

4a. (1) NARRATIVE OF EVENTS: 2d Battalion, 194th Glider Infantry Regiment

The lead glider of the Battalion took off from field A-58 near COLLUMIER, France at 0733 on 24th of March 1945 and crossed the RHINE at approximately 1026, cut loose for landing at 1030, 3 minutes ahead of scheduled time.

From the RHINE to the landing zone heavy AA fire was encountered consisting of 50 Cal. 20 mm, 40 mm, and small arms. Almost all gliders were hit by some type of fire prior to landing.

G Company was the first Company to land followed by F, Hq, and E Companies.

The heavy smoke from the RHINE smoke screen made it impossible to see the ground well enough to become oriented before landing. On landing almost all glider groups were immediately under small arms and machine gun fire and there was no time initially to worry much about ones location.

Glider being hard hit by AA fire, by having their tug planes shot down, and by poor ground visibility did not land in the assigned zones, generally landing about 1500 yards to the North and 500 yards to the West of the predesignated landing zones.

G Company suffered heavy casualties immediately on landing, many men being wounded before ever getting out of the gliders. None of the landing fields in the area were large enough and most of the gliders tore down fence posts and went thru wire fences but personnel were not injured in most cases. Many G Company gliders were in range of a 75 mm field piece located at the predesignated 194th Regimental CP and as fast as gliders landed in the field to the front of this building a round of HE from this piece would set the glider on fire. In a few instances glider personnel became casualties due to this fire.

In the initial landing of the Battalion, most gliders loads were forced to take up a fire fight immediately and the fact that gliders kept landing helter skelter throughout the area rather than in the planned pattern was probably the biggest aid possible in overcoming the strong initial resistance. Enemy groups laying fire on glidermen in one direction would suddenly have another glider land in their rear and this continuous process so disorganized the enemy that they began to surrender in great numbers within 30 minutes after the first glider hit the ground.

The Battalion Commander was a casualty within two minutes after landing, his glider landing in the vicinity of the predesignated 194th Regimental CP. His 300 radio had been hit in the air and was useless. His glider load made its way to a small building 300 yards to the West of the predesignated Regimental CP where the first temporary Battalion CP Began to function.

F Company was the decisive factor in breaking down the initial resistance in the landing zone area. Aggressive action against the building predesignated as the 194th Regimental CP enabled them to capture the building and its garrison. This was accomplished by two squads of the Company. The installation was an enemy Regimental CP and the Regimental Commander, Staff and 145 enemy were captured at this point.

4a. (1) NARRATIVE OF FACTS: (continued)

Within 30 minutes after landing, all companies were moving on their objectives and heavy machine guns and Anti-tank guns had been able to organize so as to properly support the Companies as assigned. The 81 mm mortars made their way to a predesignated firing point and within an hour after landing were prepared to fire on all predesignated targets in the area. Communications was established to forward observer teams of the 81 mm mortars with each rifle company thru the special 300 mortar net.

Major PLEASANT W. MARTIN assumed command of the Battalion, due to Lt. Col. STEWART having become a casualty. Communications were established by radio with all Companies within 30 minutes after landing. Within 45 minutes after landing the Battalion was able to make its first report to Regiment of the progress of the Battalion, this report having been made to Lt. Col. DAVID P. SCHORR who had just arrived at the CP.

With F and G Companies making good progress, E Company moved in the rear clearing out by-passed islands of resistance, and they soon had upwards of 200 prisoners. Rather than sending them back immediately, E Company elected to keep these prisoners on hand, sending back a token group for questioning. Two hours after landing they had reached their objective in the predesignated reserve area, had sent out one patrol to contact the Commandos to the West in the town of Wesel and were digging in. At 1245 hours a counterattack led by two enemy tanks was made on the West flank of E Company. The Anti-tank guns were on the move at this time, thus were not in position. One section immediately went into position in clear view of the tanks, suffering four casualties in so doing. They did however, get effective fire on the tanks, knocking out one completely and scoring a hit on the other tank. At this time Lt. SHEEHY after getting his section in action, personally took the other gun of the platoon coupled to prime mover and with the squad took off in clear view of the tanks, attempting to get closer to the tanks for a sure kill, depending on the fire of his other section to keep the tanks engaged. One tank was still able to move and withdrew at this time, going South along the far West flank of the Battalion.

G Company was alerted as regards this tank, and soon reported, later confirmed, one tank knocked out by bazooka fire. Whether this was the same or another tank is not known.

F Company at 1300 reported that it had reached its objective, was consolidating and digging in.

En route to its objective, F Company had several tough fire fights. Glider No. 25 of F Company landed with two men already wounded by flak. S/Sgt. Dodge though wounded took up the fire on landing, sending his assistant squad leader, Sgt. Reed, to maneuver with the squad. This squad eventually linked up with another squad in capturing the enemy Regimental CP. En route to the objective about 1145 hours, a tank opened fire on the Company and bazooka gunner Pfc. Weber got a miraculous hit on the tank at a range of 500 yards. The round must have penetrated to the ammunition magazine, as the tank exploded and all but disintegrated.

4a. (1) NARRATIVE OF FACTS: (continued)

By 1345 a squad of F Company had made contact with the 1st Battalion on the left and North thus securing that flank of the Battalion. By 1245 the Battalion CP had been installed in the E Company area at the predesignated location.

By 1530 all objectives had been taken except bridge #1. G Company harder hit by casualties, had slower going than F Company. G Company tried to drive West to bridge #1 from the South side of the canal but were stopped by heavy small arms fire and machine gun fire. Lt. Wittig, who then had but nine men in his platoon, volunteered to try to get thru and make the contact with the Commandos at bridge #1 by pushing West along the North side of the canal. At 1800 a runner from his platoon came to the CP with the message that the platoon was pinned down and was unable to move. The runner had been somewhat to the rear and had been able to escape.

Realizing that strong resistance was being encountered on the West flank, and seeing that the Germans were determined to keep open a line between Wesel and our West flank, the Battalion Commanding Officer gave a mission to E Company. One platoon of E Company was to move toward bridge #1 on the North side of the canal, push as far West as possible, relieve WITTIG's platoon if possible, and all costs hold and protect the West flank of the Battalion which at that time was looming more dangerous than the front. Lt. ROBINSON got the mission. No further word had been received from WITTIG. ROBINSON moved his platoon at dark and within an hour and a half and moved to a point about 200 yards North of Bridge #1. Reporting on the last known location of WITTIG's platoon, he reported finding one man dead, a member of the platoon - no sign of the rest of it. Twice during the night ROBINSON's platoon was able to ambush enemy groups moving along the corridor between WESEL and the West flank of the Battalion.

From 1600 on through the night, artillery and mortar fire landed continuously in the Battalion area being especially heavy in the E and G Company areas.

F Company was hit once during the afternoon while digging in, this being a tank attack by two tanks. The attack was at 1600. Lt KEHOE with the Company had already registered the Corps artillery, and delivered effective fire on the tanks, not knocking any out, but forcing them to withdraw.

Concern shifted from the West flank to the front soon after dark, when G Company began reporting enemy groups infiltrating their lines. Visibility was not good and covering a wide front with few men it was not possible for them to prevent such infiltration entirely. Lt. ANDERSON of E Company moved forward with a squad upon receipt of these reports and within an hour captured three groups of about 12 men each who apparently had made their way through the G Company lines.

This did not account for the number of enemy believed to have infiltrated through the lines, and concern was shown as to the whereabouts of such groups. At shortly before midnight a very heavy enemy artillery barrage landed on the G and F Company areas, then lifted to the area of the Battalion Command Post.

4a. (1) NARRATIVE OF ACTS: (continued)

At this time, F Company reported that it has ambushed a 12 man patrol that had attempted to infiltrate on its right flank. Shortly thereafter, F Company reported that it was unable to contact G Company on its right flank.

At this time communications were in with all the Companies and G Company was calling for artillery fire missions to their front. Heavy small arms fire then broke out on the G Company front, G Company wire lines and radios going out almost simultaneously. F Company reported the action, said it was not on their front. ROBINSON on the West flank said that he was doing okay.

But no word from G Company. Its CP was also out of communication. From the G Company CP a contact patrol went out at once under the leadership of T/Sgt. Wisler. While still 500 yards short of the front line, the patrol received heavy enemy small arms fire, Wisler being killed and the other patrol member wounded. It looked bad. That G Company lines had been broken was considered a possibility. One platoon of heavy guns and two antitank guns in the G Company area could not be accounted for at that time. Heavy small arms fire continued in the G Company area.

At this time Lt. SHEEHY and Staff Sergeant Kovacs, checking on their AT gun on the right, West flank of F Company, ran into an enemy tank and about 60 troops well behind what should have been the front lines. They escaped and reported the incident.

At 0200 Lt. SHEEHY and Lt. ANDERSON led a patrol from E Company, one platoon reinforced with extra bazookas, missions being to establish contact with G Company, locate any enemy forces within our lines and destroy or capture same if possible. The point where Lt. SHEEHY had seen this group of enemy with the tank looked like a good rallying point for the infiltrating Krauts and the patrol made its way back to this point. The enemy tank at that time began laying HE fire straight up the road toward the rear of the area. Going to the South side of the canal and in the center rear of G Company area, the patrol located the group that SHEEHY had previously seen, though they had moved somewhat to the West. The size of the group was now about 100 men with one tank. They were in position to force a crossing of the bridge near that point and penetrate the Battalion area North of the canal in some force. They radioed back the information and gave accurate coordinates. These were relayed to Lt. KEHOE and within five minutes he had the Corps artillery on the target, perfect shooting. Despite the fact that the group was within our own lines, despite the fact that the fire was solely from a map, the fire was devastatingly accurate. Much credit here is due Lt. ANDERSON who knew the ground and had studied his map so thoroughly that even on this dark night, being on this ground for the first time, he knew exactly where he was, making possible the accurate designation of the target.

The enemy group scattered in confusion when the artillery began to fall and many casualties were suffered by the Germans as the next morning showed only too well. ANDERSON and SHEEHY wisely did not fire on the group, thus keeping their own position secret.

At 0230, F Company reported a counterattack on its left flank by four tanks supported by Infantry. The attack was broken up by artillery fire which enabled the riflemen to get in some good shooting as the disorganized enemy troops withdrew.

4a. (1) NARRATIVE OF EVENTS: (continued)

At 0235 F Company reported that its position had been strafed by enemy aircraft. At 0245 F Company reported large concentrations of enemy troops moving in the center of the Company position and to the front. The troops, apparently unaware that they were within 300 yards of the F Company front lines were forming, obviously for a counterattack. The troops numbered about 400 and F Company could hear vehicles pulling up and unloading. Planning his fire perfectly, Capt. DUKES had the artillery and all the small arms and machine guns of his company open up on prearranged signal with decisive result. The artillery was extremely accurate and the scattering enemy were so confused that many ran toward the F Company front lines with fatal results.

At 0300 the patrol led by Lt. ANDERSON and Lt. SHEEHY returned with some information. G Company positions on the left had apparently been overrun and there was a definite gap between G and F Companies. Further to the West they could see and hear heavy small arms and machine gun fire from G Company and the enemy. They drew fire on trying to make contact, so withdrew. At least it was known that G Company or elements of it were still in the fire fight.

The Battalion Intelligence and Reconnaissance Section was rushed to the left flank of the G Company area, attacking on F Companies right flank. At this time a group of enemy had moved into the gap between G and F Company and was laying direct small arms fire on the G Company Command Post which was on the South side of the Canal. The Command Post group after withdrawing under heavy small arms fire and HE high velocity fire, returned with the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Section and firing everything from 45 Cal. pistols to bazookas forced the enemy to withdraw, the Intelligence and Reconnaissance Section picking up 10 prisoners at this point. The Intelligence and Reconnaissance Section went into position but still did not have actual contact with G Company on its right.

At about 0500 the fire died down all along the front and the fate of G Company was in doubt. E Company, having reconnoitered all possible routes to the front, was prepared to counterattack if necessary, although the situation known to exist on the West flank made the commitment of the reserve company a desperate measure.

At about dawn at 0545 a runner came through from G Company front lines. The Company had suffered heavy casualties but the two platoons had held the front and had inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. Pushed back to some extent, especially on their left where the heaviest casualties were suffered, G Company lashed out in attack at daylight and within half an hour had completely broken the enemy's will to fight and streams of prisoners began coming back. Lt. ROBINSON on the West flank was active at dawn. From his position to which he had moved at night, he was able to drive successfully to Bridge #1 and by 0730 he had more than 200 prisoners. He cut South across the canal and linked up with G Company.

At 0645 Lt. WITTIG showed up with eight men. He made it into WESEL after darkness fell, he contacted the Commandos and he brought back one of the Commandos to make the contact formal.

E Company began rounding up prisoners in the rear area. The entire area again had to be scoured and cleaned out. By 0800 the prisoners began to stream in from all companies and the daylight showed the devastating work that had been done by our troops during the night. Enemy dead dotted the front lines over the 5000 yard frontage.

4a. (1) NARRATIVE OF FACTS: (continued)

At around noon heavy artillery fire began to fall in the rear area once more causing casualties in the E Company area. While contact had been made with the Commandos a definite link had not yet been made and the area around Bridge #1 was still touch and go. The objective had been taken but the area had not been entirely cleared.

At 1400 the order came to move to the East behind the 1st and 3d Battalion. F Company stayed in its same positions and the balance of the Battalion moved to the North of F Company, prepared to attack to the East.

That night Lt. CUNNINGHAM, S-2, revealed that his count showed 1157 prisoners for the two days.

Outstanding during the period to date was the fact that though five of the eight Ammunition and Pioneer Gliders were lost, though the S-4 and Battalion Supply Sergeant were lost, thus paralyzing almost the entire supply echelon of the Battalion, nevertheless supply worked smoothly. Heavy loads of ammunition were rushed into position the afternoon of the first day and it stood the Battalion in good stead during the night.

The move to the new area on this second day was completed about 1900 without incident, the area being clear.

The night was without incident.

On the following day, D plus two, the 2d Battalion remained in position in reserve and did not move as the other Battalions of the Regiment launched an attack to the East. At 1900 that night the Battalion did move East behind the two lead Battalions. At 2400 the Battalion received an attack order to spearhead a break through to the East by riding tanks and making a motorized dash through the heavy woods to the East.

This resume covers D, D plus 1 and D plus 2.



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