

Capt. Heckler

Jerry #27 (7)

GL-211  
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Notes on Activities at 117th Infantry Regiment CP, 2 - 3 October.

2 October. Upon arrival at the 117th Regiment CP, Captain Ferriss and myself observed the bombing from the third floor of the Regimental CP. The infantry moved out promptly at 1100, carrying the long, improvised foot bridges which they used to cross the Wurm River. They moved ahead very steadily, and did not receive any artillery fire until they had almost reached the brink of the hill.

At 1130, we returned to the new regimental CP, and the following conversations were recorded:

1145: E Company reported on phase line 4. 8 wounded reported in E Company. Colonel Johnson says the Air Corps plastered Palenberg.

1200: B Company reported across Wurm River and C Company part way across.

1215: Colonel Johnson: "Get a hold of Verify (743d Tank Bn) and find out how the tankers are doing. The assault companies are well across the river, working on the pillboxes. They are hollering push from Division, as usual."

1220: Colonel Johnson: "The last bunch of medium bombers that came along, seeing the red smoke and not knowing what else to do dropped two loads and took the back half of Palenberg right off the map. That will help the 2nd Bn and B Company along the ridge."

1225: Colonel Frankland reported moving out his support company.

1230: Phone conversation between Colonel Johnson and Colonel Frankland:  
"What's holding them back. . . Didn't the dozers come down there. . . Have you both B and C Company across phase line 5. . . Are you getting any small arms fire. . . Is Easy getting much on it. . . I'll see what I can do about getting you some Mallorys. We will switch some of the tanks over to you when you go through."

1235: Colonel Johnson to Verify: "Check to see whether that tank dozer got down to Colonel Frankland."

1235: Colonel Johnson: "The mystery of the war is where that church went to, it must have been mined."

1240: Major McReynolds says that a liaison officer from the 29th Division claims that the 29th will by-pass Geilenkirchen. "Nice people." said Colonel Johnson. He notified Major Thomes of Custom who said he would take it up with Colonel Hassenfelt. Major Thomes believes the 29th was acting on Corps order.

1245: General Harrison entered the Regimental CP, and said he would like to go down and watch them build the bridge. Colonel Johnson said he was going to see Colonel Frankland and would take the General along. He said the bridge was being held up by enemy artillery. Colonel Johnson: "The right of our line is getting a hell of a pounding, and there is lots of it coming in. We have a couple of Cubs up."

1245: Captain Miller of Verify reported that his tanks were on the stream. General Harrison verified this and said he saw the tanks dragging the culverts down to the stream. Colonel Johnson: "Division is still trying to find out why we didn't get any saturation bombing... We are getting no small arms fire from the woods, but enemy artillery is still pinning them down on the right."

1255: Major Hill, Regimental S-3, enters the CP with a sprained back.

1300: E Company encountered heavy small arms fire in town of Marienberg. C Company still held up by artillery on the right.

1300: Colonel John to Crew (2nd Bn): "Cut in close by Frankland's left. Get moving. Start to move between B and E Company."

1305: Colonel Johnson: "Captain Hoppe (E Company Commander) is still using that damn hedgerow SOP. He is not using his mortars right." Colonel Johnson to 2nd Battalion: "Tell Hoppe to shove on through. Can you get a couple of TD's? O.K. I'll get them for you."

1310: Colonel Johnson to 1st Battalion: "Are your Mallorys doing you any good there? They were supposed to come down with the Verifys. They might be able to help Captain Hoppe on pillbox No. 9."

1315: Major Hill: "Find out what's the matter with getting the tanks across the stream. I understand they are about to get across. . . Frankland is trying to sideslip; artillery is still holding him up."

1320: Colonel Johnson to Mallory Red (258th FA Bn): "My orders are to put you right behind the tanks. Now stop arguing with me and get them down there, where they could knock out a pillbox holding them up. Get two Mallorys over to help E Company."

1330: The 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion liaison officer was told to bring TD's back of E Company to fire on pillbox.

1335: The plan is to run A Company along the route that B Company took.

1340: Colonel Johnson: "We will have to watch F Company's right. . . We are also left wide open to the north."

1350: General Harrison stated that the enemy had been bringing up stuff for 10 days to re-man the pillboxes.

1420: (While I was out to lunch Colonel Johnson and General Harrison left the CP.) Tanks were reported stuck in the mud down by the river.

1425: The 42nd Heavy Machine Gun Battalion was reported reinforcing the 183rd Division. According to Major Giles, this battalion came into the line September 30th, and moved up to our sector on the night of the 1st of October.

PW's say that neither the bombs nor our artillery hurt them very much.

1425: So far nobody had encountered any anti-tank guns or bazookas. . . Engineers are working at the river with shovels and picks to try and dig out the tank dozer.

1430: Colonel Dayton of 12th Army Group entered the CP and was told the following: "We can't tell how deep the fortified line is because of camouflage. The fire of the self-propelled 105's firing indirect fire was ineffective. The self-propelled 155's pecked away all week at the pillboxes -- we can't tell the effect. We have found no dragon's teeth, some anti-tank ditches, lots of communication trenches which seem to be avenues of retreat to the rear."

1450: Major Hill says that the unit on our right (119th Infantry Regiment) is being held up by final protective line grazing fire along the railroad track.

1500: Colonel Johnson phoned from the 1st Battalion, said he had neither heard nor seen any of Captain Rice's outfit (Company A of the 105th Engineer Combat Battalion).

1510: Colonel Duncan, CO of 743rd Tank Battalion, says "The situation is pretty bad down there with all that artillery." Major Hill told Colonel Duncan what Colonel Johnson had ordered about getting the engineers down to help get the tanks across immediately.

1510: Major McReynolds: "I look for the whole action to go pretty fast soon. The 2nd Battalion is flanking Marienberg, and the first Battalion is getting rid of the last pillbox on the hill."

1510: Major Giles to Colonel Johnson: "Crisis is reported in the woods still

meeting stiff resistance."

1515: Two companies of E are across the river, receiving small arms fire, not only from the pillboxes, but from houses also. There are no Mallorys there yet but Verifys are on the way.

1520: Major Hill: "The bridge is receiving time fire, which is falling short." Major Hill called the 118th FA Bn to warn them to check if they were firing time fire.

1545: General Harrison came in and reported they were still working at the bridge, under mortar and machine gun fire.

1550: Captain Rice entered the CP and said, "2 tanks are stuck in the silt this side of the river; they are winching them out now." Captain Rice reported this information to General Hobbs over the phone.

1550: General Harrison: "When I was down at the bridge, they sniped at me. I call that unfair to organized Generals."

1600: Major McReynolds said to General Harrison that he was worried about the failure of the 29th Division to cover our flank. General Harrison replied, "Troops in the pillboxes, and all the Germans are not offensive minded. Furthermore, if they counterattacked we could lay an artillery concentration that would really make those boys unhappy."

1610: Artillery, mortars, and small arms fire still reported in Marienberg. A platoon of tanks finally got down to E Company in Marienberg.

1620: F Company reported moving between E and B Companies. The trouble with G Company was that they were bogged down by 65 or 70 casualties.

1630: Major Patterson, Regimental Surgeon, said that most of the day's casualties were from artillery and mortar fire. He reported "very few" small arms casualties.

1650: Colonel Duncan entered the CP and talked with General Harrison. Among other things, General Harrison said he doubted the ability of medium bombers to hit any target smaller than Berlin. He also said it would be a serious threat to our right flank if the 119th was unable to cross the railroad track.

1655: It was agreed at the CP that the quickest way to get a bridge in was to get tanks across for protection.

1755: General Harrison told Colonel Johnson that he was worried lest Germans infiltrate to the 1st Battalion's positions during the night.

1800: The Engineers reported that within 30 minutes they would have the treadway completed on the MSR.

1800: Colonel Johnson: "The tanks are still in the silt. . . I don't know why, but the enemy is still shelling this open field very frequently. I guess they can't see us any more from the slag piles, because the TD's have been firing up one side and down the other of the slag piles." General Harrison: "The problem Johnson has now is how to get his tanks and TD's across in order to preserve his bridgehead against a counterattack." Colonel Johnson: "I think I would have been better off if I had started this thing earlier without the Air Corps." General Harrison: "Except for the dive bombers."

1825: General Harrison left the Regimental CP, saying to Colonel Johnson as he left, "Have your artillery ranged in. Have your outposts far enough out so artillery can be used."

1830: Colonel Johnson called 3rd Battalion and said to get I Company up on the right to tie in on the right flank of the 1st Battalion. He said that the Rimborg castle was a strong point firing on the 119th and on C Company. He warned the 3rd Battalion that the enemy might try to infiltrate

from the right side of the line. He told the 3rd Battalion that they would be given four TD's, and tanks, and advised them to "use your own AT's."

1840: Tanks were reported starting to cross the Marienberg Bridge.

1840: Colonel Johnson to Colonel Frankland: "Button up very tight for the night, because it may be a rough spot out there.

### 3 October

1145: Major McReynolds, reporting on the previous day's operation, said, "The infantry used improvised bridges, painted green, and hidden in the hay stacks the night before the attack. Several assault boats were also hidden in the hay stacks in case they had to be used. B Company got across the stream first, while C Company was decimated by mortars and artillery fire. Flame throwers and pole charges were used effectively against the pillboxes. B Company got up to the pillboxes on the left in very good shape, but the battalion commander had to pass A Company through C Company.

"E Company went out as sort of a task force with the mission of holding the bridge site at Marienberg. They were held up by pillbox No. 9. It had originally been planned to have the 2nd Battalion follow the 1st Battalion, but when C Company ran into so much trouble, F Company was pushed through between E and B Companies. F Company ran into a pillbox camouflaged as a garage, but by dark they had Palenberg under control. G Company got over also."

1200: Major Giles reported that the PW's said they expected tanks to precede infantry in our attack. A captured German Lieutenant claimed there would be a German counterattack on the night of the 3rd to 4th. He was asked what strength this counterattack would be. He replied, "Always, it says in the book, to save one-third of your troops for a counterattack.

1310: Colonel Johnson reported that a truck had hit a mine up by the Marienberg Bridge. Regarding German opposition on the previous night, he said, "After Mortain, this German infiltration may be compared to mice."

1315: Colonel Johnson noted the following things to his Regimental staff after talking with Colonel McDowell: "They are shooting mortars at McDowell. The 3rd Battalion is between phase lines 8 and 9. He has got wild man Culp up there, with K Company in the lead. That is good because if you get Culp mad he'll really go places. Parrish of I Company is not much of a pusher... Of the Battalion Commanders, Frankland is the only real fighter that we've got."

1320: Five or six tanks from Powerhouse are reported across the river. General White has gone up to see what is the score.

Colonel Johnson: "The 3rd Battalion has one company on each side of the main drag, Parrish on one side and Culp on the other."

1325: Colonel Johnson: "Christ in the mountains. Powerhouse ran into the rear of the 3rd Battalion and stopped cold. Do those tanks need a ribbon along the road to show them which way to go? Some day I am going to have to rewrite the tank book."

1330: Colonel Johnson called Colonel McDowell: "I want to get the armor to make an end run around the town. There is no reason why they have to wait for us. Get up to the head of your column and see if you can push them ahead a little."

1330: About 135 prisoners captured by the 1st Battalion in the woods on their right flank trooped into Scherpenseel. Colonel Johnson: "It is Powerhouse's battle now. If only they could break out into the flat. I think they must be held up by a mine -- probably a coal mine."



1430: Colonel Johnson: "Back at Fort Benning the 117th used to be the demonstration regiment for the infantry school in attacks on fortified positions and river crossings. In this operation we are doing both. "Break through" is the regimental motto."

1450: Colonel Johnson to Colonel Frankland: "I am trying to kick to Division about Powerhouse but want to have my facts first before I kick. I think they'll have to change their code name to Flowerhouse."

1455: Colonel Johnson to Custom 3: "What is Powerhouse supposed to be doing? They're messing around a little bit but mainly just sitting there. Somebody has got to move Powerhouse. I can't do it. Pressure from topside might do it. They seem to be just messing around in the mud."

1510: Colonel Johnson called his S-1 and asked him to bring in some replacements. He also said, "Get the Regimental Historian up to the CP. He is supposed to be writing combat history and how can he write it when he is sitting back in the rear."

1530: Colonel Crystal and Colonel Peyton entered the CP. Colonel Johnson told them about one pillbox that was camouflaged like a house, which they planned to look at.

1535: Colonel Johnson to Colonel Hassenfelt: "McDowell is in Ubach. He is cooking up a plan with the armored people, and the armored people will be behind him. It doesn't look like a breakthrough to me. McDowell is still going slowly, damn slowly; in fact almost as slowly as the 119th."

1545: Major Giles said to Colonel Johnson: "If you hadn't gotten the 119th to move this morning they'd still be butting their heads on that railroad."

1550: Colonel Johnson radio to 1st Battalion: "Cover up those pillboxes we have captured or else get a strong guard on them. . . McDowell is messing

around in Ubach."

1555: Colonel McDowell to Colonel Johnson: "I heard what you said over the radio about my messing around. I want you to know that I am out of the town of Ubach and the head of my column is out of town and 200 yards past phase line 10."

1555: 34 more prisoners came into the IPW enclosure, making a total of 268 for the operation to date.

1705: Colonel Johnson to Custom 3 objected at being given the job of cleaning out some of the woods in the 119th sector, particularly since the assignment was given so late in the evening.

Col. Johnson's way of "needing" his  
own CO's - according to Maj.  
Hewitt, Asst G-2, 30th Div.  
JTS.