

after elements of the first battalion had taken it.

The next morning we left on foot for the town of Kirchherten. Things had really moved in the last twenty four hours. We marched about five miles. Our company didn't have to move from Kirchherten. The armored columns were starting to move. We heard of the roads being cleared at certain hours to allow them to pass through. The 29th Division went on to take Muchen Gladbach and we relaxed a bit and wrote letters.

Kirby left on a quartering party the morning of the 5th of March. Of course we all expected to end up on the banks of the Rhine or to help fight to get to the banks. We were wrong; instead, on the morning of the 6th, we mounted trucks and headed west. We passed through Julich, (there was nothing left standing) and on to Aachen. This one was hard to figure out. We were now passing through Herleen and other nice Dutch towns. We finally ended up in Saeffelen, a little town very near to Sittard.

The best rumors indicated that we had come back to practice crossing the Meuse River. We had changed Corps. Now it was the XIII Corps. A little bit of reasoning could easily figure this one out. I would have sold my reservation to cross the Rhine mighty cheap at that time. Ike had said that the battle of the west would be fought west of the Rhine. We were beginning to wonder. Surely we would go across.

The stay at Saeffelen was a pleasant one. Training, of course, was on the program, but only for half a day. Passes were issued each day to visit the nearby towns of Sittard, Herleen, and Maastricht. I spent a day in Maastricht where I visited some old caves and wrote a number of letters.

We practiced crossing the Meuse River in Alligators, assault boats, and CVP's. Of course, all information on how we would cross was pretty much secret but it had been indicated that we should take special interest in the Alligators.

We left Saeffelen on the evening of March 20. We had enjoyed a pleasant stay.

Spring was in the air. The roads that had been muddy when we arrived were dry now. It was much better to be getting ready to attack in this weather than the conditions in December or the floods of the Roer.

Our assembly area was near Alpen. The company had a small section of woods and one house. In the woods were old German dug-outs which made matters a little easier. In the next two days, those woods were full of everything -- boats, engineering equipment, and all sorts of supplies.

Just across the road were the British. They were getting ready to jump also. We would be under Montgomery again. That was fine with us. Everyone had a lot of respect for the way he used the artillery. The plan was out. Paratroops would be dropped, the British would cross the river with a regiment of commandos to take Wesel, our division would jump at 0230 and the 79th on our right would jump at 0330. Our second battalion would lead and we would go over right behind them and take the town of Spellen.

We left our assembly area at 2000 on March 23. The moon was full, just as it had been when we crossed the Roer. Lancasters came over and plastered Wesel. It took three hours to reach the little town on the west bank of the Rhine. It was a matter of hours now, everyone caught a few winks of sleep. While we were waiting, Capt. King, the adjutant, told Stan that one of our men would leave for the states in the morning. Sgt. Rickard was that lucky boy; he left without even seeing the Rhine River.

At four o'clock that morning, we climbed on the Alligators, checked that our equipment was loose and that our life preservers were tight. Twenty minutes later the battalion was on the EAST bank of the RHINE RIVER. Everyone started for the dike that was to be the line of departure for attacking the town of Spellen. Everyone followed pretty well in the tracks of those ahead of him. Why? -- Mines.

At 0530, the battalion started forward. It was just breaking dawn as we

entered that town. That was a confusing place to figure out. An hour later the town was cleared and the platoons were setting up the defense. Zorena and I went out to locate the third platoon, and while we were doing this, we found a Jerry who had a bad leg wound. We motioned to him that we would get an aid man and went on our way. An hour later, Zorena went back to the man with an aid man. It was too late. That crazy fellow had crawled 25 yards to a broken rifle, loaded it, and put a round through his head.

The carrier planes started coming over about 1000 with the paratroops. I looked up and wondered if Ray Wilson was with that bunch. About the same time, the Germans really started to throw big stuff in the town, so we were all glad to leave just about noon. One round had hit Farmer, the first platoon guide, and wounded him fatally.

In the move out of town our company was in reserve. We held up behind a rail road embankment while the other two rifle companies cleared the houses and area ahead. Tanks were with us now. That was really quick to get them across the river. They had been ferried across. About 1700, just after we had settled down, Stan got the order that we would attack with Company "K" to take a line along which a power plant ran. This line was about 2,000 yards in front of the town of Friedrichsfeld, where Company "I" was located.

What a time we had that night getting ready to jump off, and then contact was lost ten minutes later! Zorena, Kirby, and I took off to try to regain this contact, only to run into a bunch of Jerries which Kirby scared into surrendering. About 90 had been by-passed, according to the prisoners we took. We rounded up 15 of them.

After turning the prisoners over to Company "I", we took off to find Stan and tell him what we knew about the situation. It took quite a while, but we finally found him. The first platoon and part of the second was just about up to the power line. The rest of the company had still not regained contact.

Direct 88 and 20 mm fire was coming in on the troops digging in along the power line.

It was about 0100 when we had found Stan. Lt. Parramore found us a couple hours later and brought up the remainder of his platoon and the third platoon. They had been with "K" Company. All night, the direct fire kept up. It almost beat down the house in which Parramore and Tullbane had set up.

Everyone was really tired. I fell asleep sitting up. At dawn our field artillery hero arrived and went to work on the positions in front of us. Lt. Clifford knocked out both batteries by causing them to quit firing. He actually scored two direct hits and made matters plenty uncomfortable. Company "I" took about 150 prisoners an hour later in that area.

That afternoon we moved to positions along the Lippe Canal. What a time we had in getting into positions. The CP group really got pinned down that time by 20 mm fire. The jeeps full of ammunition from the first battalion caught on fire right outside the house in which we had ducked, so we evacuated in a hurry.

The first battalion came up an hour later with tanks and relieved the situation. That night the company set up along the canal to protect the left flank of the division. We couldn't figure out where the British were, but they were not in sight across the canal.

The next morning, the 26th of March, we started walking at 1000. It began to look like a breakthrough. We walked six miles, mighty happy that each step was just walking and not fighting. That afternoon we received orders to go help the first battalion take the town of Galhen.

What a time we had there! The first was not where they claimed they were. It was impossible to identify terrain features for certain. Sniper fire was coming from all directions. It was dark, and the men were dead tired. No one had had more than four hours sleep since we had crossed the Rhine better than