

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

February began with the 90th Division attacking toward the SIEGFRIED West Wall, carrying out its assigned role of protecting the right of VIII Corps as it attacked to the Northeast.

Following a crossing of the ice-covered OUR River in bitter winter weather, the Division had driven four miles into Germany and now was preparing to completely secure and consolidate its final objective -- the high ground Southwest of SCHNEE-EIFEL.

The three infantry regiments were positioned on an 18,000 yard front with the 357th anchored at LEILER and astride the OUR River to DER LOCH WALD were connected with 358th Infantry. The latter continued the line to the Northeast and tied in with the 359th rear.

359th, making the final drive in the containing art, held WALLMERATH, WEINTERSPELT and EIGELSCHEID. On the Division right, 90th Reconnaissance Troop reinforced, with Company D, 712th Tank Battalion, defended the 2000 additional yards South from LEILER to the 6th Armored Division at KALTBORN. The Division Command Post was still at WILWERDANGE, LUXEMBOURG.

On the Division's left, 4th Infantry Division's 12th Infantry Regiment had pulled abreast of the 359th near GROSSLANGENFELD. The remainder of the Division was advancing slowly to circle toward BRANDSCHEID in the heart of the SIEGFRIED LINE where the 4th had been before its relief some weeks before. Above the 4th was the 87th Infantry Division, making the main effort, which raced toward GERMANY on trucks as it found its blows striking thin air. This unit had not yet contacted the SIEGFRIED barrier.

1 February 1945

Action during the morning was confined to patrols as the regiments felt out the enemy defense. Fighting again on home soil, the enemy used all their knowledge of the terrain and the support of the SIEGFRIED guns to delay and obstruct our advance.

In the afternoon the two left regiments thrust again. Using all three Battalions, 358th Infantry overrode the resolute enemy to capture HECKUSCHEID and the adjacent ground. B and C Companies captured the town and 70 prisoners by 2000. Company A remained at HECKHALENFELD and covered the lateral gap on the regimental left. All units received heavy mortar fire. [Page 1]

During the morning a 359th patrol scouted GROSSLANGENFELD to see if the Germans intended to fight for the town. They did, and fired machine guns at the investigators. Forewarned therefore, the 2nd Battalion launched an attack at 1500 in the afternoon across the rugged country and wrested the town from enemy hands. 3rd Battalion came up from AUDEL to relieve the 1st Battalion who moved to positions at WINTERSPELT, WALLMERATH and AUDEL.

357th Infantry continued to harass the enemy with combat patrols.

Rains and warmer weather of the past two days started of the snow to melt. The ground softened and streams were overburdened with excess water. The bridge at OBERHAUSEN washed out and 315th Engineer Battalion installed an assault boats ferry in its stead over the OUR River, which spread from six to 100 feet in width.

Corps reported that units on the left were out of contact with the enemy. Accordingly, Division Field Message Number 28, issued in 2010, directed that on 2nd February the regimental zones be cleared of enemy Southeast to the previously established patrol line. Present positions were to be consolidated, and aggressive patrols were to maintain enemy contact. Any indications of enemy withdrawal were to be immediately reported.

On this day Division lost to a higher command Major General JAMES A. VAN FLEET, who had guided the 90th in its MOSELLE and SAAR River crossings, in its role in puncturing the BASTOGNE bulge and on across the OUR River into GERMANY. Major General LOWELL H. ROOKS assumed command.

The Division CP remained at WILWERDANGE.

2 February 1945

Aside from vigorous patrolling and occasional clashes, the day was relatively inactive though still punctuated by enemy mortar and artillery fire.

Since all objectives had been attained, it was now desired to free some of the committed units from the line to gain reserves and allow the rotation and rest of the troops. Until such time as the area West of the OUR River could be sloughed off, it was decided to hold this 5000 yard front with a task force (Task Force [Page 2]DE PUY) consisting of 1st Battalion 357th Infantry, 90th Reconnaissance Troop, Company D 712th Tank Battalion, and one Platoon Company A, 315th Medical Battalion. The area East of the OUR River was reallocated to the 358th Infantry and 359th Infantry. 357th Infantry (-) was to move into reserve in the area WEISWAMPACH-LEITHUM. Division Field Order Number 52 directed these changes and the organization of the ground.

3 February 1945

The road situation was fast becoming critical. Abnormally heavy traffic of military vehicles over the constricted road net, already softened by thaw, caused the road beds to cave and buckle like wet cardboard. Vehicles ground hub-deep, straining their motors to get through washed-out areas.

The OUR River ice had broken into floes which piled and jammed, threatening bridges until demolished by 315th Engineers.

During the night a patrol from 358th Infantry surprised and captured 16 enemy at BERG without firing a shot. A patrol from 359th Infantry went to a house at 934495, fought a sharp engagement, and returned with 11 prisoners. Patrolling continued throughout the day as 358th and 359th Infantry's assumed control of their new areas. In both regiments, 2nd and 3rd Battalions remained online.

Task Force DE PUY relieved 357th Infantry West of the River, completing the relief by 0800. 357th 2nd Battalion, relieved by 358th Infantry, moved to LEITHUM. 3rd Battalion assembled at WEISWAMPACH and the Regiment in Division Reserve submitted its plans for counterattack. 359th planned a demonstration to assist 4th Infantry Division's attack on BRANDSCHEID.

The turned earth from newly dug in positions was hardly cold when Corps warned the Division to expect relief in part by 11th Armored Division, at present in Corps Reserve, and 6th Armored Division, so that the 90th could continue to attack to the Southeast in conjunction with the rest of the VIII Corps.

4 February 1945

Corps Field Order Number 8, confirming the above, was received at 1250 and directed the 11th Armored Division to relieve elements of the 90th Division 052400. The entire Corps then would attack through the SIEGFRIED LINE at H-Hour D-Day. The 90th's mission was to go through elements of the 4th Infantry Division vicinity BRANDSCHEID to seize PRONSFELD while the 4th aimed for PRUM. [Page 3]

Several difficulties now loomed to make it appear that relief would be delay. Incessant drizzles had reduced roads to an impasse. The main road through BURGREULAND was canalized into a narrow, muddy bottleneck that taxed engineers and military police alike to keep open to traffic. The heavy vehicles of the 11th Armored Division, crawling through STEFFENSHAUSEN, stalled on the slippery slopes just beyond any armor stretched bumper-to-bumper as far back as WILWERDANGE.

Further, West of the OUR, VIII Corps had parceled out part of its area to 6th Armored Division. The latter, still in III Corps, had as yet no orders for taking over the new sector.

Nonetheless, the reliefs were accomplished in good time. By sundown CCR, 11th Armored Division had relieved 3rd Battalion 359th and 358th Infantry. This latter regiment assembled its 1st Battalion at HECKHALENFELD, 2nd Battalion at STUPBACH and 3rd Battalion at WILWERDANGE.

At 1500, 6th Armored Division received its instructions and immediately relieved 90th Reconnaissance Troop and Company B 357th Infantry, completing it by 1730. This left only Company C to be relieved by 41st Cavalry Squadron of the 11th Armored Division. One platoon was relieved after dark and the rest of the company the following morning. 90th Reconnaissance Troop assembled at HOLLER in Division Reserve.

Division Command Post moved by infiltration from WILWERDANGE, LUXEMBOURG to BURG-REULAND, BELGIUM, where it opened at 1530.

Division Field Border Number 53 was issued in 1600 and detailed the continuation of the attack. Yet confirmed the reliefs already in progress and ordered 359th Infantry to assist the attack of 4th Infantry Division against BRANDSCHEID and the high ground to the Southwest in coordination with the 11th Armored Division. Lastly, the Regiment was to protect the Division's right flank.

357th Infantry, earmarked for Division Reserve, was directed to assemble vicinity WINTERSPELT, prepared to pass through 359th Infantry and continue the attack.

358 Infantry was to relieve elements 4th Infantry Division after [Page 4] capture of BRANDSCHEID and continue attack to PRONSFELD.

At 1700 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry closed at HEMMERES.

5 February 1945

The morning opened with 359th's demonstration against HABSCHEID and HOLLNICH to assist the 4th Infantry Division's attack at 0800. Using every means to predicate an attack, the Regiment before dawn moved vehicles and armor freely in the front-line area. Mortar fire was increased and patrolling stepped up.

At 0745 915th FA Battalion smothered the two towns with a four Battalion TOT (Time On Target). Then followed two Battalions of medium guns on each town every five minutes for a half-hour. Two Battalions of light artillery fired South and East of those towns. All roads in the area were interdicted at two-minute intervals. Smoke was limited and, since visibility was poor, none was fired.

Company B 712th Tank Battalion made a limited sortee against HABSCHEID and fired on pillboxes in the area.

To all of this the enemy was strangely silent.

The rest of the day was devoted to preparation for the attack as D-Day H-Hour was announced as 060400A February. The artillery battalions moved from the west bank of the OUR River to new positions from which to support the attack. 3rd Battalion 357th Infantry staged forward to EIGELSCHEID. 358th Infantry assembled in late afternoon and evening in the vicinity of WINTERSCHEID.

As road tieups greatly delayed the movement of the 3rd Battalion from WILWERDANGE, the 358th was instructed to relieve 22nd Infantry 3rd Battalion by 0700 in the morning, but not to attack until completely set. Attached tanks and tank destroyers had not arrived but the 22nd Infantry's tanks with their 3rd Battalion were to remain until they did.

By late afternoon 4th Infantry Division had secured stoutly defended BRANDSCHEID, taking 150 PWs. On 90th Division right 11th Armored Division finished its preparation for attack at the same time as the 90th. [Page 5]

6 February 1945

At 0400 the attack began. Three Battalions of the 359th Infantry moved off together, 2nd, 1st, 3rd, left to right. In the black night they moved undetected through the maze of dragon's teeth, barbed wire, mine fields and pillboxes. First enemy reaction came at 0600 as a machine gun opened fire at 3rd Battalion. By daylight, however, all assault Companies were in HABSCHEID.

A and L Companies, both in reserve, were stopped at a roadblock which the engineers prepared for demolition. Unwittingly, the Road ahead was left to be swept later. The explosion, about daylight, startled the enemy into wakefulness and bypassed pillboxes to the right rear, covering the block, stirred into action. Enemy machine guns and small arms raked the road, nullifying any further advanced by A or L or attempts by engineers to sweep the road. Enemy artillery, nebelwerfer, mortar and high velocity fire shook the town and splashed along the roads leading into town.

With all of its Battalions hemmed into HABSCHEID the Regiment had no recourse but to clear up within the area so that supporting tanks and tank destroyers could be brought forward to bolster the attack. Particularly troublesome where the boxes covering the roadblock and Companies A and L were assigned to reduce these.

Open terrain and grazing fire denied maneuver and it was not until a supporting 155 mm self-propelled gun jockeyed into position at 1530 and opened up direct fire that the Germans fled their cover and the bottleneck was broken. Other obstacles were removed and tanks and tank destroyers moved forward after dark to their Battalions. 3rd Battalion was directed to make a night attack. Contact by Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon with 11th Armored Division was arranged.

358th Infantry walked into a hornet's nest at BRANDSCHEID as 1st Battalion began to relieve 3rd Battalion 22nd Infantry had 0445. One company was relieved and the other two were in process when approximately 450 Germans, supported by three assault guns, counterattacked at 0600. Both units turned to and some hours of confused fighting followed. About midday the attack was quelled and 170 Germans were prisoners. Both B Company 358th and K Company 22nd Infantry had elements cut off. 2nd Battalion passed two companies through 1st Battalion to secure a line of departure. Then Company I relieved Company A 1st Battalion on left and maintained contact with 4th Infantry Division.

An indication of the enemy's desperate efforts to [Page 6] block penetrations of the SIEGFRIED LINE came from interrogation of the PWs taken in the counterattack. The attacking unit, known as Task Force GERLAND (after its Lieutenant Colonel Commander) consisted of two Kampfgruppe and was given the mission of retaking and holding BRANDSCHEID. One group at approximately 220 men from I and III Battalions 14th Nebelwerfer Regiment. Neither officers

nor men had been used as Infantry before. The second KG consisted of artillerymen and had a strength of 150-170 men. At the last moment 1st Company 278th Engineer Battalion of 60 men was ordered to participate in the attack. All units suffered heavy casualties as well as prisoner losses.

357th Infantry moved 1st and 2nd Battalions by way of ST VITH to WINTERSPELT and WALLMERATH respectively, closing in late morning. 3rd Battalion jumped forward to EIGELSCHEID. The Regiment made plans to move 1st the 3rd Battalions through 359th at HABSCHEID and 0130 the following morning to seize the two hills beyond the town. 2nd Battalion was allocated as Division Reserve.

On the right 11th Armored had reportedly reached their objective where they sustained a counterattack of company strength in early morning. On our left 4th Division had seized HONTHEIM, SELLERICH and HERSCHEID.

7 February 1945

Starting at 0130 as planned, 357th moved in column of companies through HABSCHEID with 3rd Battalion leading. This Battalion was to bypass the first hill (510) and seize the one beyond (511). 1st Battalion was to capture Hill 510.

Covering darkness may control difficult and the column moved slowly. Beyond the town 1st Battalions sent Company A to the East while B and C followed Company K to Southeast at rear of 3rd Battalion. The enemy on Hill 500 opened fire on this group and split Company K. One part of K and one platoon of C continued on. Company A tried to swing onto Hill 510 from the Northeast but made no headway against the enemy fire. Supporting tanks came up. The lead tank hit mines and was disabled.

In the morning the 3rd Battalion (-) with part of Company C was in the saddle between the two hills. Company B and balance of Companies C and K were just Southeast of HABSCHEID.
[Page 7]

359's advance was temporarily stymied by elements of 357th still intermingled. 1st Battalion moved at 0645 almost immediately running into trouble from pillboxes to their front. 3rd Battalion got underway at 0830 moving South out of HABSCHEID. Advance was from pillbox to pillbox as the Germans countered with high velocity, nebelwerfer and machine gun fire. Again enlisting the aid of the 155 mm self-propelled gun, companies I and K worked over the area. Men from antitank Company occupied the boxes as captured to enable the assault elements to continue.

Overcoming the initial resistance, 1st Battalion 359th were slowly along the draw Southwest out of HABSCHEID. Company C captured HOLLNICH at midday. Company A pushed on down the nose above HOLLNICH while Company B proceeded to the next nose where it made contact with 357th. 15 pillboxes were reduced. Company L moved out at 1150 along the road Southwest out of HABSCHEID with two tanks and two tank destroyers. Company I mopped up behind for a Battalion total of 40 pillboxes for the two days.

In midafternoon 2nd Battalion began to canvass the pillboxes Northeast of HABSCHEID. By dark they were just out of HABSCHEIDER MILL and had taken out 30 boxes since the operation began. 85 PWs total were captured by the Regiment.

In 358, 1st Battalion began a methodical mop up of pillboxes on the ridge to the Southwest. Company C led off and used tanks and tank destroyers as a base of fire to knock out pillboxes one by one. The method was so successful that assault teams move right on without much leapfrogging. High velocity and mortar fire came from the right flank. Artillery blinded with smoke Hill 519 where it was thought the enemy had observation. The fire lessened considerably. 10 pillboxes and over 80 prisoners were taken before the Battalion was ordered to halt for the night after an advance of 900 yards.

2nd Battalion jumped off also at 0530, encountering artillery, mortar and small arms fire. They advanced deliberately 800 yards but were harassed by mortar fire. Artillery smoked Hill 521 and fired 1350 rounds of ammunition to search out troublesome mortars.

3rd Battalion made its attack at 0630. Having no pillboxes, the Battalion advance rapidly despite enemy minefields which took 16 casualties. They overran a mortar position, capturing 15 surprised Germans and three emplaced mortars. The Battalion was ordered to halt on Hill 521 after an [Page 8] advance of 2000 yards. Cooks, bakers, an antitank men formed a Task Force GRUBBS, which was sent to relieve the 3rd Battalion so it could attack Hill 519 in the morning.

90th Reconnaissance Troop, attached to the 358th Infantry, maintained contact with the 4th Infantry Division on left. 110 PWs total were captured by the 358th, while it suffered 50 battle casualties.

Meanwhile, with open ground all around, 3rd Battalion 357th was hard hit by enemy mortar, nebelwerfer and artillery fire which came from three sides. The Battalion dug in while awaiting further support.

At 1800 1st Battalion swept forward and gained contact with 3rd Battalion. Both Battalions consolidated for the night. Companies I and L faced South on Hill 511 while Company K occupied a pillbox and the area to the immediate North.

On the Division left 4th Armored beat off several counterattacks. 11th Armored Division on the right held its positions.

8 February 1945

At 0500 several hundred Germans with assault guns and tanks counterattacked Company K 357th in attempt to regain Hill 511. The pillbox on the Hill changed hands three times in the severe fighting which continued throughout the day. Supporting tanks moved up to help repel the attack only to be knocked out by enemy high velocity and artillery fire as they moved down the forward slope. At length the attack was beaten off with 15 men captured by the Germans. 50 PWs were taken. Enemy artillery pounded the position relentlessly throughout the day. No

further advance was attempted. Company F was moved from WINTERSPELT to occupy pillboxes. 1st Battalion was directed to seize the high ground North of MASTHORN.

Despite heavy mortar fire 1st Battalion 358th continued to reduce pillboxes Southwest of BRANDSCHEID. By dark 55 pill boxes were captured, 1800 yards gained and contact with 359 established vicinity of HABSCHEIDER MILL.

In the center, 2nd Battalion set its sights on Hill 519 but gained only 500 yards and some 25 PWs from 6 pillboxes.

In this area a squad of B Company 358th and one of K Company 22nd Infantry were recaptured. These were the men isolated during the attack early 6 February. They assisted by fire the attack of 1st Battalion on the 7th although unable to get out [Page 9** image 1494] until overrun.

During the night 3rd Battalion 358th on the left sent a task force towards Hill 519 but it was driven back by small arms and intense mortar fire and returned at 230. This fire continued all day and nullified attempts of I and K Companies to advance on the Hill.

359's 1st Battalion turned West to attack the high ground, coordinating their move with 3rd Battalion which had Company L reducing the pillboxes in the area. By nightfall, both battalions had cleared almost to the Division rear boundary. 2nd Battalion captured HABSCHEIDER MILL at 1330 and continued to reduce boxes to the Division left boundary despite considerable fire from across the river. In all, 25 boxes and 93 PWs were taken by the Regiment.

Division Command Post moved to WINTERSPELT, GERMANY.

In the Division area enemy TOT's increased during the day and hit heavily traveled roads as well as targets of opportunity. Single guns fired throughout the area and high velocity fire picked up and was very accurate. Mortar fire was heavy by troops to cover in pillboxes and receive few casualties.

4th Division continued its advance but fought off repeated counterattacks as they closed on PRUM. 11th Armored Division still made no move forward.

9 February 1945

358th captured Hill 519 by midmorning after 2nd and 3rd Battalions attackpp together at 0800. Leaving only a few men per box, the bulk of the enemy forces had withdrawn and the Regiment advanced 2000 yards, capturing 12 boxes and 18 PWs. Task Force GRUBBS was disbanded in 1510 after having reported contact with 4th Infantry Division and no enemy between the forces.

The enemy pocketed between 11th Armored Division and 359th showed no inclination to withdraw and in fact fought stubbornly to prevent the area from being taken. Contact between 11th Armored and 359th Infantry still was by rear roads. K Company, attacking toward WEITERORDER, encountered 50-60 Germans and considerable high velocity and mortar fire. By dark the Company was still 200 yards short of the settlement. Company L cleared all but one

pillbox in its area. 2nd Battalion assembled and moved to BRANDSCHEID in [Page 10] Division Reserve, closing at 1515.

1st Battalion 357th moved at midnight, but the extreme darkness and thickly wooded draw made progress slow. Not until 1000 did Company B in the lead reach the specified line. Company C echeloned to the left rear and contacted 3rd Battalion. Company A closed on B Company's right and reached out to contact the left flank of 359th. This was accomplished by 1530. No further advance was made.

2nd Battalion 357th was released to the Regiment and moved to join Company F at HABSCHEID. 3rd Battalions stayed in place except from patrols from Company L who found pillboxes to their front to be occupied.

On the far left 4th Infantry Division was through the lines, found light opposition and seized a bridge over the PRUM at HERMESPAND. Next to the 90th however, they continued to gain ground slowly.

10 February 1945

The main crust of the SIEGFRIED LINE was now broken and there remained only a thin -- but the -- inner shell to be pierced before the breach was complete. To this end the Division pressed its attack. The enemy countered with increased shelling from mortars, artillery and tanks.

At this time Corps issued its Field Order Number 9 which directed that upon seizure of the PRUM River line and capture of PRUM, VIII Corps would defend upon line LOSHEIM-PRUM-NUENDORF-OUR River.

The 90th Division was ordered to relieve elements of 11th Armored Division within a new zone extending from WATZERATH to the OUR River after seizure of PRUM River line and capture of MASTHORN. For this purpose 41st Cavalry Squadron was to be attached at the time responsibility was transferred.

Accordingly, 2nd Battalion 357 was halted shortly after it jumped off and Battalion assembled that HOLLNICH. The regimental commander decided to let both 1st and 3rd Battalions clear their zone first and then have 2nd Battalion relieve and defend the entire front.

358th launched an attack with three battalions abreast and gained some 800 yards on the left and center. 1st [Page 11] Battalion moved several hundred yards to its objective and halted as ordered. From their positions all battalions could see the PRUM River and the towns of WEINFELD and WATZERATH. At 1430A and and 100 enemy launched a counterattack North of PRONSFELD which artillery repulsed without loss of ground. Tank and destroyers and artillery destroyed three tanks and one self-propelled gun.

The mission of 359th was almost complete and the Regiment finished its task by clearing out three pillboxes on the right flank and patrolling to the front.

11 February 1945

Limited objective attacks marked the day's effort. 357th moved shortly after midnight to secure a line just North of MASTHORN. K Company was on its objective by 0015. Company I by 0500 had secured the forward edge of the wooded area on the West side of the ridge. Company L made no headway against the pillboxes to its front which proved to be heavily guarded.

These boxes on the reverse slope covered the wide draw running down to PRONSFELD and in conjunction with positions on the reverse slope of the bald hill across the draw in the area of 358th first Battalion, they controlled this avenue of approach. Both areas were mutually supporting, covered by artillery and mortar fire and being on naked ground on a slope facing toward the enemy were virtually unapproachable during daylight. Once again it was questionable if the positions would be tenable because of the fire that could be laid upon it from the South.

350th was having its troubles too. Company I made three attempts during the night to enter WATZERATH but were stopped each time by cleverly concealed machine-gun fire.

At daylight a coordinated attack by all three battalions of 358th was launched. It moved easily on the left but on the right the enemy in front of 1st Battalion 358th fought tenaciously to hold the high ground and ridge North of PRONSFELD. The Battalion forced the attack, however, and flanked an extended communication trench, rolling it up from the Northeast. Attempts to gain the bald knob beyond drew such heavy fire from the right flank and across the river that this objective was temporarily abandoned as not being worth the cost to take and hold. By slowing [Page 12] the attack on the ridge just captured, the enemy had apparently accomplished his objective: to cover the withdrawal of troops to the far side of the PRUM, from the WATZERATH-WEINSFELD area by way of PITTENBACH. Air OPs could see heavy vehicular movement in enemy rear areas, generally eastward, toward the PRONSFELD-LUNEBACH Road.

Company I slowed initially by delaying forces at WATZERATH, gained entrance to the town at 1015 and cleared it by 1100. At this point they gained a small bridgehead over the PRUM River which here was a rather insignificant stream a bear 20 feet wide. Part of the town overlapped the river and the Company executing its mission cleared the East bank as well. This fact was not evident until night at which time the Company was ordered back to comply with instructions for hire headquarters.

Company G 358th bore down from a high ground Northwest of WEINSFELD to capture the town and 10 PWs at 0910. Companies E and F followed into the town.

At noon a planning conference of the regimental commanders was held to establish the defense of the Division area within its readjusted boundaries. The mainline of resistance was set along the present frontline to take advantage of the high ground. Corps had modified its plan so that 41st Cavalry Squadron remained under control of its own Group and the Division defense area was consequently reduced. Division Field Order number 54 at 1615 recorded the plan but action was begun immediately following the conference.

357th Infantry with 90th Reconnaissance Troop attached was directed to relieve elements of 11th Armored Division and 359th Infantry prior 120800A and 130800A respectively and then to defend the Division rear area.

358th Infantry was to relieve elements 357th within sector prior 130800A and to take over defense of Division left area. 2nd Battalion was to remain in place until relieved by 4th Infantry Division.

359th Infantry was ordered to assemble as Division Reserved.

To accomplish the above, 1st Battalion 358 relieved 3rd Battalion after dark and the latter moved to vicinity BRANDSCHEID preparatory to relieving 357th. 4th Infantry Division took over from 2nd Battalion 358, completing relief at 1845 and the Battalion [Page 13] moved a 2100 to HABSCHEID in regimental reserve, closing at 2400.

2nd Battalion 357 began relief of the Armored Infantry on the right shortly after dusk and completed the changeover at 0100 in the morning.

3rd Battalion 357 made another attempt to clear its area before its release the following night. At 2030 Company L sent two platoons to clear out and the pillboxes which were causing so much trouble.

12 February 1945

At first this attack went well. One pillbox was captured and occupied. From a PW later came the rest of the story. The Germans counterattacked, isolating the box with machine-gun fire and preventing outside protection from being effected. A demand for surrender was refused. The enemy then blew the box demolitions, wounding seven men and an officer. Further resistance was ineffectual in the occupants capitulated. 29 men were taken prisoner. As if to prevent any further forays, the Germans heavily shelled 3rd Battalion area with high velocity fire during the afternoon. Then the sector fell strangely silent.

90th Reconnaissance Troop was placed on the right flank of the 2nd Battalion 357 to maintain contact with 11th Armored Division. 1st Battalion 357 completely relieved 359 and 1830 and 1st Battalion 359 assembled at HOLLNICH while 3rd Battalion 359 moved to HECKHALENFELD. 3rd Battalion 358 began relief of 3rd Battalion 357 after dark, completing at 2355 without incident.

On Division left, 4th Infantry Division had overrun resistance to capture PRUM and held the near bank of the river within their sector. Some enemy remained yet to be cleared.

13-14-15 February 1945

Consolidation, rehabilitation and rotation of troops characterized these three days of relative quiet. The break was opportune for a wave of diarrhea from undetermined sources spread

through the command to augment the already sizable figure of men ill with colds received from continued exposure to wet weather. All possible countermeasures were instituted and after several days the attacks ceased as suddenly as they came. [Page 14]

Minor relocations were made within units and police of the area instituted. This activity ceased after five men were killed and three wounded when a policing party of 358th 2nd Battalion hit a German minefield in the rear area.

Road conditions continued critical and Corps pressed all non-firing artillerymen, Tank destroyer and tank man into road maintenance. Partly for this reason and partly for experiment, the 4th Infantry Division on our left was supplied by parachute as wave after wave of C-47s hummed over 90th Division to drop their load in the area outlined by Pathfinder personnel and red smoke.

With a change of weather to clear skies and unlimited ceiling, our own air became active again and fighter-bombers began to work over the area in front of the Division with good results.

As the period closed preparations were underway to resume the attack on 18 February in accordance with Field Order Number 11 from VIII Corps. Some 30 miles to the South, XII Corps had also breached the SIEGFRIED LINE and the attack was planned to affect the junction are these two forces at MAUEL (L040647) and to clear the enemy from West of the PRUM River. For the Division this meant initially an attack toward the South down the flank of the West Wall, then a change of direction to the East.

359th Infantry had been directed to relieve 358th Infantry but this Corps order brought cancellation as Division planned to use the 358th in the attack and then pinch them out. 359th, therefore, was ordered to relieve the 357th after dark the night of 16 February.

16 February 1945

357th patrols reported some of the pillboxes to their front were now empty but the enemy apparently was only repositioning for there were no indications of a withdrawal along the immediate front.

Division Field Order Number 55 outlined the plan of attack for the 18:

358th with 90th Reconnaissance Troop attached, relieve elements of 357th within zone and capture MASTHORN and [Page 15] high ground North of PRONSFELD.

359th on Division right, relieve elements of 357th within zone and capture road net at NDR and OBR UTTFELD the turn East to seize the high ground overlooking LUNEBACH.

357th assembly in Division Reserve after relief vicinity WINTERSCHIED, HECKUSCHIED, and HECKHALENFELD, prepared to pass through 359 and capture LICHTENBORN and KOPSCHEID.

The scheduled reliefs were accomplished without incident except for 2nd Battalion 357th which received casualties from shelling during its shift from the line. 3rd Battalion 359 relieved 2nd Battalion 357 while a 2nd Battalion 359 relieved C Company 357.

358th used 90th Reconnaissance Troop to relieve Company B 357 and reformed Task Force GRUBBS to free its own Company C.

17 February 1945

Preparations for the attack were concluded on this quiet day which saw little enemy activity. Our 8" guns harassed the bridge at PRONSFELD. After dark Company L 359 occupied three pillboxes vacated by the enemy and then captured the six former occupants when they came back later in the evening.

18 February 1945

Launched as planned, without preparatory fires 359th's attack literally caught the Germans napping. Included in the 400 prisoners taken during the day were the regimental commander and staff and to battalion commanders and their staffs of 331st in 339th Regiments who are all taken in their pillboxes sound asleep. Two companies were taken prisoner almost intact almost intact and the rest were almost wholly destroyed. Numerous maps and documents of value were captured. Headed for KESFELD, Company I 359 bypassed pillboxes and raced into the town and 0530. After a short firefight, the town was clear. 2nd Battalion 359th moved initially without resistance and F Company occupied the high ground 1000 yards Southeast of WETTERORDER at 0705. Startled Germans, awakening to find themselves overrun, turned their weapons on reserve elements who began a methodical mop up that lasted [Page 16 image 1501] most of the day. In all 48 pillboxes were taken by the two Battalions. 1st Battalion in column, A, C, B, passed through Company E at 1310 to attack OBR and NDR UTTFELD. Although they met no resistance be halted on order East of the main road 1000 yards East of KESFELD.

358th's 1st Battalion secured the hill North of PRONSFELD without trouble and lost only one man as casualty. 4 pillboxes and 33 PW's were captured in the area. A patrol to PRONSFELD drew heavy small arms and mortar fire. One platoon Company C and 2 tank sortied toward PITTENBACH to clear the buildings on the near side of the river across from the town. A strong enemy force intervened and harried the task force until it was relieved by 12th Infantry, 4th Division, who now took over from 1st Battalion and Task Force GRUBBS as of 2000. 1st Battalion moved to HABSCHEID and Task Force GRUBBS to NDR HABSCHEID.

2nd Battalion 358 found the going rougher. Companies F and G had scarcely reached the top of pillboxes to their immediate front when they were blanketed by enemy artillery and machine-gun fire. The attack was stymied until daylight. Then by fire and maneuver all the boxes were reduced and 75 PWs taken from them. At 1300 2nd Battalion continued attack but gained only about 1000 yards.

3rd Battalion attacked through 90th Reconnaissance Troop of 1400 to capture MASTHORN. They encountered roadblocks, mines and booby traps as well as artillery and mortar fire which retarded progress. By night they were still North of MASTHORN.

357 continued in Division Reserve. 2nd Battalion moved from EIGELSCHEID to HECKHUSCHEID while 3rd Battalion staged forward from WINTERSCHEID to EIGELSCHEID.

Attacking one and a half hours after 90th Division, 11th Armored Division moved rapidly and captured LUTZHAMPEN and LIEDENBORN.

19 February 1945

Resistance slackened perceptibly as the attack resumed in early morning hours. Within an hour 3rd Battalion 358 had seized MASTHORN and a second hour placed 2nd Battalion 358 atop Hill 477 West of PRONSFELD. Then furious at being forced back, the Germans laid concentration after concentration [Page 17] on both positions. But battlewise, neither unit suffered a casualty.

Using a new move first Battalion in attack and 2nd Battalion to mop up to Division right boundary 359 hopped off against light resistance. At 1050 Company A was in OBR UTTFELD while Company C had NDR UTTFELD. Both Companies began cleaning out pillboxes in the vicinity. Intense high velocity, 20 mm and artillery fire formed an effective barrier to progress to the woods East of the two towns. One patrol from 1st Battalion ran the gauntlet of fire only to be pinned down by cross-firing machine guns until dark when the patrol made its way back. L and K Companies moved in on 1st Battalion's left prepared to continue to the East. 2nd Battalion reverted to regimental reserve.

357th was now committed to pass through 359's right flank and wheel East to the River. Accordingly, 2nd Italian moved off at 1350 from NDR UTTFELD with Company F out front with their objective the Hill just North of HOUF.

The Germans had the advantage of position here, looking down a long open slope from LICHTENBORN and the enemy made the most of it. From this dominant seat he could unroll a carpet of artillery fire in the path of the approaching troops. Supplementing this fire were two 40 mm AA guns in pillboxes that covered the town and road into town. F Company exploited the limited maneuver by attempting to outflank the objective. Progress was slow and was finally halted while E and G Companies were infiltrated forward to give additional support. Darkness fell as the movement was in progress and ended further advance. Company D 712th Tank Battalion and 90th Reconnaissance Troop were combined as Task Force GASSMAN and attached to 357 to cover regimental right flank. Given the mission of seizing BINSCHIED, the Task Force approached the town from two directions. As this proved to be too big a bite to swallow without infantry help, the Task Force was ordered back to a point 1000 yards East of LEIDENBORN on the regimental right boundary. 1st Battalion 357 moved to HECKHUSCHEID.

Division plan called for 358 to drive past 357 as it turned and continue South then swing East to make the actual contact at MAUEL. 2nd Battalion 358 therefore relieved 3rd Battalion 358 at MASTHORN after dark and occupied the entire zone. Next day 2nd Battalion was to be attached to 359. 3rd Battalion 358 assembled at HABSCHIED while 1st Battalion proceeded to HECKHALENFELD to await forthcoming action. [Page 18]

Once again the Germans strove desperately to hold their ground. But their positions were as shifting sand as the Division ground relentlessly forward. The enemy threw in everything he had to gain time. Delay. Delay. He fought from strong points and log bunkers until blown out by tank fire at point-blank range. He brought his own tanks and self-propelled guns to counter fire. But while he slowed, he could not stop the advance. He backed off fighting.

359 broke through the crust of resistance at the near edge of the woods East of OBR and NDR UTTFELD, then moved easily through the thick trees to consolidate on the eastern edge in late afternoon prepared to attack to the PRUM River in the morning.

357 gained HOUF and the hill to the North after hard fighting by 2nd Battalion. To avoid a suicidal frontal attack over the open ground to LICHTENBORN, 3rd Battalion assembled North of the railroad tracks Northwest of STALBACH. At midnight the Battalion would attack the high ground of both LICHTENBORN with assault Companies bypassing STALBACH, leaving it to the reserve Company. Attempts by Task Force GASSMAN and Company A to take BINSCHIED were repulsed.

358 rested easily in Division Reserve as it was yet to early for their commitment. 2nd Battalion remained attached to avoid burdening 359 before it took its final objectives.

Fighter bombers attacked a convoy moving into WAXWEILER at 1215A in support of the Division and reported destruction of 38 motor trucks, 5 horse-drawn vehicles and 1 tank damaged. 4 guns were strafed and silenced.

21 February 1945

Resistance in front of 3rd Battalion 357 was light initially as it moved out in attack at midnight. One platoon Company K pulled away from the others and climbed to vicinity of objective capturing 16 PWs. Then contact with it was lost. Firing from pillboxes along the edge of the woods near LICHTENBORN, the Germans held off K and L Companies for most of the day while Company I cleared STALBACH. With the 3rd Battalion reserve tied up, C and B Companies were brought up on 3rd Battalion's left and the additional pressure aided by air support slackened the resistance in front of 3rd Battalion. Fighter-bombers knocked out an enemy gun and strafed enemy troops at LICHTENBORN. [Page 19]

Both Battalions pushed forward while 2nd Battalion continued attacking South and Southeast. By dark, the high ground was gained and 1st and 3rd Battalions joined on it. The missing platoon was contacted none the worse for its 15 hours of isolation. Meanwhile Task Force GASSMAN and Company A attacked and captured BINSCHIED at 1700, taking 50 PWs.

The Task Force then passed control of 358 as it went through the town while Company A reverted to control of 1st Battalion.

359's attack at 0700 turned into a series of short dashes as movement over the open ground toward EUSCHIED and STRICKSCHIED drew machine gun, mortar and high velocity fire. Company

A worked its way just short of EUSCHEID but could advance no further. Company I moved slowly down the road toward STRICKSCHEID after taking a pillbox at HOFSWALD. At 1000 1st Battalion was directed to relieve pressure on Company A by attacking high ground 1000 yards South of EUSCHEID. B Company moved toward this objective. Company L also ordered forward, moved on left of Company A. Under cover of smoke and using artillery to flush the Germans from hiding, Company I entered and cleared STRICKSCHEID in early afternoon. They threw back a small counterattack at 1410 with artillery fire then captured the high ground Northeast of town at 2100. Company B now was getting fire from Hill 502 (ENKELS BOIS). Company C therefore attacked the Hill, captured it, then moved on to seize EUSCHEID at 2050. Company B continued to its objective while Company A cleared the area up to EUSCHEID.

2nd Battalion 358 had been attached at noon. 359 now was notified to relieve it and release it to 358. Company K and Antitank Company were dispatched to accomplish this.

The time was ripe to use 358 and Division at 1300 ordered the regiment to clear out by dark the draw between HICKESHAUSEN and HALENBACH. 3rd Battalion was alerted at 1310, moved 6 miles by motor, organized and launched its attack. This decisive action came as a surprise to the Germans who could offer only light resistance. By 2000 Company I had captured HICKESHAUSEN and Company L secured HALENBACH. The cost: 4 casualties. These gains added impetus to the crumbling German defense.

Division ordered Task Force SPIESS to be formed by the daylight and attached to 358. This unit was composed of [Page 20 years and] Headquarters 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion (-); 1 Platoon Company C, 773rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, 90th Reconnaissance Troop, Company D 712th Tank Battalion, 1 Platoon Company B 315th Engineer Battalion, Company C 358th Infantry and Antitank Company 358 OTA Infantry. The unit would form at HOUF for employment on the right flank.

22 February 1945

Disintegration of the German defenses was evident as 358 Task Force SPIESS ran rampant over 5000 yards of enemy territory, capturing four towns, 300 PWs, 4 self-propelled guns, one tank and many horse-drawn artillery pieces.

1st Battalion 358th Infantry made a night motor march from HECKHALENFELD to vicinity of BINSCHIED from where they launched an attack to capture HOLZCHEN and high ground 1000 yards East of town, bypassing ARZFELD enroute. They hit resistance a mile beyond HALENBACH. Company A eliminated this, capturing 2 officers and 40 men. The attack then moved rapidly to HOLZCHEN which was taken about 2030 and final objective was seized at 2200. One squad of Company A caught some 100 PWs, mostly artillerymen, on the high ground East of HOLZCHEN as they tried frantically to hitch their horses and escape. PWs stated our troops and overrun all their positions.

3rd Battalion 358th Infantry set out to capture ARZFELD which they did in late morning after applying artillery to some tanks which delayed the advance. Here they overran a mortar platoon.

Having used plenty of firepower, the unit halted to replenish ammunition. Resupplied 1700 they jumped off again for WINDHAUSEN taking that town in 2030.

Task Force SPIESS swept along the right flank of the regiment capturing the high ground from Southwest of HECKESHAUSEN to Southeast of NEURATH. They seized a mortar platoon and 4 self-propelled guns intact. As Task Force SPIESS was unable to occupy such an extended area (some 5000 yards), 2nd Battalion 358 was brought to take over the high ground closest in.

At 0700 1st Battalion 357th Infantry attacked LICHTENBORN. 5 enemy tanks opposed this advance. One tank was knocked out and the other four withdrew. Companies B and C then moved into the town occupying it by 0900. [Page 21]

From the ridge line South of the town several self-propelled guns opened up and the 3rd Battalion was ordered to capture this point. Their advance met Infantry and tanks but by midafternoon they had pushed to the "Y" fork South of LICHTENBORN. Here they turned East and attacked in conjunction with 1st Battalion. Enemy "Tiger Royal" tanks stopped both Battalions until darkness. At 2000 the offensive was renewed just as enemy Infantry counterattacked 1st Battalion. Artillery fire dissipated the attack. Both Battalions continued meeting resistance.

359th cleared their area without much opposition and consolidated their positions. 2nd Battalion relieved 1st Battalion which assemble that KESFELD. Patrols to LUNEBACH LU and th2nd Battalion relieved 1st Battalion which assemble that KESFELD. Patrols to LUNEBACH found the bridge blown and dug in positions empty. No enemy activity was heard.

90th Division Artillery with perfect visibility for air OP's, fired 43 air-observed missions. As a result during the day 7 enemy tanks were knocked out and 4 others probably knocked out. 3 self-propelled or assault guns were destroyed as well as 6 antitank guns, two 88's and 15 vehicles.

11th Armored Division captured ESCHFELD and REIFF and mopped up its area maintaining contact with our right flank units. 6th Armored Division and 6th Cavalry Group which had attacked across the OUR River two days before were driving fast to the East.

23 February 1945

The Germans made a determined stand with tanks and Infantry at KOPSCHEID as 1st Battalion 357th approached to the town and exhaustive fighting continued throughout the night. At daylight the Battalion gained a foothold in the town and finally cleared it by 0940. One of our tanks was knocked out in this fight. Company A then went on to capture KINZENBURG.

3rd Battalion 357th meanwhile was concerned with 4 enemy tanks rattling around in their rear. All available weapons were used on them without result. Finally K and I Companies bypassed the tanks leaving them for Company L. Before L Company could close with them the tanks withdrew.

K and L moved on to the ridge line West of MANDERSCHEID at daylight intending to attack the town later in the [Page 22] day. At 1100 they were ordered to stand fast while a run was made to seize the bridge as WAXWEILER.

2nd Battalion 357th drew this assignment and reached the town just after dark. Some fighting took place to clear the West Bank. Company F deployed along the West Bank to gain the bridge. The Germans blew it at 2345. Without a bridge, a crossing was not desired and the Battalion withdrew to an assembly area South of LICHTENBORN. The area was turned over to 358th Infantry.

In the interim Company I was ordered into MANDERSCHEID and the unit occupied the town at 1730. B Company thereupon relieved Company I and 1st Battalion took the entire front of the regimental zone.

358th and Task Force SPIESS augmented by B Company 602nd Tank Destroyer Battalion swooped through enemy rear areas not giving the Germans time to dig-in. This incessant pressure added 4000 more yards of ground again, 4 enemy tanks and 5 self-propelled guns knocked out or captured as well as 200 prisoners taken.

Like 357th, 1st Battalion 358 was harassed by two stray enemy tanks in the hours after midnight. The tanks finally withdrew to the East. 1st Battalion moved out at 0730, knocked out one tank and 2 self-propelled guns, captured 80 PWs and rode on to their objective (LAUPERATH and Vic) on Tank destroyers without further resistance. At this point they received orders to capture the bridge at WAXWEILER and moved off at 1730. 357th beat them to the town, however, and the Battalion held up organizing the high ground West of the River. Company E was attached to outpost the area vacated by 2nd Battalion 357th.

3rd Battalion captured KRAUTSCHEID in late morning and were held there with orders to capture BELLSCHEID in late afternoon. These orders were canceled and the Battalion held its position, having already a fair catch: 2 tanks; 100 PWs, 4 motorcycles, 1 150 mm gun with prime mover, 1 staff car, 2 self-propelled guns and several forces with saddles.

2nd Battalion 358th moved in regimental reserve to HOLZCHEN in midafternoon.

Task Force SPIESS cleared HEILBACH, UPPERSHAUSEN and BERKOTH capturing a reported 89 PWs. The enemy shelled [Page 23 and] BERKOTH heavily, then slapped off during the night.

359th Infantry held its positions patrolling toward LUNEBACH.

The Air Force flew 13 missions in front of the 90th in the general vicinity NEUERBURG-PHILIPPSWEILER-WAXWEILER and a 5 mile radius East of the PRUM. They estimated the following destroyed or damaged: 75 tanks, 90 motor trucks, 90 armored vehicles, 1 supply down and several mobile guns. Troop concentrations also were hit.

24 February 1945

357, 359 and 1st and 2nd Battalions 358 remained in their areas while 3rd Battalion 358th made the final offensive on the Division right. Moving out at 0800, the battalion seized BELLSCHIED, RINGHUSCHIED, OBERPIERSCHIED and NDR PIERSCHIED in just one and three quarters hours. The Battalion took two casualties and captured 25 PWs. Task Floors SPIESS seized the high ground a few hundred yards West of PHILIPPSWEILER. Permission to enter the town was refused by Corps since it was out of our area.

Fighter-bombers flew 7 missions around PHILIPPSWEILER, OBERWEILER, OBERLAUCH, PLUTSCHIED, DACKSCHIED and LASCHEID and hit tanks, vehicles, CPs and troop concentrations.

1st Battalion 359th reverted to its regiment as Division received word it would assemble in Corps Reserve after relief by 6th Armored Division in 6th Cavalry Group. These units had made contact with each other and with the 80th Division moving up from the South. The 30 mile pincer was fast closing. Aside from 87th Division which was to attack on 27 February on the Corps North flank, VIII Corps was temporarily taking a defensive position along the PRUM.

The German's uncanny ability to recover crippled tanks again manifested itself. The day before, 8" guns had knocked the turret off a "Tiger Royal". Now only the turret and useless gun remained, torn from the hull. Examination of the tracks showed the headless vehicle had moved off apparently under its own power.

The reliefs by 6th Armored Division and 6th Cavalry Group were accomplished without event and the units assembled in their new areas. [Page 24]

25-28 February 1945

It would have been difficult to get less suitable for a unit supposed to get a rest. The area assigned was already crowded with Corps troops, who could not be moved since they were supporting the front, and by the rear elements of the units on line. The ground had been thoroughly fought over in villages laid waste by artillery, tanks, tank destroyers, mortars and air power. Those pillboxes not burst open by tank and tank destroyer fire were split asunder by explosives. Dead animals were everywhere. In the warming days, their fetid stench was increasingly nauseating. The men of the Division collected and buried the dead animals and improvised shelters. Pyramidal tents were requisitioned and used.

The units settled down to brief training schedules and recreation and rehabilitation of personnel. Thus a month of hard slugging ended quietly as 90th Division slipped from Corps to SHAEF Reserve.

VIII Corps however, jumped off in attack to capture the high ground West of the KYLL River to effect a juncture with XII Corps vicinity DENSBORN. (L-1870).

* * * * *

In the summing up, February was a month of conquest -- conquest of dirty weather, of concrete and barbed wire, of stubborn enemy groups committed to a "do-or-die" effort to hold the West Wall.

This much touted barrier itself proved no match for the skill and courage and the mode of attack shown by our troops. Everywhere it crumbled -- crushed and ground to bits by the inexorable force of the American onslaught. Notwithstanding its thinly-manned but stubborn defense, the West Wall's speedy reduction is a tribute to the drive and fighting qualities of the American soldier and the men of the 90th and attached units. Over 500 pillboxes and log bunkers had to be captured and destroyed. 3195 prisoners were taken, 25 tanks and 13 self-propelled guns were captured or knocked out, besides a cornucopia of other enemy materiel.

The Reich was entered; the West Wall broken. Now the Division looked East -- to the blue RHINE, the next most formidable barrier.

ROOKS
COMMANDING
BOOTH
G-3
[Page 25]

BREACHING THE SIEGFRIED LINE

What were the factors in the 90th's successful reduction of the Siegfried Line? At first it looked like an insurmountable problem. The ground was hub-deep with mud, streams were thaw-flooded and the incessant rains made air cover something to wish for. After initial contact it was found that pillboxes were far more numerous than shown on defense over-prints. Some were adeptly camouflaged. The enemy usually fought stubbornly until completely surrounded. Lastly, in spite of ammunition shortages, the enemy supported his positions with some artillery, considerable deadly nebelwerfer and mortar fire, high velocity fire from gasless tanks dug in as artillery, as well as some roving tanks and self-propelled guns.

But in actual fact, the West Wall, though formidable, was far from impregnable as had been supposed. In the States the Division had trained on attacking the perfect defensive position. But the real thing was far from perfect as the Division had experienced at DILLINGEN and TETTINGEN. It could be cracked.

Here, the dragon's teeth were largely unaffactive. Mines and Barbed wire, though plentiful, were still not as profuse as anticipated. The pillboxes themselves -- contrary to those at DILLINGEN -- served more as troop shelters and the fighting was done mainly from around and outside of them. While this gave the enemy better fields of fire -- since many of the boxes were on reverse slopes -- they similarly made him more vulnerable to artillery and mortar fire. Further, in each area was a key box whose reduction left the others easy prey. Quick to learn this, our units directed their efforts to establishing the key and reducing it first, thus unlocking the defense of that area. In general this was done, though not as easily as the writing of it.

Other factors contributing to the Division's success include:

Timing, since the Division attacked as part of a large-scale assault when the enemy was most harried. The Russian drive from the East was gaining sledgehammer momentum. The Germans were not yet recovered from the Ardennes Disaster.

The enemy troops were insufficient in number, lacking in Weapons (most pillboxes had only machine guns and an occasional bazooka) and were low in morale. They were motley groups thrown together, hodgepodge, from every kind of units -- infantry, engineers, artillery, Air Force, service troops, etc. Some Were First-Rate Soldiers who fought hard and well. But too many were a raggle-taggle of scraps. Some had no infantry training at all. Many did not even know the units to which they were assigned. As a result, the Germans' favored defense -- the counterattack -- was almost nullified. The enemy soldier's morale suffered when they learned from our propaganda, our news leaflets, and our overwhelming their positions that they had been sold down the river by their top commanders. When they realized they were just bodies with trigger fingers placed in the path of a Juggernaut, many became disillusioned and gave up. Our troops took more prisoners each day than the enemy could replace in a week.

The successful application of fundamental training doctrines as originally learned in the States by key personnel still with the Division and developed by experience with the Mansion Forts and previous Siegfried Line encounters was another item. Positions were outflanked whenever possible.

The aggressiveness and skill of the units making the attacks counted a lot. Veteran soldiers and officers among the PWs remarked repeatedly and favorably upon the control, discipline and skillful approach of our troops in the attack.

Thoroughness of execution helped. Bitter experience at DILLINGEN had taught the dangers of enemy infiltration and the inadvisability of skipping pillboxes. Consequently, each one was mopped up and either occupied or demolished after capture. For this purpose, since assault troops were at a premium, special unit troops -- Antitank Company, Cannon Company, etc. -- were pressed into service. While this mop up slowed the advance, it saved redoing an area.

Development of a relatively simple technique aided the advance. All units eventually boiled down their attack on pillboxes to a simple formula: button up the box with tank, Tank destroyer or machine-gun fire, and assault with a small force of 8-10 infantrymen and 2 engineers with the demolitions to knock out the box. On the more obdurate strongholds, direct fire of the 155 self-propelled gun softened the resistance.