

30th INFANTRY DIVISION  
117th Infantry Regiment

BREACHING THE SIEGFRIED LINE  
"K" Company

6-1-44

*Hechler*  
*#24*

(Interview with Capt. Wayne Culp, Company Commander, "K" Company, 3d battalion, 117th Infantry Regiment, 22 October 1944; and Lt. Orrin Cooley, platoon leader of 3d platoon, "K" Company, 23 October 1944.  
... Capt. Hechler

The mission of the 3d Battalion of the 117th on 3 October was to pass through the 1st battalion, secure Ubach and establish defenses to the east and northeast of the town. Palenberg was still within small-arms range when K Company moved through on 3 October, most of the rifle fire coming from the patch of woods south of Palenberg in the 119th sector. Artillery and mortar fire was more intense.

Theoretically, K and L Companies were to enter Ubach abreast; actually I, L and K were pretty well mixed up, with L on the left, K in the center and I on the right flank. All three platoons of K company were up on the line. Many direct fire weapons were slowing the tank advance of the 2d Armored Division, which in turn slowed the infantry.

*Dominic P. ...*  
*2 A.D. ...*

Toward the close of the day, the boundaries between companies got worked out a little better, and L and K companies were separated by the north of the two main roads which run east-west through Ubach. Reaching the edge of town toward evening of the 3d, K Company and L Company sat on the edge of town and set up their defenses in the midst of the terrific artillery and mortar fire.

There were three distinct counterattacks aimed at the 3d battalion on 4 October. The first came about 0400, and came in due east and hit L Company. The second came just after first light and came from the barracks straight up the boundary between K and L Companies. The third, which was the ~~weakest~~ <sup>strongest</sup> of the three, came up from the south edge of Ubach.

Capt. Culp estimates the first two counterattacks to have consisted of 75-100 men and six or eight Mark IV tanks, while the third was a little stronger and included a company of infantry and about as many tanks as each of the preceding ones. Most of the preparation of enemy artillery consisted of direct fire from tanks and assault guns right into our front lines, plus the usual dose of mortars which had been dropping in Ubach almost continuously since the arrival of our troops.

All night on 3-4 October, the lines were fifty yards and less apart. There was confusion at times where the lines were, for enemy and friendly troops would be holding alternate houses. The enemy riflemen advanced on one occasion with white flags, and then, apparently at a prearranged signal and spot, suddenly bent over and picked up rifles on the ground and started yelling and firing only 25 yards away from the K Company outposts.

The third and most serious of the counterattacks started in the early afternoon, and about 1500 on 4 October the K Company line was breached by enemy tanks and <sup>the third</sup> ~~one~~ platoon of K was cut off from the rest of the company. Only two men came back from the platoon, but then the company attacked to regain the line and recaptured seven of the men who had been held prisoner in a cellar. Late in the day, three K Company men who had been captured the previous night, Pvts. Oliphant, Martinez and Molina, returned with 14 German prisoners whom they had talked ~~into~~ into surrendering. It seems that one of the Germans had gone to school in the states, was amenable to persuasion, and was able in turn to convince his buddies of the advantages of giving themselves up.

Capt. Culp states that the 2d Armored Division was of assistance in

repelling the counterattacks, but the details are not too definite or clear.

Individual reports from members of the 2d platoon of K Company indicate how bitter the fighting during the 4 October counterattacks actually was. Although Capt. Culp states that the first counterattack hit L Company, Sgt. John McDaniel relates that at 0300, while he was standing guard, a machine gun opened on him and a Mark VI tank rolled up. McDaniel withdrew to a building on the edge of Ubach, threw a hand grenade and fired a rifle grenade without effect. A second rifle grenade glanced off, but the tank withdrew.

In the second counterattack, which came between the two companies, K was hit a little harder. S/Sgt. Roy Bettes was interrupted in the middle of a breakfast ration by a machine gun only 25 yards away. While a BAR team supplied support for him, he was able to pick off two machine gunners with his M1. At the same time a Mark IV came up within 30 yards of a hedgerow and started to fire on dug-in positions along the hedgerow. Pfc. Otis Barnett fired three rifle grenades without effect, and then a German officer walked out and demanded that all the Yanks put their hands up. Pfc. Charlie B. Collins relates that the officer was quickly killed by BAR fire from the right.

The 2d platoon had a difficult time after the 3d platoon on its right flank had been cut off. The platoon leader and platoon sergeant worked their way back for reinforcements and then in the face of heavy enemy tank and small-arms fire, S/Sgt. Henry F. Brand, the ranki non-com, withdrew the platoon successfully.

On 4 October, K Company suffered 4 killed, 13 wounded and 2 missing.

On 5 October, K Company shoved off for zu Ubach, but the advance was slow in the face of tanks, anti-tank guns and the small-arms



Q. by Capt. Ferriss and answers by Capt. Mechler on K Co. story:

p. 1- Q: Division of responsibility between 2d Armored Division and 3d Bn, 117th in cleaning out Ubach?

A. Col. Johnson, CO of 117th Regiment, said that the general plan was to have the 2d Armored Division move through the northern edge of Ubach and the 117th's 3d battalion to cover the southern half. However, the tanks of the 2d Armored had a difficult time getting through the artillery fire in the town. The 2d Armored did assist in repelling the counterattacks on the 3d battalion on the 4th, but it is believed that the 3d battalion did the most in cleaning out the town.