Authority NND 735017

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1-1051

HISTORY OF OPERATIONS

1428 ENGR. BN.

MARCH 1945

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BY AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

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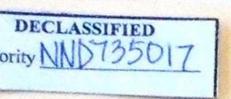
1-1051

HIST ONY OF OPERATIONS

142D ENGINEER COMBAT BATTALION

for the month of

MARCH 1945



Unit History - 1 M er - 31 Mer 1945 142d Engineer combet Battalion

NARRATIVE

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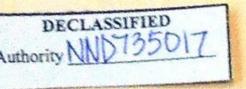
The month of Merch begin with the main emphasis still on active defense. In this the Engineers played a vital role. All companies attended the mine school conducted at Lo Petite Pierre by the Battalian with the assistance of personnel from the 7th army mine school at Epin 1. Here the men were familiarized with both description and functioning of the more commonly used enemy mines as well as instructed on new mines recently discovered and what uses the Germans made of existing mines of occupied countries. One of the main things stressed was the inadvisability of picking up mines. The pulling and blowing of enemy mines wherever possible was stressed. We were later to find out that due to the swiftness of our advance many of our ideas about mine removed had to be revised.

Then not in mone school, mine detector teams were being trained in using the SCR 625 - non-metalic mine detector. Later these men instructed the Infantry in the use of these instruments.

while B & C Companies were busy maintaining the MRS for their respective regiments, Co A began building a new road from Musenthal North of Fosteig to Althorn as the enemy kept the existing road under continuous artillery fire. The men worked day and night, sweeping for mines, cutting trees, building bridges and culverts, and grading and ditching, the new road, many times under enemy small rms and sniper fire. One sniper was killed at Althorn, Meanwhile, Company C as searching for reported minefields but none were found. Company P was busily neaged in building gun employements and wiring in friendly minefields.

Lt Ernest T. Kimbrough with a detail from the 1st Flat.on of Company were given a mission of laying an AP minefield on the division right flank. Iston Leader, Lt Kimbrough, Cpl Henson, Tec 5 Febello with the Infantry comeny commander and two riflemen went forward to reconnoiter the proposed site. pen arriving at the site they were fired upon by an enemy machine gun and a few iflemen. The infantry company commander was fatelly wounded. The party returded the fire and at the same time Lt Kimbrough ordered two of the men to execuate the Infantry Captain which was done as the party withdrest, by fire and movement, the enemy then three a few 50mm Morter rounds into the area. It Kimbrough took mached of the available Engineer and Infantry soldiers, deployed them against the enemy an prepared to attack. Artillery and morter fire was called for and irected in the enemy at which time Lt Kimbrough and his party returned to the ite and laid the AP Mines.

From Merch 4th to 9th, Lt Gol Devis was on temporary duty with VI arps accompanying the 9th Infantry Division following the 1st Army breakthrough. If George M. Elliott assumed command f the Battalian.



On March 6th the front line companies and platsons were inspected to see if they knew the location of existing minefields. A number of improperly marked minefields were discovered and the proper corrections were made.

Company A came up n an unmarked minefield in which was lying a body of an American soldier. A number of men attempted to crawl out to recover the body but each time they were driven bank by intense machine gun and sniper fire. The mission was uncompleted that day. However, the next day the men returned for the second time. Dog, edly they attempted to reach the body but each time they were driven back by enemy fire. One can was ucunded while trying to crawl to the body so the mission was abandoned, again and then completed the next day.

On the night of March 11 we thought sure we would get a tests of fighting, The entire Battalian was clerted for a possible parachutist actack. Guard posts were strengthened and the guards were doubly vigilent. However, night passed without incident. Our wish for fighting was unfulfilled but not for long. Although unchare at the time, plans were already being made for the push which was to come four days hence.

Commencing about 12 Mar 45 the legistics of wer began to indicate that something big was about to break. The medical Esttalian moved the clearing station forward to the vicinity of La Petite Pierre and called for a mine sweeping detail to check a field being used as a parking lot for ambulances. The S-2 section was given orders to produce additional maps. All jeeps were ordered sand-bagged. Prefabricated culverts were constructed using gesoline drums welded together and corrugated sections were bolted together to give each company a minimum of two culverts in readiness for expedient repair of blown bridges. All available minefield realized were submitted to the French army so that in the future all minefields could be removed as seen fit by the French.

It was requested that the men attending "weasel" operators school to raturned for duty with their equipment. They were made available with their tracked jeeps at the ratio of one per company. The S-4 section established a forward dump near "immency with timber, mines, culverts and explosives.

mpony of Engineers reconsistering for lones to be breached and cleared of mines, all three Regiments and Engineer companies were put into the line abreast. Lo mether to a Company C was liven the mission of opening the read Morth from Respectswiller. This task meant clearing mines and abatis from about two miles of read.

On Merch 14th the Engineer Betteli.n OF displaced forward to a words just North of minnened in readiness for ettack the next day.

at 0645, 15 Morch 45 the puch began. During the night the Engineers had supposed three minefields in the Main line of Fesistance tor ugh which the Informative passed. At 0700, Third Platon Company I under Lt Anthony Tuesdalle March #0"

The fire the 117th feeth squadren with traces to sweep meds sheed of for vehicles. With fire traces as point and flank protection, they advanced from the CP toward althorn sweeping and removing mines as they went. During the entire morning they were subjected to heavy enemy artillery, mortar and small arms fire. By 1300 the fire became as intense that the men were forced to aband nother mission and seek shelter in the town of Althorn. The fellowing is the platon Leeders account of the action that had just taken place.

We departed from the bivource of 0700 and arrived at Althorn at 0800. Our mission was to clear the read from Althorn to Mouterhouse. I mediately upon errival we received "88" fire -- but the fire was light. We waited until 1100 to start and following up the sweepers were two tenks and two Tank Destroyers for support. Very light occurity was provided by the 117 Fon Trop. We started sweeping the readout of town and had advanced about 300 yards when 88's and mortars increased the rate of fire. The men hit the ground when shells dome in and then got up and continued sweeping. This continued for two hours and the platon had advanced 800 yards, at which time sweepers reached a bend in the read which put them under observation of an old mill. Then a large portion of the platon had passed the bend burp gun fire was received from the mill and pinned us down. All during this time 88 and mortar file was heavy. Supporting armore could not fire on the mill to silence the burp gun because a string of mines had been placed across the read on the bend.

Opl Tagge made three a tempts to pull the mines out but was driven back by the small arms fire. The fourth attempt was successful. The tank moved up and placed 12 rounds into the mill -- no more fire was received from the mill (for a while). For this action Cpl Tagge received the Silver Star.

In spite of daring shown by Tagge the mission was still held up by 88 and morters. For the next hour the enemy threw shell after shell into our group. The entire operation was pinned down. At about 1630 the CO of the Fon trop decided to send patrol cross country with two sweepers attached to find and clear road to Mouterhouse. Sat Lee and 9 men went with patrol. Patrol was engaged in fire fight at about 2100 and did not disentage itself until about 2300. At 1730 the remainder of platon was ordered to return to bivouse area. The feeling of relief at being withdrawn from such a hot spot was very evident. The next morning the platon successfully cleared the road of 80 mines and 200 yards of abatis without opposition and opened up a major division route of advance.

For True CP counted approximately 300 rouds of shells that were thrown at us. For the intense period of fire, approximately ne round per minute came at us. The strain undergone by the men was shown by the fact that many men (including the plateon leader) became sick to their stomachs when the order to stop operations was received. All men tere completely exhausted mentally.

For its first experience under fire the men of the 3rd Platson C mpany B behaved like verterans and deserve to take pride in the way they c nducted themselves. The tankers, 30 m nths overseas service, said it was the most intense Feinie fire they ever received. The readily agreed.

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The next day Company A was sent to clear the reads M rth Fast of pothbac while Company B begin plearing the Althorn-Mouterhouse read. Meanwhile Company Company for mines and built a fird at Reipertswiller. The Tank dozer and a crew were busy clearing an abstis in the Reipertswiller-Barenthal read when its tread was knocked off by a mine. However work on tinued and by the next day they met Company A which had been clearing the Zinswiller-Barenthal read. Company P, less one plat in which was attached to Task force Coleman cleared the read from Althorn to Mouterhouse.

Meanwhile, in the same day 17 Merch 45, the Engineer reconnaissance section was busily reconnitering reads for the new MSF. One vehicle containing S/SEt A.J. Hoyt, Tec 5 Lyle L. Given and Tec 5 Cécil O. Smalley, while on the mission corssed into Germany. Thus they became the FIRST members of the Fainbow to cross the German border in 26 years.

The next three days were busy ness for the entire battalion. The Infantry had done a marvelous job in routing the enemy and was travelling at top speed with the Engineers right behind them. Most of the roads were obstructe by abatis craters and blown bridges. Abatis were cleared and craters were filled in record time. Where ever possible at stream crossings, fords were built. Where fords were impossible bridges and culverts appeared as if like magic.

Some bridges were f und still in tact for the enemy had fled before they could be blown although they were prepared for blowing. Volunterrs from Engineers with the forward elements removed the demolitions.

One squad with a tankd zer began clearing rad blocks and abatis on the Peterbashal-Ludwigswinkel rad. Here an egg granade rigged as a booby trap, exploded, seriously wounding one EM and slightly wounding three thers. Then the Infantry decided that the Engineers and the dozer were to far forward so the Engineers and the dozer were pulled back.

The men needed sleep and needed it bedly but they kept in with their will the Infintry culd fight with ut sleep, the Ingineers wuld see that they wuldn't lack supply reads.

By 21 March the dughs were pounding at the Siegfried line. At Fischback and Ludwigswinkel the Germans put up stubb rn resistance and the drive was temperarily stopped.

The pick up the attack and drive on ahead through the Siegfried Line C.1 Davis called in his experience and knowledge gained while acting as an observer on the Northern front in early March. Col Davis had, along with a group of fficers from the Divisi note to First army Headquarters at SPA, Relgion with the mission of studying methods of breaching the diegfried Line. He reported to the 9th Infantry Divisi no and accompanied that division in its attack through the Siegfried into Germany. This was the famous recovery the First army moderate.

the extensive penetration by the Germans in December. Col Davis studied the Division staff planning including Infantry, Artillery, and Engineer tectics. He brought back the results of action emproying flame throwers, prepared charges, and was proven here.

In the early morning hours of 22 March reconnessance parties were sent out by all three companies to locate enemy pillboxes. Then under the supporting the pillboxes and rifles, the Engineers placed shaped and satchel charges against the pillboxes demolishing them and destroying their contents. Many times during the day and night the Engineers were sheed of the Infantry. Company B alone destroyed 18 pillboxes with their contents and took 8 prisoners. By night fall the Infantry had the Germans again on the run and the so called impregnable Siegfried line was breached.

Adelbert J. Hoyt made a first recommaissance through the enemy defense system. They licated a large explosive charge which had been previously reported by an escaped Russian slave laborer.

Thile It Bush made a further rec nomissance, Sgt Hoyt dug at the site of the charge with his hands and mess kit unc vering a det nating cord. On hearing voices he turned to investigate, as It Bush returned from his reconnaissance. Together they investigated a well concealed pillbox a proximately one hundred yards away, capturing ten enemy soldiers.

After delivering their prisoners to other troops they returned to the charge and continued excevating, guarding the site to prevent possible detonation by the remaining enemy, to this action each was subsequently awarded the Silver Star.

With the Siegfried Line bre ched and General Patt n's juncture with the Seventh 1rmy, rg nized resistance West f the Rhine River c llepsed. There was little else f r the Infantry t d. but clean up scattered remnants f the German Army.

On 23 Merch the Bettali n m ved into the vicinity of Dahn, Cermany and established a bivouac. While the Infantry mopped up the remnants of the enemy, the Engineers were getting new MSR's in shape for the division. Abatis and road blocks were cleared. Foods were swept for mines and cleared of enemy vehicles. Craters were filled.

Each company was assigned an area t find and destroy the remaining pillboxes of the Siegfried Line. In two days time more than 140 pillboxes were destroyed consuming 103,00 pounds of explosives. The only casualty in the operation was It Fimbrough of Company B. It Ernest T. Kimbrough and the 1st Platon of Company B were dem lishing pillboxes of the dieffried Line in the vicinity of Dahn, Germany. The party was using approximately 500 lbs of explosive in each of the pillboxes to completely demolish them. On no occasi n part of the charge did not blow the roof off of the pillbox. Lt Kimbrough entered the pillbox to investigate and was overcome by the gas of the explosion. Tec 5 Febello entered the pillbox and tried to locate him but was unable to. He then called for help and S/Sgt Brozowski came to help him. Together they again entered the pillbox and located the officer when they saw the beam of the flashlight he was using. They pulled the officer out of the pillbox and artificial respiration was given him for an hour. It kimbrough was then execuated through medical channels.

the 26-27 Merch, a reconneissance was made of routes suitable for convey forward to the Phire Piver. Use was made of information obtained from yxx corps to which the division was then attached.

On 28 March a reconnaissance was made of the reads and a possible bivate sight accress the Thine Fiver.

Meanwhile, the entire Battelian was preparing to make. Vehicles were given checks, equipment was cleaned and necessary repairs made.

On Saturday 31 Merch the Battali.n crossed the Fhine Fiver at worms.

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ANATOS AND DISCOUNTIONS

MANCH 1945

PURPLE LEADT

Pvt Philip A. Bux, 31 018 877, Co. C, 21 Mar 45

Tec 5 Charles W. Jacoby, 39 212 756, Co. B, 20 Mar 45

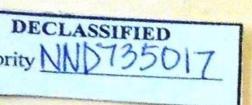
Ifc Douglas F. McGuire, 32 995 609, Co. G, 22 Mar 45

Ifc Walter J. Newicki, 36 045 572, C. C, 16 Mar 45

Ifc Loyd L. Umstat. 35 347 902, Co C, 20 Mar 45

Ifc Francis A. Zech. 35 571 994, Co B, 28 Mar 45

Pvt Philip A. Haugh, 31 018 877, Co C, 21 Mar 45



LOSTIN OF CULLIANDAYS IND STAFF

MARCH 19/5

1-10

Pattalian	Commander
Executive	Officer
S-1	
S-2	
S-3	
5-4	
In O	
Asst S-2	
Ecr O	
Co Comdr.	CC A
de demdr.	CC B
co comdr.	ac a
Co Comdr.	H&S
Bettelien	Surgeon
Battalian	Dentist

It Col	ELLIS O, DAVIS
Major	GEORGE M. ELLIOTT
ist Lt	KICHARD P. BOTTCHER
Capt	LUCIAN A. MASSIE "
Major	HIRLIAT L. HULL
Capt	FICHAED L. COPELAND
Cept	JACK I. JOYNER
2d Lt	JACK SINGLETON JA.
2d Lt	ARTHUR J. BUSH
Copt	GECIGE M. FULLMOIE
1st Lt	HAROLD J. FRIES
Capt	FOBERT L. J.CKSON
Capt	ALFIED C. LAYWELL
Cept	VINCENT BELLAFICEE
Capt	FOLAND D. WOLFE