. The riflemen of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions crossed the river and deployed on the far bank. The first supporting tank that attempted to cross a small bridge over the stream fell through to the river, thus leaving the riflemen across the river with no armor support. The Germans took advantage of this situation and launched a strong counterattack against the regiment. The counterattack was predominantly armor. As a result of lack of armor support, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions were forced to fall back across the Ill River. Many officers and men were killed, wounded or captured by the Germans. (5) The attempted crossing of the Ill River, near Colmar, on the night of 23-24 January remained in the minds of the men of Company F, 30th Regiment, until the end of the war. (6)

The division cleared the "Colmar Pocket" by 6 February. It remained on the banks of the Rhine until 20 February.

(3) A-3, p. 283; (4) A-3, p. 283; (5) A-4, p. 314-317;
(6) Personal Knowledge.

At that time it moved to the area of Nancy, France, to become SHAEF reserve. (See Map A) (7)

During the period 22 February to 13 March the entire division engaged in training. Subjects on the schedule were the attack of a fortified position, street fighting, defense against armored attack, and tank-infantry tactics. The most important training received at Nancy were the river-crossing exercises. Units were oriented on all types of infantry assault craft and were given the opportunity to become fully acquainted with their methods of employment. "Dry-run" boat drills were practiced in open fields. At night the units had practical exercises in river-crossings. (8) (9)

On 10 March the 30th Regiment moved to a lake area southeast of Nancy to engage in combined river-crossing exercises with the combat engineers. (10) The engineers manning the boats were from the same units that later carried the 3rd Division across the Rhine. Perfection in every phase of river crossing was stressed. Boat teams, previously organized within the companies, were drilled until each man knew his specific job thoroughly. The training continued for two days. At the end of the brief training period, the 30th Infantry returned to Nancy to make final preparations for the attack into Germany. (11)

The action of the 30th Infantry at the Ill River crossing and the amphibious training received at Nancy were two of the deciding factors in the success of Company F in the Rhine crossing. (12)

(7) A-4, p. 323, p. 326; (8) Personal Knowledge; (9) A-3, p. 328; (10) A-4, p. 327; (11) Personal Knowledge, and A-4, p. 327; (12) Combined opinions of the officers of Company F, 30th Infantry, June, 1945.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

In order to arrive at the banks of the Rhine, the Seventh Army, including the 3rd Division, had to battle through the Siegfried Line. Higher headquarters considered the breaching of the Siegfried Line and the crossing of the Rhine River as parts of the same continuous operation. (13)

The Seventh Army Commander at this time was Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch. XV Corps was commanded by Lieutenant General Wade H. Haislip. The 3rd Infantry Division was commanded by Major General John W. "Iron Mike" O'Daniel. The 30th Infantry was led by Colonel Lionel C. McGarr.

Field Order 10, 11 March 45, Headquarters, Seventh Army, provided that Seventh Army would cease defensive operations and would attack to destroy the enemy in its zone, penetrate the Siegfried Line and seize the west bank of the Rhine River. The Rhine was to be crossed between Mannheim and Mainz. (14)

XV Corps issued Field Order 22 on 12 March 45, which conformed with the provisions of Field Order 10, Headquarters, Seventh Army. On 12 March the 3rd Infantry Division was attached to XV Corps for the coming attack. (15)

D-Day for the attack into the Siegfried Line and into Germany was ordered as 15 March 45. The XV Corps was to make the main effort with the 3rd, 45th and 100th Divisions in the assault. Key locations on the route of the Corps were Zweibrucken, Kaiserslauten and the west bank of

(13) (14) (15) A-2, p. 22.

the Rhine in its zone. On Army orders the XV Corps was to cross the Rhine River north of Mannheim and secure a bridgehead for further operations to the northeast. (16)

The plan as set forth by Seventh Army and XV Corps was executed. On the 15th of March the 3rd Division passed through the 44th Division and attacked in the direction of the Siegfried Line and Germany. On the 18th of March the 3rd Division reached the defenses of the Siegfried and by the 20th of March had completely cracked through the line and captured Zweibrucken, its' first large objective. (17)

After a brief period of clearing out isolated pockets around Zweibrucken and the Siegfried Line, the division moved quickly toward Kaiserslautern and the Rhine. General Patton's Third Army units had moved south into the XV Corps area after penetrating the Siegfried. Close coordination was necessary in order to move the 3rd Division to the banks of the Rhine. (18)

By 24 March all units of the 3rd Division had completed their moves to the west bank of the Rhine River. The division began its reconnaissance and plans for the jump across the Rhine. The XV Corps assault crossing was to be made by the 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions with the 3rd Division on the right and the 45th Division on the left. (19) (See Map B) In preparation for the assault crossing, elements of the 3rd Division renewed their training on river crossing techniques.

Field Order 23, XV Corps, 24 March 45, directed the

(16) A-2, p. 23, p. 24; (17) A-3, p. 337; (18) A-3, p. 338; (19) A-2, p. 65.

3rd Division to attack at D-Day, H-Hour and force a crossing of the Rhine between Mannheim and Worms. (20)

A brief description of the Rhine and the enemy opposing the 3rd Division would be fitting at this point in the narration.

THE RHINE RIVER AND THE ENEMY

"WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE NORMANDY BEACHES, THE RHINE RIVER PRESENTED THE MOST FORMIDABLE NATURAL OBSTACLE IN WESTERN EUROPE." (21)

The Rhine River in the vicinity of Mannheim and Worms flowed in a northerly direction and was approximately 1,000 feet wide. It was from 15 to 20 feet in depth in the center of the stream. The terrain on both sides of the river was exceedingly flat for a distance of 3 to 7 miles. On the far bank the flat land stretched approximately 8 miles and ended in a series of low mountains. The rate of flow of the river was normally from 4 to 6 MPH. The banks had been revetted very solidly with large rocks. On the west bank there was an elevated road which ran parallel to the river about 100 yards from the water's edge. (22) (23)

The enemy situation near the end of March was hard to ascertain. Thousands of prisoners had been captured by the Third and Seventh Armies from the Siegfried Line to the Rhine but it was not known how many had succeeded in retreating across the river. "Remnants of 22 divisions were believed to have escaped across the river in the XV Corps

(20) A-2, p. 65; (21) A-6, Introduction; (22) A-5, p. 252; (23) Personal Knowledge.

zone, but the effective strength of the divisions could not be estimated." (24) Seventh Army estimated that the enemy was probably capable of defending with about 50 men per river front kilometer.

THE 3RD DIVISION AND 30TH INFANTRY PLANS

The 3rd Division had its normal attachments during the period 24 to 26 March. They were the 441st AAA AW Battalion, the 756th Tank Battalion, and the 601st TD Battalion. In addition, the 3rd Division had as attachments the 540th Engineer Group (C), the 1109th Engineer Group (C), and the 106th Cavalry Group. The attached engineer groups were to perform all the bridge construction for the division and were to transport all assault troops across the river by assault craft and ponton ferries. The organic 10th Engineer Battalion (C) was to be held for operations across the river. The 106th Cavalry Group was given the mission of patrolling the exposed XV Corps right flank during the crossing. (25) (26)

Major General O'Daniel, 3rd Division Commander, planned his attack across the Rhine as follows: 7th Infantry to be on the right, 30th Infantry on the left, 15th Infantry to be the division reserve. As the 7th Infantry was to be on the exposed XV Corps right flank, the 15th Infantry was to be prepared to block to the south after the crossing. The 7th Infantry initial objective was Sandhofen. The 30th Infantry axis of advance was the Worms-Burstadt-Lorsch road.

(24) A-1, p. 747; (25) Verbal statement of Lt. Col. Norman P. Barnes, Asst G-3, 3rd Inf Div, 10 Dec 48; (26) A-2, p. 68.

Should be personal know
D-Day; 26 March, H-Hour: 0230. (See Map C) (27) (28)

Colonel Lionel C. McGarr, Commanding Officer of the 30th Infantry, planned to commit his 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the regiment as the assault elements. The 2nd Battalion would cross on the left and attack along the Worms-Burstadt road. The 3rd Battalion was to cross on the right and proceed to Lampertheim. The 1st Battalion was to cross after the 2nd and 3rd Battalion and attack in the direction of Hofheim and Burstadt. (29) (See Map C)

THE PLANS OF THE 2ND BATTALION AND COMPANY F

The 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, bivouaced on 24 March about ten miles west of the Rhine. However, late in the afternoon, the battalion moved to an assembly area at Pfiffligheim, four miles east of Worms. (30) On the evening of 24 March the men in the companies wrote letters and relaxed. Incoming mail was distributed and outgoing mail was censored. The rest period was a welcome one after the battle through the Siegfried Line and the race through Kaiserslautern to the Rhine River.

The rifle platoons of Company F ranged from 17 to 22 men per platoon. Casualties had been heavy in the Siegfried Line, the company lost 9 killed and 22 wounded during a costly attack through the dragons' teeth to the pillboxes. In spite of the heavy casualties sustained in the past week, morale was high and the men were eager to cross the Rhine. (31)

(27) A-5, p. 250; (28) A-4, p. 333; (29) A-4, p. 333;
(30) A-2, p. 68; (31) Personal knowledge.

At approximately 1100 hours, 25 March, the battalion commander, Major James L. Osgard, called the company commanders of the battalion to his CP for a brief orientation on the crossing of the Rhine by the 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry. Maps previously distributed to the company officers had been the objects of very careful study. As yet, the exact crossing location for the 2nd Battalion had not been selected. The battalion commander did give the approximate location as an area immediately south of Worms. (32)
(33)

Upon his return from the battalion CP, Captain Robert L. Fleet, company commander of Company F, was ready to make a reconnaissance of the river. He took his four lieutenants, by jeep, through the battered city of Worms to the main bridge across the Rhine. The bridge had been blown by the retreating Germans and the center section had dropped neatly into the river. On each side of the river were two massive 150 foot towers, all that remained intact of the original bridge. The Company F officers climbed high into the tower to observe the far bank of the river. About 100 yards from the base of the tower an American tank was firing at enemy positions across the river. On the far bank were observed enemy positions, occasionally a German soldier could be seen running quickly from one foxhole to another. Actually there was little to be gained from this reconnaissance as a fringe of tall trees bordered the entire east bank of the river, thereby limiting visibility to about
(32) A-7; (33) Personal knowledge.

20 yards from the water's edge. After making this limited visual reconnaissance for about half an hour, Captain Fleet decided to make a reconnaissance of the approximate crossing location near the southern edge of Worms. The officers parked the jeep behind a large building, located adjacent to a chemical works, and started their reconnaissance. (34)
(35)

The five officers moved by foot to the very edge of the river. They walked along the banks for a distance of 300 yards. On this reconnaissance, they checked the far side of the river as best they could. Scattered German personnel could be observed from time to time moving from one location to another, the Germans crouched low and ran quickly. At a point directly across the river was observed a cluster of four or five small buildings and Germans were observed moving about in the general area. Captain Fleet advised his lieutenants that these houses were possibly a German strongpoint and probably had automatic weapons. While on the reconnaissance, the group took a close look at the bank of the river. It was solid and not marshy or muddy and would provide excellent footing for launching the boats. Retracing their steps, the group stopped in a small building which was formerly a yacht club. Observation from here was a little better, but the trees on the far bank still denied good observation. After observing from this location for 10 or 15 minutes, the officers returned to the jeep. (36) (37)

(34) A-7; (35) Personal knowledge; (36) A-7; (37) Personal knowledge.

Soon after the Company F officers arrived back at Pfiffligheim, all officers of the battalion were called to the battalion CP for the battalion commander's attack order. The battalion commander wasted no time in giving his order. He gave the over-all situation, including the division and regimental plans for the crossing. The 2nd Battalion was to cross at a spot about 200 yards south of the small yacht club visited by the Company F officers earlier that afternoon. The 2nd Battalion would cross with E and F Companies in the assault with E on the left and F on the right. E Company was to cross and capture a group of houses 400 yards beyond the bridge tower. F Company was to assemble after crossing and continue across a two-mile open field and attack the town of Burstadt. G Company was to be the reserve company and was to mop-up and follow F Company into Burstadt. (See Map D) H Company and Battalion Headquarters would cross the river after all rifle companies had crossed. The assault wave of each company was to cross in storm boats and the following waves of the rifle companies would cross in assault boats. Companies would leave Pfiffligheim by foot at 2000, 25 March, and would be led by members of the battalion staff through Worms to the final assembly area. The final assembly area was a small area immediately behind the elevated road which ran parallel to the river about 100 yards from the water's edge. At H-Hour, the engineer guides would lead the riflemen over the road to the boats which were to be lined up in formation. Upon arriving at the boats, the riflemen

would hand-carry the boats to the water's edge. The engineer crews would guide the boats to the far side. (38)

After answering any questions and clearing up any doubts in the minds of the assembled group, the battalion commander dismissed his officers so that they could make their final plans.

The Company F officers returned to their company area and Captain Fleet made his plans. The company executive officer was to draw up the boat list which was to be submitted immediately to battalion headquarters. Captain Fleet's plans were comparatively simple. The 2nd and 3rd Platoons were to be the initial assault wave; 2nd Platoon on the right, 3rd Platoon on the left, 1st Platoon, Weapons Platoon, and Company Headquarters were to cross in assault boats after the assault waves had crossed. The entire company was to assemble on the far side at a location easily located on the map, it was a stand of trees on the road that ran parallel to the river's edge about 250 yards inland. At this point the company would line up in column: 2nd Platoon, 3rd Platoon, 1st Platoon, Weapons Platoon and Company Headquarters, and proceed toward Burstadt. (See Map D) It would be necessary to set compasses for the night attack across the open field to Burstadt. The platoon leader and platoon guide would have the compasses in the 2nd Platoon, and the company commander would have his compass with him in rear of the 3rd Platoon. It was planned that the three individuals carrying compasses would stop from time to

(38) Personal knowledge.

time and check with each other on direction. The azimuth from the assembly point on the east bank of the river to Burstadt was checked and rechecked on the maps. (It is interesting to note that none of the personnel involved took magnetic variation into consideration.) After answering any questions, Captain Fleet dismissed his officers and key non-commissioned officers so they could give their final orientation to the men in the platoon. (39)

The platoon leaders returned to their platoons and oriented the men briefly. Every man in the entire company had participated in the river crossing exercises at Nancy, so questions concerning the method of crossing were at a minimum. The only real question the men had was concerning artillery support. This was answered by repeating the information the battalion commander had given his officers; "A heavy barrage by Division and Corps Artillery would precede the crossing." (As it later developed, this barrage was entirely adequate to neutralize the far bank.) (40)

(41)

By 1700 the entire company had been oriented, so letter writing and relaxation were next on the schedule. Hot food was fed about 1800, after which the men made final checks on their equipment, finished their letters and attempted to catch a little sleep before being called out for the move to the river. (42) Since combat was only a minute-to-minute, day-by-day existence, none of the men were particularly worried about the river crossing. Only time

(39) Personal knowledge; (40) A-7; (41) Personal knowledge; (42) Personal knowledge.

would tell what the future held for each individual.

THE COMPANY ATTACK

At 2000, 25 March, Company F was lined up and ready to move out. A battalion staff officer met the company and in a few minutes the company was on the move toward the banks of the Rhine. The march led the company through small clusters of houses and past open farm fields. Enemy aircraft were particularly active and anti-aircraft machine guns sprayed the night sky with their red tracers. The company soon arrived in Worms and continued past bombed and burned-out factories and houses to the south end of the city. At about 2300, Company F arrived at a crossroad in a small patch of woods about 300 yards from the final assembly area. Here the company was halted while the battalion staff officer checked to determine exactly when F Company was to move into the area. The men took advantage of this break and fell on the ground to catch what sleep they could. (43)

After a 30-minute halt, the company was ordered to move quietly into their final assembly area, using engineer tape previously laid on the ground as a guide. The spot selected for F Company was on the west side of the elevated road running along the river. (See Point 1, Map D) The company was organized in boat groups in each platoon. The men immediately began to dig shallow foxholes for protection. While digging, they watched the brilliant anti-

(43) Personal knowledge.

aircraft show going on overhead. Two enemy aircraft were brought down in flames in the immediate vicinity of the 3rd Battalion crossing site located to the south. (44) After completing their foxholes, the boat groups and platoons were checked by the company executive officer and company commander to ascertain that all was in readiness. Captured German Panzerfausts were distributed to selected members of the company previously trained in their use.

(45) (46)

The time was now about 0100, 26 March, with one and a half hours remaining before H-Hour. The engineer crews from the boats on the east side of the road came back to determine the exact location of their groups. The men of the company relaxed and talked quietly. A voice from a foxhole inquired, "Is this trip really necessary?" (47)

At 0152, 3rd Division Artillery plus attachments, the 44th Division Artillery, and the XV Corps Artillery, began their pre H-Hour concentrations. (48) (49) 10,000 rounds were fired in a 38-minute period. At 0215, the engineer guides were with their Company F boat groups ready to move out. As the fires began to decrease at approximately 0225, the men moved with their 540th Engineer Combat Group guides to the waiting boats. The 2nd Platoon on the right had three boats, the 3rd Platoon on the left had 4 boats. Each boat held 5 to 7 riflemen and 2 engineers. The storm boats were carried by each boat group to the river bank. No enemy fire was falling on the troops. At the river's edge the

(44) Verbal statement of Sgt. Richard E. McCoy, Actg Machine Gun Section Sgt., Co. M, 30th Inf, 13 Jan 49; (45) Personal knowledge; (46) A-7; (47) Personal knowledge; (48) A-3, p. 339; (49) A-5, p. 250.

boats were quickly placed in the water and men began paddling until the engineer crews could get the 55 HP motors started. Some motors coughed and started immediately while 2 or 3 boats were paddled more than half way across the river. One stray friendly artillery shell landed in the water about 20 yards in front of a 3rd Platoon boat. (One 2nd Platoon boat, when lowered into the water, became caught on a rock. Two riflemen had to jump waist-high into the water to push the boat free. This same boat was minus the engineer crewman who was to guide the boat from the front.)

All boats of the assault wave moved across the river and landed safely on the far bank. (See Point 2, Map D)

(50) The 2nd and 3rd Platoon leaders quickly rallied the men who landed in their immediate area for the short move to the company assembly point previously designated. Enemy opposition was light, two machine guns firing at the crossing site were quickly silenced by the platoons in their move to the assembly point. By the time the 2nd and 3rd Platoons had advanced cautiously and reached the assembly point, the 1st Platoon, Weapons Platoon and Company Headquarters had completed their crossing. All elements of the company organized at the assembly point for the move to Burstadt. (Point 3, Map D) The platoons lined up as Captain Fleet had previously directed; 2nd Platoon, 3rd Platoon, 1st Platoon, Weapons Platoon, Company Headquarters. Organizing the company for the move inland was relatively easy, al-

(50) A-7.

though it was exceedingly dark at that time. At a signal from Captain Fleet, the company began to move out towards their objective. (51)

(It is interesting to note that the 2nd Battalion of the 30th Infantry received practically no opposition in the crossing. The 3rd Battalion of the 30th Infantry received heavy fire at their crossing site and the entire 7th Infantry on the right flank received heavy fire from enemy 88 MM guns located on an island in the river.) (52)
(53)

The 2nd Platoon led the move inland. (See Point 4, Map D) In front were 2 scouts and the platoon guide, the platoon guide had his compass. About 50 yards behind was the platoon leader with his compass. There were two flank guards 50 yards on the left and two flank guards 50 yards on the right. The guards on the left were to notify the platoon leader when they could see or actually were on the road leading from Worms to Burstadt. The platoon leader sent riflemen to the lead scouts and to the flank guards from time to time to assure the formation was intact. At about 10-minute intervals, the entire company formation would halt while the platoon guide, the platoon leader, and the company commander checked their compasses to see that the company was proceeding in exactly the correct direction. (The compasses had been set to bring the company to Burstadt at the exact spot where the road from Worms entered Burstadt.) (54)

(51) Personal knowledge; (52) Verbal statement of Sgt. Richard E. McCoy, Actg. Machine Gun Section Sgt., Co. M. 30th Inf, 13 Jan 49; (53) Verbal statement of Major John D. Foulk, S-2, 7th Inf, 28 Dec 48; (54) Personal knowledge.

In the field over which the company was moving were many small irrigation or drainage streams. They were about 12 feet wide and 2 to 3 feet deep. These ditches occurred about every 200 yards. The company crossed a paved road and soon thereafter crossed the railroad leading from Lampertheim. Judging by the angles at which the road and railroad were crossed, the company officers knew they were headed in the correct direction. Heavy enemy fire could be heard coming from about two miles to the south, this fire was directed at the 7th Infantry crossing site and the 3rd Battalion of the 30th Infantry. About 1,000 yards to the company right could be heard enemy tracked or wheeled vehicles, the members of the company did their best to "ignore" the sound of these vehicles and continued on their way to Burstadt. (55)

The company was in perfect formation and proceeded cautiously across the field. At about 0400 hours, the company reached a large farmhouse with outlying barns and smaller buildings. (See Point 5, Map D) The 2nd Platoon leader passed the information back to the company commander to hold up the column while the farmhouse was checked for enemy personnel, the platoon leader also sent three men around to the back of the farmhouse to search out any enemy. The farmhouse was found to be empty and the three men returned in about five minutes to report they found no enemy but there was a stream about 20 feet wide and 4 to 6 feet deep in the rear of the barns. The platoon leader

(55) Personal knowledge.

sent the platoon sergeant and the three men back to the stream to find a bridge or a ford. (56) About this time, there were loud voices and an extreme commotion to the right of the farmhouse. It proved to be the company commander of G Company and his company. The G Company Commander wanted to know what the difficulty was and why F Company was moving so slowly. The 2nd Platoon leader and the G Commander exchanged a few words and then Captain Fleet joined the discussion and reminded the G Company Commander that G Company was to follow F Company and not to break into the F Company formation. There was great confusion in the area as G Company men swarmed over the farmhouse, there was no semblance of control in G Company. (57)

In a few minutes the platoon sergeant returned to the 2nd Platoon leader and reported that there was a small wooden bridge about 50 feet down the stream. F Company moved immediately to cross the bridge. After crossing the bridge quickly the company again assumed its' correct formation. The two guards on the left reported that they were guiding on the road to Burstadt, so everything was going smoothly except for the fact that G Company again came abreast of F Company on the right. G Company had no formation in the "field manual" sense of the word. (58) (59)

The time was now 0530. It was slowly getting lighter and visibility increased to about 75 to 100 yards. The 2nd Platoon suddenly came upon a marshy patch of ground with

(56) Personal knowledge; (57) A-7; (58) Personal knowledge; (59) A-7.

small ditches running diagonally across it. Upon reaching the marshy ground, the 2nd Platoon leader saw that Burstadt was about 100 yards in front of the platoon. At this time the company halted while the 2nd Platoon leader and two men made a quick visual reconnaissance for a bridge across a small stream running behind the houses and for an entrance through the back yards of the houses into the town. G Company was still on the right in their helter-skelter formation. F Company was well-dispersed behind the marshes. (See Point 1, Map E)

Suddenly there was a loud report in the vicinity of G Company. At this sound all men of both companies took what cover was available in the field. Another explosion soon followed and an enemy tank was observed about 150 yards to the left front of F Company. The tank was located at the point where the Worms-Burstadt road entered Burstadt. The tank would sneak out from behind a building, fire, and then back up several yards for cover. Enemy machine guns on the left front opened fire on the two companies, however, their exact location could not be determined. (See Point 2, Map E) One machine gun was firing down the Worms-Burstadt road. The two left flank guards of the 2nd Platoon took cover under a culvert where the stream went under the road. F Company could not locate the enemy machine guns due to the early morning ground haze. (60) (61)

When the enemy firing began, the 2nd Platoon leader and

(60) Personal knowledge; (61) A-7.

his two riflemen ran quickly across a small wooden bridge they had located over the stream and looked for a spot where the company could enter the town. A house was found which had a courtyard and an entrance into the first street in Burstadt. The platoon leader called back to the company commander that he had found a location. The company tried to move quickly by small groups to cross the stream and get into the courtyard. While the company was in the process of moving, the 2nd Platoon leader and his two men ventured out into the first street of Burstadt to attempt to work around behind the tank and knock it out. (See Point 3, Map E) It took only several minutes for the 2nd Platoon and Captain Fleet to move into the courtyard and the house. The 3rd Platoon, 1st Platoon, Weapons Platoon, and Company Headquarters were still in the field seeking cover from the enemy fire. The enemy machine guns were still not located and the tank was not exposed long enough for F Company to return any fire. (62)

At this moment friendly artillery began to fall within a 100-200 yard radius of the enemy tank. The concentration was extremely intense. The 2nd Platoon leader and his two men were caught in the street, the 2nd Platoon, part of the 3rd Platoon, and Captain Fleet were in the courtyard and the house, and the 1st Platoon, Weapons Platoon and Company Headquarters were still in the field. (63)

Artillery rounds were landing within 15 yards of the

(62) A-7; (63) A-7.

2nd Platoon leader and his men. They took what cover they could in doorways. Movement was not feasible as it was impossible to tell where the next round would fall. Tiles from the roof tops came tumbling down on the small group and shrapnel whizzed through the street. The portion of the company in the house was in a better location as most rounds were landing on the roof or in the street. The group still remaining in the field did not know which way to move and received five casualties from this heavy shelling. (64)

The artillery fire continued to fall for 10 to 15 minutes. It then decreased in intensity and the men still in the field joined the company in the courtyard and the house. The 2nd Platoon leader and his men ran quickly around the corner behind the tank, only to find it burning and abandoned. There were no enemy sighted in the area so the platoon leader and his men returned quickly to the rest of the company to report the situation. It is not known whether the artillery fire hit the tank or whether the crew set it on fire and retired back into the town. At any rate the threat of the tank was now removed and the enemy machine guns were silent. (65) (66)

(There are several points to be considered at this time. The first is that Company F had no artillery forward observer at any time during the Rhine crossing. The second is that it is not known exactly who called for the artillery fire that landed on Company F, however, the battalion S-3, located

(64) Personal knowledge; (65) Personal knowledge; (66) A-7.

on the Worms-Burstadt road about 200 yards from the town, called the battalion commander by radio to stop the artillery. (67) In the third place the casualties inflicted on Company F as a result of the enemy action and our own artillery numbered seven men. (68) Finally, the effect of heavy friendly artillery fire falling on Company F was extremely demoralizing so early in the attack on Burstadt.) (69)

It was now approximately 0600, 26 March. The friendly artillery fire ceased. Captain Fleet then ordered the 1st and the 2nd Platoons to continue into the center of Burstadt by two streets, the 2nd Platoon following a street on the left and the 1st Platoon following the main street. The platoons had advanced one block when they came abreast of a church, the steeple of which dominated the town. (See Point 4, Map E) Near the base of the church the 2nd Platoon began to receive heavy sniper fire from all directions. The 1st Platoon advanced to the main intersection in the center of town and they were met by sniper fire. (See Point 5, Map E) The fire directed at the platoons was predominately Panzerfausts. If a rifleman exposed himself for one instant, a huge Panzerfaust projectile with the effect of a 105 MM shell would come flying at him. (70) The projectile was capable of punching a hole in a house or through a stone wall. The fragmentation effect was not severe, but flying debris made movement hazardous.

The 1st Platoon leader placed his men in positions where

(67) Verbal statement of Captain George S. Peck, S-3, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, June 1947; (68) A-7; (69) Personal knowledge; (70) Personal knowledge.

they could pick off the enemy sniping with Panzerfausts, the 2nd Platoon leader near the church did the same. The 2nd Platoon began a systematic house-by-house search in their immediate area and captured six prisoners, one of which was a German Corporal. Upon spot interrogation, the corporal stated that there was a depleted company in the town led by several officers. The prisoners were searched for weapons and sent to the company CP still near the edge of the town. The 2nd Platoon had a difficult time trying to locate the enemy firing the Panzerfausts, but one by one the enemy personnel were killed or wounded by rifle fire. The 1st Platoon in their position at the main intersection continued to fire at any exposed enemy personnel. Movement in the streets was dangerous, any movement by Company F personnel was through backyards and connecting alleys. (71)
(72)

By 0900, the area around the church had been cleared. The Battalion S-3 entered the church and was immediately fired upon by two enemy snipers high in the steeple. With the help of the 2nd Platoon, these two Germans were eliminated and the Battalion S-3 continued up into the steeple to observe. (73)

Captain Fleet met the 2nd Platoon leader near the church and stated that he was sending the 3rd Platoon, now in reserve, to the far end of the town. Captain Fleet felt that movement in the streets was dangerous, but the 3rd Platoon

(71) A-7; (72) Personal knowledge; (73) Verbal statement of Captain George S. Peck, S-3, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, June 1947.

could infiltrate through back yards and alleys. Captain Fleet told the 2nd Platoon leader to accompany him on a reconnaissance of the 1st Platoon positions near the main intersection. Upon reaching these positions, Captain Fleet decided to venture on the main street to get a better look at the street leading to the far end of town. The company commander and the 2nd Platoon leader walked about 25 paces down the street when a rifle bullet smacked into the wall right over their heads. They immediately ducked into an open yard and around the back of a house. As they rounded the back of the house, which was on a street corner, they saw a German soldier with a Panzerfaust 15 feet away looking back up the street in the direction of the 2nd Platoon. At that instant a burst of fire from the 2nd Platoon finished the German. Captain Fleet and the 2nd Platoon leader merely placed the soldier's field coat over the body. After returning to the 2nd Platoon positions through backyards, Captain Fleet called the 3rd Platoon leader by radio and ordered him to proceed to the far end of town. (74)

The 3rd Platoon leader brought his platoon forward to the 2nd Platoon's positions and checked with Captain Fleet. The 3rd Platoon then moved quickly through yards and alleys to the far end of town, killing several snipers and taking five prisoners on the way. (See Point 6, Map E) The platoon reached a large house adjacent to an elevated railroad which ran north and south through the east end of Burstadt. The

(74) Personal knowledge.

platoon leader began a reconnaissance for positions for his platoon on either side of an underpass where the railroad crossed over the street. The platoon had no machine guns, bazookas or mines. The time was now 1015. (75) (76) (77)

Five minutes after arriving at the railroad, a member of the 3rd Platoon noticed enemy movement about 100 yards down the street from where the platoon was now located. Four enemy tanks and 60 accompanying riflemen were advancing rapidly toward the 3rd Platoon. The platoon leader had to act quickly as his men were not yet in positions. The enemy tanks and riflemen began to fire as they advanced up the street. The platoon had no chance to fire as the counter-attack was practically upon them. (78) About 15 men caught in the street were told to retreat in the direction of the main body of the company. The two men with the platoon leader were told to take refuge in the cellar of the large house, where they proceeded to strip themselves of any German trinkets or souvenirs. The platoon leader climbed to the attic of the house and knocked out a tile in the roof to observe the Germans. The Germans reached the underpass and continued up the street hollering at the top of their lungs as they went. (Point 7, Map E) The enemy riflemen banged on each house door as they passed to inform the occupants that they were looking for Americans. The owner of the house in which the 3rd Platoon leader was located came up to the attic to tell the platoon leader to get out or he would notify the

(75) A-7; (76) Personal knowledge; (77) (78) A-10.

German soldiers. The platoon leader told the German civilian not to inform the soldiers as the Americans would soon occupy the entire town. The civilian wanted to argue, but the platoon leader kicked the German civilian down the attic stairway. In about a minute a German concussion grenade came flying up the attic stairway and exploded in the attic. The blast did not harm the platoon leader, but it almost convinced him that he had better surrender. The platoon leader went downstairs and called one of his men from the cellar to guard the civilian while he took a look at the situation in the street. As he looked from the side door of the house, he saw a German tank and 4 riflemen in the street in front of the house. The platoon leader ducked back in the house and soon the tank went on up the street. The platoon leader then took a look up the street and saw that the counterattack was rolling right into the Company F positions. The tanks fired at practically every house as they went. (79)

In the vicinity of the 1st and 2nd Platoons, the first news of the enemy counterattack was when the men of the 3rd Platoon came running back shouting, "Tanks, Tanks"! The first impression was quite startling, as F Company had no armor support. Information was that no supporting tanks had crossed the Rhine as yet. Captain Fleet quickly took stock of the situation and planned a quick defense. (80) Many of the men in the company started a quick retreat, but the officers and non-commissioned officers held them in place

(79) A-10; (80) Personal knowledge.

by sheer discipline. Captain Fleet kept his 1st Platoon where they were, as the counterattack was headed directly towards them. He augmented the 1st Platoon with two machine guns and two bazooka teams from the Battalion Anti-Tank Platoon. The 2nd Platoon was at a 90 degree angle from the axis of the counterattack, so he directed the platoon leader to place his platoon in position to cover the street corner where the leading enemy tank and riflemen would first appear. Battalion headquarters and H Company had reached Burstadt by this time and were on the edge of town about 200 yards behind Company F. (81) The battalion commander was present with Company F when the men of the 3rd Platoon came rushing back. He ordered machine guns and bazooka teams from H Company to help Company F in this quick defense. The street corner where the enemy tanks would have to come was well defended, but the enemy counterattack was determined and no one knew what the outcome would be. Orders were to hold fire until the enemy was at the street corner. (82)

As the tanks approached the corner they continued to fire. When the lead enemy tank reached the intersection, it slowed down and the tank commander lifted his head out of the turret and was observed to be checking a map. At this instant Company F opened fire on the counterattacking force. A bazooka team from the Anti-Tank Platoon fired point-blank at the lead tank. The bazooka round hit the front of the tank with no effect. The tank fired point-blank at the

(81) Verbal statement of 1st Lieutenant John W. Blaker, Communications Officer, 2nd Battalion, December 48; (82) Personal knowledge.

bazooka team and killed both men instantly. The Company F men and other elements from the H Company used every weapon available, including the Panzerfausts distributed prior to the river crossing, machine guns, BAR's and bazookas. One enemy rifleman fired a Panzerfaust at the building where Captain Fleet was observing, the round blowing off the entire corner of the building. (83)

The enemy had little chance to return any damaging fire. They had been caught by surprise and Company F was located in good positions in the adjacent houses. The enemy tanks closed their hatches and began to back off down the street. The enemy riflemen fell back in complete confusion, carrying their wounded as best they could. (84)

The enemy force retreated to the woods at the far end of Burstadt and it appeared that the fight was over. The men who had participated in the Ill River crossing near Colmar remarked that fighting tanks in towns was easier than fighting tanks in woods. (85)

Less than fifteen minutes after the counterattack was repulsed, two floating tanks (Direct Drive) from the 756th Tank Battalion reported to Company F. Captain Fleet directed the 2nd Platoon leader to take his platoon and the tanks and attempt to locate the 3rd Platoon leader and his men at the far end of town. The tanks and the men moved cautiously down the street, checking all side streets and houses as they went. As they neared the underpass at the far end of

(83) A-7; (84) Personal knowledge; (85) Personal knowledge.

town, the 3rd Platoon leader and approximately 10 of his men were there to greet the tanks and the 2nd Platoon. It was a matter of minutes before the remainder of the company came up to the underpass and deployed along the elevated railroad. At last the company knew that Burstadt had been secured. During the action in Burstadt, the company had suffered 10 casualties. (86)

By 1500 the company was organized and deployed along the railroad. (See Point 8, Map E) All platoons picked out suitable houses and started a rotation system so that the men of the platoons could dry their socks and open up some K rations. (No one had eaten since the preceding evening.) At 1600, Captain Fleet called the 2nd Platoon leader to his CP. The platoon leader was ordered to take a patrol out into the Lorscherwald, guiding on the road from Burstadt to Lorsch. The 2nd Platoon leader was told that he would use 2 squads from the 1st Platoon, as they had a less difficult day than either the 2nd or 3rd Platoons. The 1st Platoon was commanded by a sergeant who had a chronic case of hiccups, so Captain Fleet did not want to use him to lead this particular patrol. Orders for the patrol were to proceed through the Lorscherwald to where the autobahn, west of Lorsch, crossed over the Burstadt-Lorsch road, and report any located enemy or enemy activity. (See Map F) The patrol would take an SCR 300 which would be in direct contact with the battalion commander. Captain Fleet stated

(86) A-7.

that the patrol would be difficult, as about three hours of daylight remained and the woods would probably contain Germans. The 2nd Platoon leader was concerned about the enemy armor that he knew must be in the woods. Captain Fleet stated that he personally felt that the entire company deserved relief, but the battalion commander insisted the patrol be sent. (87)

Company E cleared a small housing area east of the town of Burstadt. (Point 1, Map F) The patrol followed the company until E Company swung right and then back into town. The patrol guided along the road from Burstadt to Lorsch. Two men were sent to the left side of the road to follow a ditch and a railroad, the main body of the patrol was on the right side of the road several yards in the woods. The patrol moved cautiously through the woods, crossing wide firebreaks about every 100 yards.

The lead scouts suddenly stopped. They had observed enemy. To the immediate left of the patrol at a distance of about 300 yards was a dug-in enemy tank and about 12 enemy personnel. (Point 2, Map F) They were in an open field and were busily engaged trying to camouflage their position with straw. About 200 yards in front of the patrol were observed more enemy in a two-story station house along the railroad. (Point 3, Map F) The two right flank guards crawled back to the platoon leader to report Germans in the woods to the right about 75 yards away. (Point 4, Map F)

(88)

(87) (88) Personal knowledge.

The 2nd Platoon leader made a few quick decisions. There were enemy on three sides of the patrol, but the patrol had not been detected. Four men and the original right flank guards were sent back to observe and protect the right flank. The SCR 300 radio and operator were called up from the rear of the patrol to transmit the information to the battalion commander. The dug-in enemy tank appeared to be the best artillery target at the moment, so the platoon leader described the target to the battalion commander and gave grid coordinates.

Within five minutes, heavy artillery fire was falling about 75 yards to the right of the enemy tank and personnel. A quick adjustment by the platoon leader brought the fire directly on the positions. The enemy scurried about trying to take what cover they could. The enemy soldiers soon began to run back to a small cluster of houses about 200 yards east of their tank location. After the platoon leader decided any remaining enemy personnel around the tank had been knocked out, he had the artillery fire shifted to the cluster of houses on the edge of the woods as about 30 Germans were observed at this location. This group of houses was subjected to about 20 minutes of heavy artillery fire. (89) The platoon leader then requested that the fire be shifted to the station house along the railroad. The battalion commander would not have this mission fired as he felt it was too close to the patrol. The battalion commander told the

(89) Personal knowledge.

patrol leader to stay in the present position and maintain close observation on the enemy until the company arrived later that evening. The Germans in the station house had not as yet observed the patrol, primarily because the patrol was concealed very well by the heavy undergrowth and tree shadows. The Germans in the woods on the right were apparently going to remain in the woods all night as they did not move from their first reported location. (90)

Darkness fell about 1930. The patrol felt uneasy because they were 2000 yards from the company and the battalion. The enemy tanks that had counterattacked earlier in the day still had not been located, but it was believed they were someplace in the Lorcherwald. The firebreaks that the patrol had crossed coming through the woods had disclosed enemy tank tracks, this fact did not help the situation. (91)

While the platoon was waiting for developments, a German soldier was captured by the patrol. He was unarmed and expressed a desire to surrender. He spoke exceedingly loud but was quickly quieted by strong-arm tactics. The patrol leader feared some sort of trick. By questioning the prisoner, it was determined that an enemy company was in the houses on the edge of the woods but they had many wounded as a result of the artillery fire. The prisoner had no knowledge of other enemy troops in the area. (92)

About 2300, the men in the rear of the patrol reported tanks approaching from the direction of Burstadt. Thinking

(90) (91) (92) Personal knowledge.

they might possibly be enemy tanks, the patrol leader told his men to move away from the edge of the road about 5 yards further into the woods. This was unnecessary as it was Company F moving up with two tanks and a tank destroyer. The column stopped when it reached the patrol position. The platoon leader quickly found Captain Fleet and oriented him on the situation further up the road. Since the Germans in the station house were still there when darkness fell, the platoon leader advised Captain Fleet that movement straight up the road might be a mistake. Captain Fleet agreed but had been ordered to move quickly straight toward Lorsch. The 2nd Platoon leader was told to take the 1st Platoon in the rear of the tank destroyer. The company was lined up as follows: the 2nd Platoon (minus the platoon leader), a tank, the 3rd Platoon and a tank, and the 1st Platoon and a tank destroyer. Company headquarters and Weapons Platoon followed. (93)

The column moved about 50 yards when suddenly heavy enemy fire hit the column from directly in front of the lead tank. (Point 5, Map F) The fire consisted of Panzerfaust, machine gun and rifle fire. The company immediately deployed on both sides of the road. Several men from the 2nd Platoon were wounded by the initial bursts from the enemy. The tanks and the tank destroyer pulled off to the side of the road. The men from the 2nd and 3rd Platoons immediately brought heavy fire on the enemy and killed or wounded all of

(93) A-7.

them. There were about 20 enemy at this roadblock near the station house led by a Lieutenant firing Panzerfausts. Within a few minutes after the fight was over, 30 enemy walking wounded surrendered to the company. These soldiers were coming from the little group of houses shelled that afternoon. Although this skirmish was only about 10 minutes in duration, the firing from both sides was extremely heavy. The lead tank had been hit by a Panzerfaust so the tank crew left for the rear.

By this time the entire company was suffering from extreme fatigue. Most of the men were so tired they found walking difficult, many merely hung on the sides of the tanks and were literally dragged along. (94) (95)

At this time the battalion executive officer joined the company. The battalion commander was at the rear of Company F and was pressing Captain Fleet to move rapidly up the road. Captain Fleet was ordered to put the 2nd Platoon on the lead tank and have them proceed quickly to the underpass just west of Lorsch. The 2nd Platoon mounted the tank and moved out. The 3rd Platoon and the 1st Platoon gathered around the tank destroyer and started again down the road.

The tank with the 2nd Platoon proceeded to within 50 yards of the underpass when they were fired upon point-blank by an enemy anti-tank gun and machine guns located in the underpass. (Point 6, Map F) The tank backed off the road and four or five men of the platoon were severely injured

(94) A-7; (95) Personal knowledge.

when they were knocked from the tank. A Panzerfaust hit the tank and wounded several more men. The anti-tank gun and machine guns had been zeroed in to fire straight up the road. The men of the 3rd and 1st Platoons about 200 yards to the rear of the 2nd Platoon received all of this heavy fire. Some of the fire was luckily passing about 6 feet over the heads of Company F. All of the men again deployed to the sides of the road. It took about 3 minutes for the company to get in position to return this enemy fire. (96)

Company F received several casualties from the enemy fire and the men were beginning to think they would never reach the underpass that night. The enemy continued firing as Company F proceeded to deliver a terrific volume of machine gun and rifle fire at the roadblock. In about ten minutes the enemy firing ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Captain Fleet and the battalion executive officer rallied the company and the tank destroyer to move quickly to the underpass. When the enemy firing ceased, the tank fired upon near the underpass came back on the road toward Burstadt carrying the severely injured men of the 2nd Platoon. The three or four remaining men of the 2nd Platoon rejoined the company when the column reached their location. (97)

The time was now 0430, 27 March. Upon reaching the underpass the company found that the enemy had pulled out completely. Captain Fleet and the officers of the company attempted to round up as many men of the company as they could, how-

(96) Personal knowledge; A-10; (97) A-7.

ever they could only locate 30 to 35 men. (98) It was not known at this time how many casualties the company had received. Control in the dark had been difficult and it was known that some men had dropped out of the column because of extreme physical fatigue. (Company F, including the officers, was so physically exhausted that any further action seemed impossible.) (99) (100)

The battalion commander contacted Captain Fleet and ordered the company to attack Lorsch. The first houses in Lorsch were 500 yards east of the underpass. The company would have to cross the entire 500 yards of open area to reach these houses.

By this time the officers and men of the company felt that any type of wound would be welcome. All powers of reason were gone. Captain Fleet felt that his company was in no condition for an attack, however, the remaining men of the company and the remaining tank destroyer headed for Lorsch and expected the worst. (Point 7, Map F) (101)

The first men to reach the edge of Lorsch reported no enemy in the first few houses. The company moved through the dark streets and all was silent, white sheets were hanging from the windows. The company passed the main intersection in the center of the town and proceeded to the east end of the main street. The last building in Lorsch was a small cigar factory which Captain Fleet selected for his CP. The executive officer was ordered to post a squad of men

(98) A-7; (99) A-7; (100) Personal knowledge; (101) Personal knowledge; A-10;

straddling the road leading east out of Lorsch. (Point 8, Map F) Several other men were posted in the vicinity of the factory. Defense plans by Company F at 0600, 27 March were negligible. (102)

By 1200, 27 March, Company F began to resemble a fighting rifle company again. Men who had fallen out in the attack down the Burstadt-Lorsch road straggled back to the company. Captain Fleet and the company officers did not reprimand these men.

By 1500, reorganization of the company was practically complete. Other elements of the 2nd Battalion passed through Company F and the company became battalion reserve. (103)

The company strength at 1700, 27 March, was approximately 45 men and 5 officers. (104) (105)

Good Summary is noted

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The crossing of the Rhine River by Company F, 30th Infantry was successful mainly because of past combat experience and intensive training.

Pre-planning by higher headquarters considered every possible eventuality. Engineer support, artillery support, and air support were all contributing factors to the successful crossing.

Company F should not have marched by foot to the crossing site below Worms. Three of the four miles could have been covered in trucks. Marching four miles loaded down with

(102) Personal knowledge; (103) (104) A-7; (105) Personal knowledge.

equipment and ammunition did much to tire the men before the actual assault.

Combined amphibious training with engineers helped to make the crossing of the Rhine a smooth operation. The men in the company had faith in the assault boats and the crews that carried them across the river. The boat drills and night river-crossing exercises conducted in Nancy prevented confusion and loss of time when the actual operation occurred.

In considering the operation from the regimental and subordinate levels there is one important factor to consider. It is believed that provisions should have been made for the floating tanks to cross shortly after the assault battalions crossed. Armor support is necessary if for no other reason than morale purposes.

When attacking across an open field at night, control is difficult but extremely necessary. Company F had control and all-around protection in their movement from the Rhine to Burstadt. The formation adopted by Captain Fleet was tactically sound. Company G did not have a good formation and acted against orders when they came abreast of Company F near Burstadt.

It is believed that Company F could have entered Burstadt without being discovered. G Company, with their noise and loud talking, probably alerted the enemy to the approaching attackers.

The friendly artillery fire that fell on Company F on the outskirts of Burstadt was unnecessary. It has never

been determined (either by this writer or by anyone with whom he has spoken) who called for that particular concentration. It was most severe and could have completely wiped out Company F. Artillery-infantry liaison was weak in this instance.

The actions of Company F at the Ill River near Colmar served to remind the officers and men of the company that to retreat and fall back was costly. When Infantry fights tanks in towns, the infantrymen hold the upper hand because of adequacy of cover and availability of concealed firing positions. The defense against armored attack training received in Nancy was invaluable.

The company commander of Company F realized the need for quick action to contain the enemy penetration in Burstadt. He made quick decisions and personally placed the primary anti-tank weapons in suitable firing positions. His personal courage and qualities of leadership cannot be overlooked in any analysis of this operation.

The 3rd Platoon leader prevented the loss of his entire platoon by his quick thinking when counterattacked in Burstadt by the enemy. His platoon was in no position to engage the counterattacking forces. He acted wisely in sending his men back to the company in the face of a much stronger enemy force.

The daylight patrol in the Lorcherwald performed in a commendable manner. They were in a dangerous position but nevertheless inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy by accurately observing and directing artillery fire.

Company F was employed excessively in the Rhine crossing. Other companies in the battalion could have been used in the attack from Burstadt to Lorsch. In addition, an artillery forward observer should have accompanied the company at all times during the operation.

In a final analysis of the operation, training, pre-planning by higher headquarters, and combat experience added up to make the Company F crossing of the Rhine a success. It was a well-planned, well-conducted and well-fought operation.

LESSONS

1. Combined amphibious training for large scale assault river crossings is vital to success.
2. Training in the use of the compass should include many night marches in open and wooded terrain.
3. An artillery forward observer should always accompany the leading rifle companies in an assault.
4. Enemy counterattacks should always be expected by front-line combat units.
5. A commander should always consider the physical condition of his troops when planning an operation.
6. Correct combat formations facilitate control.
7. When defending, holding fire until the enemy is at close range helps achieve surprise.
8. Attacking infantry will be most successful by acting boldly and with speed.
9. Control at night can be maintained by strong leadership.

10. Night training should receive more consideration in unit training programs.

11. Reconnaissance patrols can be effective in directing artillery fire if personnel are properly trained.

12. Infantrymen must be trained to deliver accurate fire at maximum rate when the necessity arises.

13. A knowledge of the enemy language is valuable in combat operations.

14. Captured enemy weapons can be employed effectively if personnel are trained in their use.

15. Exhausted units should be relieved at first opportunity.

16. Armor support is a strong morale factor for infantry.

ANNEX A

Extracts from Written Statement of 1st Lt. Arthur A. Nusbaum, 3rd Platoon Leader, Company F, 30th Infantry, 2 January 49.

1. Concerning the crossing. -- "My platoon was in the first wave and we crossed in four boats. We couldn't get the motor started in my boat until we had paddled more than half way across."

2. Concerning the friendly artillery fire on the edge of Burstadt. -- "Our artillery gave us support at that time but unfortunately they shot right into us. I took cover with Lt. Obadowski in a pigpen so we had a couple of pigs for company."

3. Concerning the enemy counterattack in Burstadt. -- "From the attic I could see the enemy in the street below. Riding on the 4 tanks or running along behind shouting at the tops of their lungs were about 60 or more soldiers."

4. Concerning the reorganization of the company for the attack on Lorsch.-- "We tried to reorganize the company and it was a tough job. The men were tired and sleepy and were falling asleep on their feet."

5. Concerning the entire operation. -- "Considering all we did we were lucky not to have had more casualties."

ANNEX B

Extracts from Written Statement of 1st Lt. Joseph J. Obadowski, Executive Officer, Company F, 30th Infantry, 15 December 48.

1. Concerning the friendly artillery fire and the enemy tank on the edge of Burstadt. -- "The artillery rounds landed right in our laps. Why we didn't lose more men than we did is beyond me. We suffered our first casualties when the tank opened up and more when the artillery started to fall."

2. Concerning the company defense against the enemy counterattack in Burstadt. -- "German Panzerfausts used by our men, bazooka teams from H Company, BAR's, and machine guns helped to stop the counterattack. We sure needed armor."

3. Concerning the attack through the woods toward the underpass. -- "I am sure that if we had hit another road-block we wouldn't have made it. Being knocked off the road twice left the company in bad shape."

4. Concerning fatigue. -- "From the time I got up on the 25th, until we reached the cigar factory in Lorsch, I didn't sleep a wink. I was so tired I couldn't see not to mention the fact I couldn't move a muscle."