

1ST INF DIVISION
Roer River to Bonn
25 February to 9 March 1945

A comprehensive account of attack to Rhine River. Systematic narrative at regimental and battalion level, with no small-unit details.

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Map

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FROM THE ROER TO THE RHINE (25 February - 9 March)

Headquarters, 1st Inf Division

Interview with Maj Earl Green, Ass't G-3

Held at the division CP at Wunnenberg, Germany, on 4 April 45

Major Franklin Ferriss, Interviewer

A history of the 1st Div's drive from the Roer to the Rhine should emphasize the following points:

1. The maneuver through the adjoining corps' sector whereby a frontal assault across the Roer River was avoided. This was well-coordinated and saved a lot of lives. Our attack on the enemy's positions was from the flank or the rear, instead of frontally, as he had anticipated. [This view is shared by Maj Reuben Johnson, Asst G-2 of III Corps, who, in speaking to Maj Ferriss on 13 March, emphasized (1) the well-prepared field fortifications and steep banks of the Roer, and (2) the surprise to the enemy which this maneuver achieved.]

2. Until the attack reached the Cologne Ridge, east of the Erft Canal, the terrain was as flat as a table. Advance across this terrain was wide open to observation from the towns that dotted the area, and unless hostile observation from these towns had been masked in some way, the movement of troops across the intervening flat ground would have been very costly. The solution generally employed by the 1st Div was to attack under cover of darkness, closing with the enemy in each town before it was light. Where the schedule of the operation would not permit a night attack, smoke was used to deny the enemy's observation.

3. While the regiments may vary in their type of attack, each of them varies their tactics according to the terrain to achieve surprise. This principle rather than any set formula of attack is the important thing. Maj Green pointed to the 26 Inf as an example. This regt

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tends to leave its armor behind on call when it makes a night attack, seeking to retain the element of surprise as long as possible. But when the CO figures that the men are dog-tired, and they have any distance to go before reaching their objective, he will mount them on the tanks and TD's. The same principle holds in the matters of the use of an artillery preparation and the time of attack. Incidentally, each regt is permitted to choose its own H-hour (within limits, of course). Various considerations within each regt make one hour preferable to one regt, another hour preferable to another regt. The division does not believe that the advantage of all regts attacking at the same time is controlling.

4. Both the division and the regimental plans called for the leap-frogging of the units. This gave battalions, and even regiments time to catch a little rest and reequip before they resumed the attack; yet the division attack continued without letup from 25 February through 9 March.

5. Credit for the quick reduction of Bonn must be shared equally by the 16 Inf and the 18 Inf. The rapid drive of the 16 Inf into the town under cover of darkness upset any plans for a perimeter ^E defense of the town. Yet this maneuver could not have been executed successfully if the 18 Inf had not engaged the sizeable enemy forces in the vic of Duisburg, preventing them from interfering with the 16 Inf's reduction of the northern part of the town.

Franklin Ferris,
Major, AUSA.

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FROM THE ROER TO THE RHINE (25 February - 9 March)

16 Inf, 1st Inf Div

Maj Albert H. Smith, Jr., S-3 (since 7 Nov 44)

Interviewed at CP of 16 Inf in Bornheim, Germany, 15 March

Capt Franklin Ferriss, Interviewer

1 - MARKED MAP (1:50,000 * 5 SHEETS)

On 25 February the combat efficiency of the 16 Inf was excellent. The regt was close to T/O strength. Quite a few replacements had arrived since the last operation, however, and this required extra leadership during the advance from the Roer to the Rhine.

Col Frederick W Gibb ~~is~~ Commanding Officer of the 16th Inf
~~Following is a roster of Bn CO's during the operation:~~
Bn CO's during the operation:
1st Bn - Lt Col Edmund F. Driscoll
2d Bn - Lt Col Walter Grant
3d Bn - Maj Edward Wozzenski

Combat Team during the operation!

The 16 Inf had been chosen to spearhead the 1st Div's crossing of the Roer River. To avoid an assault crossing of the river, it was planned to move the regt across on D plus 2 through the 8th Div's sector on the left of the 1st Div, then attack south for the 16 Inf's initial objective, Kreuzau. In case this plan should not prove feasible, 16 Inf was prepared to cross one Bn by boat at Kreuzau. The schedule of supporting fires from the high ground west of the river was impressive: In addition to normal artillery, the regt had 12 M-10 TD's, 4 quadruple 50 cal AA guns, 3 platoons of heavy mortars, one chemical mortar company, all of which was to fire into Kreuzau.

For two days preceding the jump-off an M-12 SP 155 mm howitzer had been pasting ^E specific strongpoints in Kreuzau and

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and the high ground east of the town, using a delayed fuse so that the rounds would burst inside of the buildings that were being hit. A total of about 150 rounds were fired, and Maj Smith rates this preparation as very effective. He pointed out, however, that the fire of an M-12 is very easy to spot; hence, it is adviseable ~~to use the same firing position only once.~~ *Use the same firing position only once.*

The 1st Div has adopted the policy of having the same companies of its tank battalion and ^{of} its TD battalion work with the same infantry ~~regiment~~ ^{regiment} in each operation. Thus the 16 Inf is always teamed with Co A of the 745th Tank Bn and Co C of the 634th TD Bn. In turn, each battalion of the 16 Inf normally works with the same platoon of tanks and TD's. This practice has been followed so long that the Bn CO's regard their tank and TD platoons as virtually organic support. The result has been excellent teamwork, and the Roer to Rhine operation was no exception.

with Co A 745th Tk Bn and Co C 634th TD Bn (1 Plat)

25 February During the morning the 2d Bn ~~and its supporting armor,~~ ^{with 1 Plat Co C 634th TD Bn} followed by the 3d Bn ~~and its armor,~~ crossed the Roer on the 8th. Div's bridge north of Krauthausen and assembled in Niederau. The 2d Bn team attacked for Kreuzau, two kms to the south, at about 1230. The attack was preceded by a normal artillery preparation, and the high ground east of Kreuzau was smoked to deny the enemy observation. Attacking from the north, instead of from the west, and employing armor, the 2d Bn had little difficulty in overrunning the defenses of Kreuzau. The planned foot bridge north of Kreuzau was in by 1430, and by 1730 an infantry support bridge was also constructed. The 1st Bn crossed

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that afternoon and assembled in Kreuzau. One reinforced company of the 2d Bn was sent on to Drove, two kms SE of Kreuzau, that afternoon and reported it clear by 2000. The 3d Bn attacked out of ~~Kreuzau~~ ^{Niederan} right after the 2d Bn, with the mission of seizing the wooded high ground to the east. The objective was not occupied until early the next morning, chiefly, because of orientation trouble in the woods. Though quite a few PWs were captured in the foregoing fighting, the enemy's resistance was not tenacious.

26 February At 0700 the 2d Bn in Drove received a counterattack from the direction of Thum. The enemy's strength was about one company of infantry supported by four tanks. The attackers actually got into the town of Drove and knocked out one M-4 tank and one M-10 TD. By 0800, however, the enemy was driven out, with two of his tanks destroyed. The 2d Bn went on to take Soller that day morning, providing the 1st and the 3d Bns with their LD's for their respective attacks that afternoon. The 1st Bn pushed one km south to Frangenheim (the 1st Bn's first objective since the operation began), while the 3d Bn moved three kms east to seize Vettweis. These latter two attacks had been ordered by division headquarters for that afternoon, though the 16 Inf would have preferred to wait until it had the concealment of darkness. The 1st Bn managed to take its objective without heavy fighting; but the 3d Bn fought 12 hours to capture Vettweis.

Preceding the 3d Bn's attack, harassing fire had been placed on Vettweis over a considerable period of time. ^{Also} ~~Then~~ the town and various points of observation were smoked to hide our movements from the enemy. But the defenders had good Anti-tank protection; several 88 mm guns and a 122 mm SP AT gun (excellent)

made things rough for the tanks working with the 3d Bn. They deployed off the road, and this resulted in several of them bogging down. ^{Others were stopped by the hostile fire. (7.2.)} So the infantry had to make a coordinated assault by rushing to get into town. Casualties were fairly high, about 100 Maj Smith thought.

27 February Vettweis had been cleared only a few hours when the 3d Bn was ordered on to take Gladbach, three kms to the NE. Jumping at 0500, the attackers got to the town under the cover of darkness. The cleaning out of the town, however, was delayed by ~~the~~ very plentiful mines. Even after the roads were pronounced clear, two vehicles and their occupants were lost by pulling just slightly off the road. Maj Smith feels that the combat engineers did the best possible under the conditions (e.g., semi-darkness), and that the road should have been reswept.

Thereafter the 3d Bn was given the mission of taking the two villages immediately north of Gladbach, while the 2d Bn, ~~was brought up to seize~~ being fresher, was brought up to seize a bridgehead east of the Neffel River. The 26 Inf was to attack out of this bridgehead the first thing the next morning, which meant that the 2d Bn had to secure the ground in time to let the engineers build a bridge before daylight. "Getting across the Neffel was a little sticky - - we used two companies - - waded across - - took about 50 PWs - - the bridge was in by ²⁸ 0500." ₁ The 3d Bn was on its objectives north of Gladbach by 1300.

~~4 March~~ After the 26 Inf past through the 16 Inf, the latter regt had three days of rest - "just about time to get our vehicles, tanks, and TD's back, and our weapons cleaned up".

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4 March The 16 Inf moved to Weilerwist under orders to relieve the armored infantry in the town. The 1st Bn moved in first under darkness. The armored infantry apparently had not been advised of the relief. The other two Bns were brought up to Friesheim, and ~~sk~~ later the 3d Bn was pulled up to Weilerwist.

5-6 March The axis of attack was still east and a little north. This meant crossing the Swist River (a tributary of the Erft) and ascending the wooded slopes of the "Cologne Ridge". At the point where the 16 Inf attacked, this ridge is about 4 kms across and approximately 30 feet higher than the plain on either side of it. The biggest problem for the 1st and 3d Bns was the lack of one decent road across the ridge in their sectors. Soil trafficability was not good at this time, and the movement of armor was slow. The troops plugged along most of the day, all night, and did not call a halt till about 1200 the next day. They were "all in" but they held the vital high ground commanding the Cologne plain and controlled most of the eastern slopes down to the plain.

Meanwhile, the 2d Bn had captured Metternich with the help of a smoke screen and then extended its line east through the woods atop the Cologne ridge to protect the south flanks of the 1st Bn. The ~~1st~~ Bn took the heaviest casualties in the regt, about 60, chiefly due to tree-bursts.

After the 1st and 3d Bns had taken the towns on the eastern slopes, the 2d Bn attacked and captured the four villages to the SE before dark on this second day of the attack. The axis was now south, the ultimate objective Bonn.

7 March The 2d Bn paused only long enough to effect necessary reorganization. Around 2400 it jumped off for Bornheim and by 0630

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the town was cleared. At 1030 the 3d Bn ~~was~~ was pushed through the 2d Bn and took Roisdorf and Alfter. Resistance was light in all three of these towns. The key factor was friendly control of the high ground overlooking all of them. The 47 Inf is believed to be the friendly force that held the ground.

In preparation for the attack from Alfter into Bonn, scheduled for the following day, the ~~634~~^{634th TD}'s recon company relieved the 1st Bn and the latter was brought to Alfter.

Attack on Bonn (8-9 March)

16 Inf had the mission of advancing from the towns of Roisdorf and Alfter and seizing roughly the northern half of Bonn. On its right the 18 Inf was to attack simultaneously to secure the southern half of the town. However, the two regiments were not in/^{physical}contact with each other, the high ground on the ~~left~~^{right} of the 16 Inf not having been seized by the 18 Inf prior to the start of the attack on Bonn.

The 16 Inf's attack got under way at 080400, the 3d Bn pushing out from Roisdorf and the 1st Bn from Alfter. The approximately three kms between these towns and Bonn were across flat terrain; ~~hazy~~ and since the enemy had a lot of SP and 20 mm AA guns covering this ground, a daylight attack would have have been costly. By attacking before it was ~~dark~~^{light}, however, this defense was almost entirely nullified. The surprise factor was increased by an early morning haze and by keeping the tanks in the rear. The 1st Bn ran into about 200 Jerries in the suburb of Dransdorf and it took a while to capture them and get going. But the 3d Bn, under the pressure of the regimental/^{and Bn}commanders, moved rapidly. Disregarding its flanks, it kept pressing until

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by 0700 it had reached the Rhine. This dash was the key factor in the taking of Bonn. Fortunately, the men were feeling a bit cocky, not having encountered much resistance in any of the towns taken during the preceding two days. Pressure from regimental and battalion headquarters was also a very important factor.

Once in Bonn, the 3d Bn was ~~XXXXXX~~ ordered to swing left and face north. Soon its rear was protected by the 1st Bn, which came into the city by the same route from the NW and then faced south roughly along the Bonn-Alfter road. In the case of both Bns, the supporting tanks followed the infantry into town. A pocket of resistance at the west end of the bridge held out all day, despite efforts by both Bns to reduce it. During this time the 2d Bn ^{was} cleaning out pockets of resistance left behind by the other two Bns. Despite the presence of a large American force in the town, the defenders on the outskirts continued to man their guns. No vehicles were safe on the regimental MSR until after dark. Finally, at 1800 the 2d Bn was ordered to cease mopping up, ~~and~~ move into the city, and attack the hostile force ~~XXXXXX~~ protecting the bridge from the south. This the 2d Bn proceeded to do; but before the force could be reduced, the enemy blew the bridge. The demolition occurred sometime between 2000 and 2100. What was left of the defending force either got away in boats, leaving their equipment, or were captured. All three Bns were on the river front that night.

The next morning was spent going through the houses of Bonn, picking up PWs. No real resistance was encountered anywhere. By noon the city was entirely in American hands

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Per Corps order, no artillery was used on Bonn proper. As it turned out, none was needed, in Maj Smith's opinion.

Once the Americans secured the high ground west of Bonn, the capture of the city was a certainty. Nevertheless, the resistance was less than anticipated.

The 16 Inf got no close-in support of importance from the Air Corps during this operation.

Franklin Ferriss

Franklin Ferriss, Capt., AUS

NB Pen + ink corrections were made by Maj. Smith
F.F.

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23 March 45

CAPT FERRISS.

I hope this corrected copy will give you the information desired.

Have made some additions that may help to clarify the picture. Sorry I don't have more details available, but hope you understand the circumstances.

~~Fredrick~~

CAPT 16th Inf.

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FROM THE ROER TO THE RHINE (25 February - 9 March)

16th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division.

Captain Fred W. Hall, Jr. - S-2

Interviewed at CP of 16th Infantry in Bornheim, Germany
15 March 1945.

Captain Franklin Feriss, Interviewer.

Most of the time during this operation the 16th Infantry was in contact with the 353rd Division. The 3rd Parachute Division was identified on the Right Flank after the 2nd day of crossing the river and continued to be identified periodically during the operation. The 62nd Volks Grenadier Division was identified during the last 10 days of the operation.

Resistance was spotty. The enemy lacked good artillery support, except during the period of approaching and crossing the ERFT RIVER. He did have a good many assault guns and some tanks. Then, too, most of the towns were protected by mines in the roads and along the shoulders and just about every town had one or more log barricades. The latter, however were no real barriers for the infantry. It was an engineers' job, though, to pull enough logs aside so that tanks could get through.

The 16th Inf. received a lot of fire from its exposed south flank during the advance from the Roer to the Neffel - both SP and artillery fire. Weak counterattacks were numerous, ~~and~~ the only heavy counter-attack came up from Thum toward our positions in Drove early in the operation. Altogether resistance was less than anticipated.

According to the IPW Team, the 16th Inf. took 1701 PWs from 25 February through 9 March 1945. Of this number, 1021 were captured in Bonn or its vicinity. Twenty to thirty different units were represented in this latter haul.

The Defense of Bonn Bonn was defended by remnants of the 62nd VG Div. plus the 253rd Replacement Regiment commanded by Colonel Feind plus Combat School Army Group "B" originally in Sechtem, plus numerous stragglers thrown together in rather ineffective Kampfgruppen and representing a multitude of units. Their chief support came from AA Bns - the 222nd AAA Bn (light) was one - and at least one heavy AAA Bn. The 106th Panzer Brigade was also contacted in Bonn. Seven tanks and 3 assault guns from this unit came down from Cologne to help in the withdrawal action.

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Incidentally, the police of the Cologne and Dusseldorf area also came down and were committed as the 4th Police Battalion. They were low quality troops. The police of Bonn were never committed as a unit. Volksturm units were never encountered as effective fighting groups.

Colonel Heimann, the CO of the remnants of the 62nd VG Div., was captured in Bonn. A *General* Bothner was in charge of the defense of Bonn.

The plan of defense called for two defense rings: (1) A perimeter ring, and (2) An inner ring (the city itself). The first ring was pierced before its organization was complete; the second was never organized at all. The main resistance in the city seemed to be in the nature of a covering action for a withdrawal.

Personnel casualties suffered by the 16th Infantry.

	KIA	MIA	WIA
Officers	1	0	8
EM	$\frac{36}{37}$	$\frac{13}{13}$	$\frac{280}{288}$

Franklin Ferriss

Franklin Ferriss, Capt., AUS

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FROM THE ROER TO THE RHINE (27 February - March 9)

18 Inf, 1st Inf Div

Maj Sam Carter, S-2
Capt Edward W. McGregor, S-3
M/Sgt David W. Parker, Operations Sergeant

Bonn, Germany, 14 March 1945

Capt Franklin Ferriss, Interviewer

1 - MARKED MAP (1:50,000 - 5 SHEETS)

The 18 Inf had been assembled in division reserve NE of Vicht (962390) for at least 10 days prior to its crossing of the Roer River. Combat efficiency was exceptionally high. On 22 February the regt got a new CO, Lt Col John Williamson, who had previously been CO of the 2/18. The 18 Inf was, by division plan, to follow the other two regts across the Roer; hence, no program of specialized training was undertaken.

26-27 February On the night of 26-27 February the 1st and 2d Bns, in that order, crossed the Roer over the 1st Div's bridge just north of Krauthausen. They moved immediately to assembly areas in and just west of Stockheim, taking over from the 28 Inf, 8th Inf Div. The 3d Bn did not cross until after daybreak. By then the 1st Bn had already jumped off for its initial objective, Jacobwullesheim, two kms east of Stockheim. Only very light resistance was encountered, and the town was secured by the time it was really light. So patrols were sent forward to the 1st Bn's next objective, Kelz, about 2½ kms further east. The terrain surrounding Kelz, like practically all the terrain between the Roer and the Erft in the

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1st Div's sector, is "as flat as a billiard table". Hence, during good visibility, which characterized the opening days of the attack, the enemy could observe any advance in the direction of the town and subject it to heavy artillery, ^{and SP} ~~and~~ mortar/fire. The patrol found that it could not get across the open ground in daylight because of this observed fire, so the attack was given up until dark. Maj Carter commented: "When there's no concealment or cover, you've got to attack at night. The primary things now are German artillery and mortar. Jerry infantry is almost a thing of the past".

Thus the first real attack for Kelz began that evening about 2200. Contrary to typical 18 Inf tactics, an artillery preparation was placed on the town. (The CO of the 18 Inf and the CO's of the 2d and 3d Bns feel that in a night attack where some element of surprise is sought, the use of artillery serves chiefly to alert the hostile defenders of the town. Hence, it is used only if absolutely necessary.)

Two roads run from ~~Wixi~~ Jakobwullesheim to Kelz, roughly parallel to each other. The plan of attack, which worked perfectly, was to mount one rifle company on half of the 1st Bn's tanks and TD's and have this force attack down one road, while simultaneously another rifle company was riding the remaining tanks and TD'S down the other road. Both forces got across the open approaches to Kelz without difficulty, and once in the town, our firepower was way too much for the defenders. Resistance was light. The tactics were so successful that they became SOP for all 18 Inf attacks up to the Erft Canal. The greatest hazard proved to be the loss of the lead vehicle to mines. Only one vehicle

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would be lost in this manner, however, for as soon as a minefield was discovered, the supporting engineers would sweep the road under the concealment of darkness and the overwatching armor. Incidentally, these tactics avoided any difficulties due to poor soil trafficability.

As soon as the town of Kelz was taken, the 2d and 3d Bns, with the rifle companies riding the tanks supporting these battalions, moved out for their respective objectives. The 2d Bn reached its LD by going through Frauwullesheim and Eschweiler uber Feld (previously taken by the 8th Inf Div), whence it advanced approximately 4 kms to establish a bridgehead east of the Neffel River. The bridge here was seized intact, and the bridgehead secured by daylight of 28 February.

The 3d Bn past through the 1st Bn in Kelz, took Irresheim without a fight, and when relieved there by Company A, went on to secure its bridgehead east of the Neffel River, including both Norvenich and Hochkirchen. The combination of enemy artillery and a blown bridge at Norvenich, which prevented the tanks and TD's from moving across with the infantry, slowed the attack and kept the 3d Bn from seizing the woods east of the Neffel while it was dark. Rather than risk observed fire, the 3d Bn took it easy the rest of the day (28 February), i.e., until dark.

Night of 28 February The 1st Bn relieved the 3d Bn in Hochkirchen and went on to attack Darweiler and Pingsheim, 2-3 kms to the east. Darweiler fell without difficulty, but Company C got pinned down north of Pingsheim and took a number of casualties. The main fire power in Pingsheim consisted of four artillery

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pieces, all of which were concentrated on the NW side of town. When Company B attacked the town from the south, it got in without difficulty and reported the town clear by 0623. Incidentally, the civilians in Pingsheim said that the Americans had arrived "two days ahead of time".

Meanwhile, the 3d Bn completed the reduction of its objective of the night before, the woods east of Norvenich, and the 2d Bn attacked to take Rath and then Wissersheim. Company G jumped from its LD on the edge of the woods at 2230. Resistance was negligible in both towns.

Night of 1 March The mission of pushing on to the final regimental objective, the line of the Erft Canal and Roth River, was given to the 3d Bn. It past through the 2d Bn in Wissersheim and started for Gymnich shortly before 2400. The usual maneuver of putting the infantry on the armor and then "barreling down the road" was employed. This took the 3d Bn through Mellerhof, where the enemy for some unknown ~~resistance~~ reason put up a fight. By daylight, however, the 3d Bn had gotten through to Gymnich and reported the town clear. Neither here nor at any other town between the Roer and the Erft was the 18 Inf counter-attacked. (Addendum: 32d Cav Rcn Sq took Herrig before the 3d Bn advanced against Gymnich, thus protecting 3d Bn's south flank. Resistance was inconsequential.)

The 18 Inf held the Erft-Roth line without incident until relieved by the 14th Cav Group. Then on 7 March it assembled in the vic of Buschhoven (462318) in preparation for its second mission, the capture (together with the 16 Inf) of Bonn.

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The Reduction of Bonn (8-9 March)

As a result of III Corps' capture of the Remagen bridge, 1st Div's southern boundary was bent sharply south to include the town of Bonn, which formerly had been in ~~III Corps' sector~~ ~~IXth Inf Div's sector~~ 9th Inf Div's sector. 18 Inf was given a corridor on the extreme right of this new 1st Div sector. Its objective was the southern half of Bonn. 16 Inf was on its left, with the northern half of Bonn as its objective.

The 1st Bn spearheaded the regt's attack, jumping off at 080400. Its LD was approximately 4 kms ~~from~~ ^{SW of} the outskirts of Bonn, and its route of approach was astride the Buschhoven-Bonn road. This road was the only feasible MSR for an attack employing armor, but it had the decided disadvantage of being flanked on both sides by high ground. The enemy had organized an MLR west of Duisdorf (a suburb of Bonn), siting a number of SP and a great many 20 mm AA guns in prepared positions on this high ground. So the 18 Inf, which had not fought up to its LD (as did the 16 Inf), but rather inherited it from the 9th Inf Div, definitely did not attack Bonn from high ground.

Companies B and C, in the lead, had a short sharp fight breaking through the enemy MLR west of Duisdorf. The defenders consisted principally of two training battalions (250-300 each), which presumably had been billeted in the two barracks on the east side of Duisdorf. Their plentiful supply of 20 mm AA guns made it necessary for the attacking infantry to move cautiously, keeping an eye out for cover at all times. B Company finally worked itself into the cover of the northern half of Duisdorf, and A Company took the south part of the town. From there

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Company C launched an attack on the barracks SE of the town. These had to be cleaned building by building, and then C went on and captured Lengsdorf. The company's final objective was the high ground east of Lengsdorf, which commanded the entire vicinity. This ground was "hot", with plenty of automatic and SP fire to be neutralized before it could be overrun. After a patrol from C was turned back, the assault on the town was given up till the next day.

One reason for postponing the assault was that both the 2d Bn and the 3d Bn (less Company K), which had jumped off from Duisdorf shortly after the 1st Bn got the town, had successfully overrun the outskirts of Bonn and were well into the town. The only stiff fight in this advance was the reduction of the other barracks, NE of Duisdorf, which succumbed to the fire of Company G. Inside ~~the town~~ Bonn itself, resistance was light and sporadic. The 2d and 3d Bns reached a line roughly along the main RR that runs through town.

On 9 March the rest of Bonn was taken without any real fighting. Most of the enemy had pulled out during the night. The others surrendered as soon as discovered, or before. The high ground east of Lengsdorf, which had been so "hot" the previous afternoon, fell to Company K without a shot being fired.

PWs stated that there had been a plan to counterattack the 18 Inf as it advanced. There was to be a double envelopment, using 400 infantry and 25 tanks. Maj Carter doubts that the enemy had this many tanks. Those they did have apparently ran out of gas. Several were found in the vicinity with empty tanks.

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Resistance The resistance encountered, which was light for the most part, was about what was anticipated. The enemy's organization of the terrain, as indicated on the over-printed 1:25,000 maps, proved to be substantially accurate. The main opposition came from SP guns, with 20 mm AA guns playing an important part on the outskirts of Bonn. No paratroopers were encountered. The principal identification was the 12 VG Div and some elements of the 353 VG Div. Between 25 February and 13 March PWs totalled 17 officers and 1027 EM.

Casualties (secured from the regimental S-1)

	KIA	MIA	WIA	Total
Officers	0	2	12	14
EM	5	45	152	<u>202</u> 216

Addendum
r
Corps order prohibited the use of artillery on the town itself except upon special permission from VII Corps. (Maj Carter suggested that this was because of the many hospitals and civilians in Bonn.) The town fell so easily that there was no necessity for asking VII Corps to relax this prohibition.

Franklin Ferriss

Franklin Ferriss, Capt., AUS.

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FROM THE ROER TO THE RHINE (25 February - 8 March)

26th Inf, 1st Inf Div

Interview with Capt Cedric A. Lafley, S-2 (since Oct., '44)

Held at the regt'l CP at Bruchhausen (659228), Germany, 16 March.

1- MARKED MAP (1:50,000 - 5 SHEETS)

Capt Franklin Ferriss, Interviewer

(NB - The original report of the interview with Capt Lafley was checked and corrected on 24 March by Capt Lafley and Major Henry Clisson, S-3. All corrections have been incorporated in the following account.)

The 26 Inf was not in "peak condition" prior to this operation. This view is based on the fact that the regt had had only one day when it was not in contact with the enemy since its hard fight to breach the Siegfried Line - "for a second time" - in the early part of February. Reinforcements had come in since then, but the regt was not quite up to T/O strength.

The 26 Inf held a battalion front west of the Roer prior to 25 February. Opposite them was the 353rd VG Div, particularly, the 941st Regt, which had been holding the Roer River line since Nov., 1944. These German troops had not suffered much, despite our harassing artillery. They lived either in comfortable basements or in well dug shelters. They had had plenty of time to lay mines and prepare good defensive positions. The 26 Inf was familiar with these latter, as a result of reconnaissance, aerial photos, and the over-printed 1:25,000 maps.

The 26 Inf's initial mission was to clean out a pocket east of the Roer River formed by a bend in the river on the extreme right of the 1st Div's sector. The most important part of this mission was the seizing of Hill 388, which dominated much of the terrain west

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of the river, particularly Ober - and Untermaubach. This high ground was known to be well defended. To avoid a frontal assault, the plan called for the 26 Inf to cross on the 16 Inf's bridge north of Kreuzau. The 3rd and 2nd battalions crossed over this bridge during the afternoon and evening of 25 February, as they were to "carry the ball" in the next day's attack. The 1st Bn held the regt's sector west of the river until the advances of the 2nd and 3rd Bns on the east side made further defense unnecessary. The 1st Bn crossed at Udingen at 261205 Feb.

Attack on 26 February The 3d Bn was the spearhead. It jumped off from a LD on the south side of Kreuzau before daylight. With tanks following, it moved into Udingen under cover of darkness and without difficulty. Seven PWs were captured in the cellars of the town. From Udingen the 3d Bn went on to Boich. The attack on Boich was a two company affair. Company L ^{separated from} ~~the~~ the rest of the 3d Bn before getting to Udingen and marched east to Drove. The plan was for it to attack Boich from Drove, while Company K pushed off from Udingen. Company K's attack went well. Like the attack on Udingen, it was not preceded by an artillery preparation. Since artillery support was being used by the friendly units attacking on both left and right flanks, the failure of the 26 Inf to use artillery achieved a certain amount of surprise. Company L, however, got involved in a sharp fight as it was moving out of Drove between 0700 and 0800. At this juncture the enemy launched an infantry counterattack supported by tanks in an effort to throw the 16 Inf out of Drove. It hit Company L on the flank when it was not in a tactical formation, and the result was a hard fight in which three platoon leaders, three platoon sergeants, and the first sergeant became casualties.

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As Company K cleared Udingen, the 2d Bn came through and attacked ~~for~~ Hill 388, via Rath and Leversbach. The enemy's prepared positions were only partly outflanked by this attack from the east. Also the defenders had lots of mortar fire at their disposal, 4 or 5 SP guns, and the artillery fire from the SE was heavy and well-adjusted. The morale of the 941st Regt (353d VG Div) at this stage of the operation was good. Altogether, the 2d Bn took considerable casualties in capturing their objective. Company G had a particularly hard time securing Rath. Total casualties for the regt on 26 February were 6 KIA and 46 WIA. This was the highest figure for one day in the entire advance from the Roer to the Rhine. Prisoners captured that day were also the most of any day: 264.

Another notable point in the 26 Inf's reduction of its initial objective east of the Roer was that the engineers removed in the neighborhood of 1000 schu mines from the east bank of the river in the 26 Inf's sector. Had the regt tried to force its way thru these minefields, it would have run into a lot of trouble. Altogether, Capt Lafley feels that the regt accomplished its mission as quickly and with as few casualties as possible.

After securing the above objectives on 26 February, the 26 Inf had only a holding mission on the 1st Div's exposed right flank, taking over towns from the 16 Inf.

The Attack on Erp (1 March) The regt's freshest Bn, the 1st, was chosen to take Erp. Gladbach, which had just been captured by the 16 Inf, was the assembly area. Jumping off at 1800 from a LD east of the Neffel River, Companies B and C, with their tanks left behind on call, advanced toward Erp on either side of the Gladbach-Erp road.

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Combat engineers came right behind the infantry, sweeping the road for mines to permit the tanks to come quick as soon as their help was needed. No artillery preparation was employed. (In short, a typical 26 Inf tank-Infantry attack was executed.)

No artillery fire interdicted the advance of the two assault companies. The attackers were also fortunate in not running into any mines. However, the Luftwaffe was out that night and the 1st Bn took a number of casualties from bombing and strafing. The front line troops were given no AA protection at all. (According to what the 26 Inf was told, this was due to the fact that friendly night fighters were in the vicinity.) Erp itself was not easy. It was protected by communication trenches on the outskirts of town, as aerial photos had shown, and the trenches were manned by a couple of fresh training Bns. Their small arms and mortar fire were backed by four 88 mm guns. The fight lasted all night and well into the morning of 2 March. The 1st Bn's tanks and TD's gave invaluable support in driving the defenders from their positions, but the four 88 mm guns did succeed in pulling out to the east.

2 March The 3d Bn joined the 1st Bn in Erp during the day. Neither Bn was given the mission of clearing the patch of woods $1\frac{1}{2}$ kms SE of Erp, as same was not in the regimental sector. This, it latter proved, was a missed opportunity. For in taking Bruhl on 7 March, the 2d Bn captured Col Hans Martin, CO of the 941st Regt, who stated that his CP during the battle for Erp was located in this patch of woods. In fact, Col Martin stayed at this CP with only 21 men for 24 hours after Erp fell, waiting for permission from higher headquarters to withdraw. A company of armored infantry, according to

Col Martin, passed right by the house in which his CP was located.

From Erp the 26 Inf's axis of advance was Lechenich-Liblar - Bruhl. The 3d Bn shoved off from Erp in another night attack without artillery preparation, commencing about 1900. Again no artillery fire interdicted the advance. But Lechenich was protected by an effective anti-tank obstacle, the Roth River. It was only five yards across at most, but all bridges had been blown, and so the infantry had to do most of the cleaning out of Lechenich by themselves. The attack had to be pressed, for the 2d Bn was scheduled to attack out of Lechenich for Liblar and Blessem prior to daylight. The supporting engineers had a busy night of it. In addition to installing a treadway bridge over the Roth during darkness, they had to remove a couple of log barricades that effectively blocked the main road through Lechenich. This problem had been foreseen, and a bulldozer was at hand to expedite the removal of the logs. Still, each one was about an hour's job, and the work had to be done while the infantry was clearing out the town. In fact, PWs were still being captured as late as daylight. (Capt Lafley mentioned the 48 Inf (12 VG Div) as being prominent in the fight for Lechenich. They could not have put up a great deal of resistance, for the 3d Bn took only 3 casualties.)

Breaching the Erft River Line, 3-4 March

The road from Lechenich to Liblar runs due east two kms across table-flat terrain, then crosses the Erft River and turns NE to Liblar, which is about one km beyond the Erft. The river is a most effective anti-tank obstacle, being 25-30 yards wide at this point. East of Liblar the ground rises gradually for two to three kms,

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until it reaches the crest of the Cologne Ridge, some 40 meters above the plain west of the Erft. The combination of the river and the commanding ground east of it make this a natural defensive line. The Germans had dug a lot of trenches on this high ground, and had fresh troops prepared to man them. The latter fact, as well as the location of the trenches, was known in advance.

Col Seitz, the CO of the 26 Inf, gave his 2d Bn, which had not had an offensive mission since it captured Hill 388, the job of cracking this line. Both Blessem and Liblar were included in the 2d Bn's goose-egg, and a simultaneous assault on both was planned. Blessem was Company G's objective, while Liblar was the goal of Cos E and F. The attack commenced at 030445 March. The infantry covered the two kms to the Erft and waded across before it was light. Company F had "quite a show" just west of Liblar, but the men got into town before it was light and proceeded to clear it out by themselves.

The bridge site on the Lechenich - Liblar road was under too much fire to permit the construction of a bridge during daylight. Fortunately, though, the bridge at Blessem was only partly demolished, and after Company G had Blessem and its environs thoroughly cleared, engineers threw a treadway across the site here. It opened to traffic at 1630.

That morning, however, the enemy launched the only major counter-attack received by the 26 Inf during its advance from the Roer to the Rhine. About two companies of infantry and five tanks advanced on Liblar from the SE and NE. Our defensive fires - small arms, mortars, and prepared artillery concentrations - stopped the hostile

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infantry; but with no American armor east of the Erft, the German tanks got into town and roamed around for some time. They finally withdrew after it became clear that the supporting infantry could not reach the town. In repulsing this attack, five battalions of artillery, including 155 mm howitzers, fired continuously from 1200 to 1255. It was the toughest fight the 26 Inf had between the Roer and the Rhine.

Originally, the plan was for the 26 Inf to push on from Liblar to Bruhl to the Rhine. But the evening that the regt captured Liblar, orders were received to proceed south, seize Bliesheim, and make a second crossing of the Erft River at that point. The reason given for this was that the unit on the right of the 26 Inf was having a rough time crossing the Erft in its sector; that the enemy's reinforcements were coming down the Euskirchen - Cologne road; and that this road must be cut. The 26 Inf had had a difficult time that day in securing a bridgehead east of the Erft, and was not keen to do the job over again at Bliesheim. (As it turned out, the regt probably avoided a lot of trouble by swinging south and thus avoiding the "badlands", the open pit mines east of Liblar. There were two strong points in there that would have been tough if attacked frontally.)

At 032400 March - two hours after orders were received from division headquarters -

the 1st Bn attacked out of Lechenich to capture Bliesheim, three kms to the SE. Again there was no artillery preparation and the Bn got into town without much difficulty. The enemy's real defenses were not in Bliesheim, but on the high ground east of the town and the Erft River, which flows on the east side of Bliesheim.

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The bridge was, as usual, blown, but the first Bn waded across and overran these defenses before it was light, capturing most of the 8th Co, 3d Bn, 4th Fortress Regt. It was discovered that the line of trenches was not completely dug, and furthermore, not even all those which had been dug were manned.

The 1st Bn continued east toward the Euskirchen-Cologne highway. Company A in the lead soon found that it had only broken the enemy's first line of defense. Between the railroad and the highway two composite companies of the 353rd Div put up a determined fight to hold the highway open. Company A was reinforced by a platoon from C, and together they fought 24 hours to get to where they could interdict the highway by fire.

While the 1st Bn was battling on 4 March to cut the highway, the 2d Bn cleared Ober Liblar and the factory areas east and north of that town. As anticipated, the battalion found, and captured here what remained of the two companies that had attacked Liblar the previous morning. They belonged to the 3d Bn of the 4th Fortress Regt. (This battalion, it should be noted, was relatively fresh, not having been committed west of the Erft.)

5 - 6 March

The next mission given the 26 Inf was to seize the line Bruhl-Trippelsdorf and then advance east in zone to the Rhine. The 2d Bn had to be left to contain the enemy east of Liblar, so the 3d Bn was brought around on the right of the 1st Bn, 2 kms east of Bliesheim. Then at 051200 March the 3d Bn attacked for Walberberg, Schwadorf, and Trippelsdorf, and simultaneously the 1st Bn went for Badorf, Pingsdorf, and Dorf.

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The enemy's principal defense on the Cologne Ridge consisted of 20 mm AA guns, which had been moved into previously prepared positions. These were of value, however, only until tanks could be brought up. Thus the hardest fight was the capture of the main RJ in Dorf. The 1st Bn's tanks were held up by a demolition job on the Euskirchen - Bruhl highway, which was their axis of advance. So the infantry went ahead without the tanks and ran into a stubborn infantry defense aided by AA guns at the RJ at Dorf. This strongpoint was cracked only when the road was repaired and the 1st Bn's tanks arrived. Then the hostile infantry gave up almost at once, specifically about 060900 March. (This is typical, according to Major Clisson.)

The defending troops were composed of some 30 different units, and it took some hard fighting to neutralize their fire. From the LD east, however, the 1st and 3d Bns were attacking from high ground, and this was an important asset. By mid-morning both Bns had secured their objectives.

The Capture of Bruhl, 7 March

The 2d Bn was relieved in the vic of Liblar and Ober Liblar on the 6th by elements of the 14th Cavalry Group. The Bn moved by motor to Pingsdorf the same evening and attacked for the final regimental objective, Bruhl, at 070600. To everyone's surprise, the battalion went through Bruhl "like a dose of salts". Only one American was wounded in taking the town. The Germans' morale had obviously gone to hell. It was on this attack that Col Hans Martin, CO of the 941st Regt, was captured. Martin was outspoken in his praise of the 26 Inf's night attacks.

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From Bruhl, a reinforced platoon of Company E attacked east at 071200 and secured Berzdorf after a short, sharp fight. After Company F came up and took over the town, the platoon from E advanced to the superhighway, where it installed a road block, and then sent patrols to the Rhine. Meanwhile, the I and R platoon cleared the western suburbs of Bruhl, while Company K cleared Sechtem.

The by-passed "badlands" between Liblar and [~]Buhl[^] were ~~also~~ cleared by the cavalry, assisted by the 26 Inf. The enemy in this pocket had been cut off by the capture of Bruhl; hence, the mopping up process was not hard.

On the whole, Capt Lafley felt that the resistance encountered was about what was expected. The over-printed 1:25,000 maps proved accurate and most helpful. Fortunately, many of the prepared positions were found unoccupied.

Prisoners Total PWs from 26 February through 14 March, inclusive were 1028, plus 79 Italians.

Casualties For the period 26 February - 9 March:

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Officers	2	1	8	
EM	<u>29</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>165</u>	
Total	31	10	173	214

Franklin Ferriss

Franklin Ferriss, Capt., AUS

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*Original report of interview -
See report revised after interview on 24 March - J.J.*

FROM THE ROER TO THE RHINE (25 February - 8 March)

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26 Inf, 1st Inf Div

Interview with Capt Cedric A. Lafley, S-2 (since Oct., '44)

Held at the regt'l CP at Bruchhausen (659228), Germany, 16 March

Capt Franklin Ferriss, Interviewer

The 26 Inf was not in "peak condition" prior to this operation. This view is based on the fact that the regt had had only one day when it was not in contact with the enemy since its hard fight to ~~be~~ breach the Siegfried Line - "for a second time" - in the ~~vixxof~~ early part of February. Reinforcements had come in since then, but the regt was not quite up to T/O strength.

The 26 Inf held a battalion front west of the Roer prior to 25 February. Opp^osite them was the 353d VG Div, particularly, the 941st Regt, which had been holding the Roer River line since Nov., 1944. These German troops had not suffered much, despite our harassing artillery. They lived either in comfortable basements or in well dug shelters. They had had plenty of time to ^{lay mines and} prepare good defensive positions. The 26 Inf was familiar with these latter, as a result of reconnaissance, aerial photos, and the overprinted 1:25,000 maps.

The 26 Inf's initial mission was to clean out a pocket east of the Roer River formed by a bend in the river on the extreme right of the 1st Div's sector. The most important part of this mission was the seizing of Hill 388, which dominated much of the terrain west of the river, particularly Ober- and Untermaubach. This high ground was known to be well defended. To avoid a frontal assault, the plan called for the 26 Inf to cross on the 16 Inf's

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bridge north of Kreuzau. The three battalions crossed over this bridge during the afternoon and evening of 25 February, the 3d and 2d Bns ~~going in the same direction as the 1st Bn~~ crossing first, as they were to "carry the ball" in the next day's attack.

Attack on 26 February The 3d Bn was the spearhead. It jumped off from a LD on the south side of Kreuzau before daylight. With tanks following, it moved into Udingen under cover of darkness and without difficulty. Seven PWs were captured in the cellars of the town. From Udingen the 3d Bn went on to Boich. As it cleared Udingen, the 2d Bn came through and attacked for Hill 388, via the two towns east of the hill. ~~xxxxxx~~ The enemy's prepared positions were ^{only partly} outflanked by this attack from the east. ^{Also,} ~~but~~ the defenders had lots of mortar fire at their disposal, 4 or 5 SP guns, and the artillery fire from the SE was heavy and well-adjusted. The morale of the 941st Regt (353d VG Div) at this stage of the operation was good. Altogether, the 2d Bn took considerable casualties in ^P capturing their objective. The regimental total was 6 KIA and 46 WIA ~~for~~ on 26 February, and this was the highest ^{for one day} figure in the entire advance from the Roer to the Rhine. Prisoners captured that day were also the most of any day: 264.

The 3d Bn's attack on Boich, like its attack on Udingen, achieved surprise. Capt Lafley feels that an important factor in this was that neither attack was preceded by artillery preparation. However, he points out that the element of surprise was closely related to the fact that artillery support was being used by the friendly units attacking on both left and right flanks of the 26 Inf.

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Another notable point in the 26 Inf's reduction of its initial objectives east of the Roer was that the engineers removed in the neighborhood of 1000 schu mines from the east bank of the river in the 26 Inf's sector. Had the regt tried to force its way thru these minefields, it would have run into a lot of trouble. ~~Altogether,~~ Altogether, Capt Lafley feels that the regt accomplished its mission as quickly and with as few casualties as possible.

After securing the above objectives on 26 February, the 26 Inf had only a holding mission on the 1st Div's exposed right flank, taking over towns from the 16 Inf.

The Attack on Erp (1 March) The regt's freshest Bn, the 1st, was chosen to take Erp. Gladbach, which had just been captured by the 16 Inf, was the assembly area. Jumping off ~~from~~ at 1800 from a LD east of the Neffel River, Companies B and C, with their tanks left behind on call, advanced toward Erp on either side of the Gladbach-Erp road. Combat engineers came right behind the infantry, sweeping the road for mines to permit the tanks to come quick as soon as their help was needed. No artillery preparation was employed.

(In short, a typical 26 Inf tank-infantry attack was executed.) Some measure of surprise was apparently achieved, for no artillery fire interdicted the advance of the two assault companies. The attackers were also fortunate in not running into any mines.

However, ~~the~~ Erp was protected by communication trenches on the outskirts of the town, as aerial photos had shown, and the trenches ^εwere manned by troops of the 941st Regt plus one or two training Bns. Their small arms and mortar fire were backed by four 88 mm guns. The fight lasted all night and well into the morn-

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ing of 2 March. The 1st Bn's tanks and TD's gave invaluable support in driving the defenders from their positions, but the four 88 mm guns did succeed in pulling out to the east.

2 March The 3d Bn relieved the 1st Bn in Erp during the day. Neither Bn was given the mission of clearing the patch of woods $1\frac{1}{2}$ kms SE of Erp, and this, as it latter proved, was a missed opportunity. For in taking Bruhl on 7 March, the 2d Bn captured Col Hans Martin, CO of the 941st Regt, who stated that his CP during the battle for Erp was located in this patch of woods. In fact, Col Martin stayed at this CP with only 21 men for 24 hours after Erp fell, waiting for permission from higher headquarters to withdraw. A company of armored infantry, according to Col Martin, passed right by the house in which his CP was located.

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The tanks and TD's did arrive, however, in time to

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assist in repulsing the counterattack which the enemy launched about 1000 that morning. About two companies of infantry and five tanks advanced from the SE. They never got into town. Defensive fires of all calibres, including 155 howitzers, broke it up and the attacking force retired to Ober Liblar. ~~In a fast moving action,~~ The following day (4 March) the 2d Bn pursued its attackers into OberLiblar, where it captured what was left of both companies. They belonged to the 3d Bn of the 4th Fortress Regt, which, it should be noted, had not been committed west of the Erft.

(3 March)

That night the 1st Bn attacked out of Lechenich to capture Bliesheim, three kms to the SE. Again there was no artillery preparation and the Bn got into town without much difficulty. The enemy's defenses really were not in Bliesheim, but on the high ground east of the town and the Erft River, which flows through it. The bridge was as usual blown, but the first Bn waded across and overran these defenses before it was light, capturing most of the 8th Co, 3d Bn, 4th Fortress Regt. It was discovered that the line of trenches was ~~was~~ not completely dug, and furthermore, not even all those which had been dug were manned. ~~That day (the 5th)~~ the 1st Bn continued east into the woods two kms, cutting the Euskirchen-Cologne highway. The third battalion came through Bliesheim and advanced onto the right of the 1st Bn during the afternoon. It had cleared 3/4 of the woods east of Bliesheim before it buttoned up.

6 March Just before daybreak the 3d Bn continued its attack to clear the Cologne Ridge and in particular to capture Walberberg. Simultaneously, the 1st Bn on the left hit for Badorf and Pingsdorf. The principal defense of these towns ~~was~~ consisted of 20 mm AA guns,

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which had been moved into prepared positions along the ridge west of the towns. SP and artillery fire from east of the Rhine was also met. The defending troops were composed of some 30 different units, and it took some hard fighting to neutralize their fire. From the LD east, however, the 1st and 3d Bns were attacking from high ground, and this was an important asset. By mid-morning both Bns were on their objectives.

The Capture of Bruhl, 7 March

The 2d Bn was relieved in the vic of Liblar and Ober Liblar on the 6th by elements of the 14th Cavalry Group. (The open-face mines east of Liblar had been purposely by-passed; hence, a defensive line had to be held here.) The 2d Bn moved by motor to Pingsdorf the same evening and attacked for the final regimental objective, Bruhl, at 070600. To everyone's surprise, the battalion went through Bruhl "like a dose of salts". Only one American was wounded in taking the town. The Germans' morale had obviously gone to hell. It was on this attack that Col Hans Martin, CO of the 941st Regt, was captured. Martin was outspoken in his praise of the 26 Inf's night attacks

The remaining 5-6 kms to the Rhine were cleared by the 14th Cavalry. They got a number of PWs, but the going was not heavy. The by-passed "badlands" between Liblar and Bruhl were also cleared by the cavalry, assisted by the 26 Inf. The enemy in this pocket had been cut off by the capture of Bruhl; hence, the mopping up process was not hard.

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