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OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION, 422D INFANTRY  
(106TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE BATTLE OF THE  
BULGE, IN THE VICINITY OF SCHLAUSENBACH, GERMANY  
10 - 19 DECEMBER 1944. (ARDENNES - ALSAAC CAMPAIGN)  
(Personal Experience of a Battalion Executive Officer )

Type of operation described: INFANTRY BATTALION IN THE RELIEF,  
DEFENSE, WITHDRAWAL AND ATTACK

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO I

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OPERATIONS OF THE 1ST BATTALION, 422D INFANTRY  
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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 1st Battalion, 422d Infantry, 106th US Division in the Battle of the Bulge, in the vicinity of SCHLAUSENBACH, GERMANY, 10 - 19 December 1944. It will include the daylight relief of a battalion in defensive position, conduct of the defense, a daylight withdrawal and an attack on the city of SCHONBERG, GERMANY.

Early in June 1944, Allied Forces made successful landings on the continent of EUROPE and by 24 September 1944 the 4th Infantry Division, at that time attached to V Corps, First US Army, had advanced to the east, against heavy resistance, broken through enemy positions in the SEIGFREID LINE and had taken up defensive positions on the SCHNEE EIFEL RIDGE in GERMANY. (1) (See Map A)

During the period September 1944 to December 1944, many changes in the disposition of troops along the front were made in preparation for continuing the advance to the east. By 9 December 1944, VIII Corps, First US Army had taken over the positions of V Corps along the SCHNEE EIFEL with the mission of conducting an aggressive defense and be prepared to advance on COLOGNE on order. This was a sector extending from LOSHEIM, GERMANY on the north to a point where the MOSELLE RIVER crosses the FRANCO - GERMAN boundary at the northeast corner of the Duchy of LUXEMBOURG. This sector comprised a front of approximately eighty-eight miles.  
(2) Since there had been very little enemy activity, other than minor

(1) A-3, p. 50  
(2) A-6

patrols, and it was known that the Germans were using this sector for indoctrinating green troops to the sounds of battle, it was dubbed the "quiet sector."

This sector was defended by a Task Force and three infantry divisions abreast. The 2d Division on the north occupied a salient in the SEIGFREID LINE along the high wooded SCHNEE EIFEL RIDGE. Task Force "X" was attached to the 2d Division and occupied a five mile front north of the SCHNEE EIFEL positions and maintained contact with the 99th Infantry Division of V Corps on its left. (3)

The 28th Infantry Division defended the center section along the OUR RIVER, on the right of the 2d Infantry Division and the 83d Infantry Division defended the southern part of the sector along the OUR RIVER to its confluence with the MOSELLE RIVER and thence up the MOSELLE to the boundary between VIII and XX Corps of the Third US Army.

The 9th Armored Division, with no combat experience, was in Corps reserve and was rotating its infantry units in division front lines to gain combat experience. (4) (See Map A)

#### THE GENERAL SITUATION

The 106th Infantry Division landed at LE HAVRE, FRANCE on 6 December 1944, moved by a succession of motor marches across FRANCE and BELGIUM, and on 8 - 10 December closed in an assembly area in the snow covered ARDENNES FOREST in the 2d Infantry Division sector near ST. VITH, BELGIUM.

The 106th was assigned to VIII Corps and was to be given an opportunity to gain combat experience by occupying defensive positions in the relatively "quiet sector" of VIII Corps. (5)

The 106th was to relieve the 2d Infantry Division and attacked Task Force X now in defensive positions in the northern sector of VIII Corps along the SCHNEE EIFEL RIDGE. The 2d was being attached to V Corps in preparation for an attack in the area of the ROER DAMS. (6)

- (3) A-6
- (4) A-6
- (5) A-6
- (6) A-3, p. 96

Attached to the 106th was the 18th and 32d Squadrons of 14th Cavalry Group. These squadrons were to take over the sector occupied by Task Force X now attached to 2d Infantry Division, and maintain contact between the 106th Division and the 99th Division on the north. (7)

The disposition of troops for the 106th Division was to be elements of the 14th Cavalry Group and the 422d Infantry Regiment on the north, the 423d Infantry Regiment in the center and the 424th Infantry Regiment, less one battalion, on the south. One battalion of the 424th was to be in division reserve. (8) (See Map B)

The enemy, as known to the Division Commander at this time, consisted of elements of the partly trained 18th and 26th Volksgrenadier Divisions and their supporting artillery. Two Panzer Divisions were reported somewhere in reserve. (9) It was believed that these two Panzer Divisions were held in reserve in case of an attack by VIII Corps. (10) (See Map B)

The combat efficiency of the troops of the enemy in comparison with the 106th was estimated as generally the same, since the 106th had no combat experience and a definite pattern had shown that for the past month the comparatively "quiet sector" in front of VIII Corps had been used by the Germans for seasoning newly formed divisions. (11)

The SCHNEE EIFEL is a hogback ridge, characterized by high plateaus, deeply enclosed valleys and a restricted road net. This area is heavily wooded with steep ravines and ridges running to the east and west. The road net consisted of narrow dirt roads in poor condition running generally north and south along the ridge. Due to the snow and ice at this time some of the roads were almost impassable.

The fortifications of the SEIGFREID LINE ran generally along the

- (7) A-3, p. 96
- (8) A-6
- (9) A-13
- (10) A-1, p. 12
- (11) A-1, p. 17

crest of the SCHNEE EIFEL. These fortifications consisted of concrete pillboxes, dug in gun positions and fox holes. (12)

The weather was cold, the ground covered with snow and ice, and snow falling intermittingly. The sky was cloudy and dull and a heavy mist hung about the tops of the trees. (13)

The supply situation throughout the Corps was normal except for a shortage of Prestone, tires, PX rations, miscellaneous signal equipment, shoes, overshoes, and raincoats. (14)

#### DISPOSITION AND PLAN OF THE 422D INFANTRY

On 9 December the 422d Infantry closed in its assembly area in the ARDENNES FOREST\* in the vicinity of ST. VITH, BELGIUM. (See Map B)

On order from Headquarters, 106th Division, the 422d Infantry Regiment and its supporting 589th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm) would relieve the 9th Infantry Regiment and its 15th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm). (15) This order stated that the 422d was to take over from the 9th, "man for man and gun for gun", on or about 11 December 1944 and continue the defense. (16)

The 422d's plan for the relief was as follows: the 2d Battalion would relieve the 2d Battalion, 9th Infantry, on the north, the 1st Battalion would relieve the 2d Battalion, 23d Infantry, which had relieved the 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry, on 4 December so it could go to a rest area at STEINEBRUCH, GERMANY, in the center (17). The 3d Battalion would relieve the 3d Battalion, 9th Infantry, on the south. (See Map C)

The regiment would move by motor from its present position at 100900 December 1944 to execute the relief. The battalions would move in the following order: 2d, 1st and 3d.

- (12) A-3, p. 102
- (13) A-1, p. 9
- (14) A-13
- (15) A-3, p. 93
- (16) A-1, p. 13
- (17) A-1, p. 11

## DISPOSITION AND PLAN OF THE 1ST BATTALION

Well after dark on the 9th of December, after another all day motor march in open trucks, freezing weather, and in a blinding snow-storm, the 1st Battalion closed in its assembly area in the ARDENNES FOREST in the vicinity of ST. VITH.

The Battalion was met by guides from the quartering party, the Battalion Commander, and the Company Commander. The Battalion Commander, his party, and Company Commanders had gone forward earlier in the day to have their first look at the positions they were to take over the following day.

The blinding snow, that was falling, and the restriction on the use of lights made it very difficult for the men to follow their guides. Some of them were separated from their units and found their way to other company areas. It was the next morning before the companies could re-assemble. (18)

The battalion kitchens, which had been under regimental control since the march began, had arrived a few hours earlier and had hot coffee waiting for the men. This was indeed a treat and morale booster. Even though the morale of the troops was high, the fatigue of the long motor marches across FRANCE in open trucks in rain and snow, the lack of hot meals and no opportunity to change to dry clothes tended to lower the combat efficiency of the unit as a whole. At this time the battalion was approximately up to TO & E strength.

The Battalion Commander's orders were to relieve the 1st Battalion, 23d Infantry, then attached to the 9th Infantry, "man for man, gun for gun." The kitchens were to move up in the vicinity of the Company's Command Posts and the men's duffle bags would be up later.

(18) A-10

The Battalion Commander oriented his staff as to the situation. The enemy forces opposing the positions were not positively identified at this time but, it was a "quiet sector" and the activity was limited to light patrolling.

The battalion was to take over positions on the eastern slope of the SCHNEE EIFEL. This slope was steep and heavily wooded. The few available roads were in poor condition, covered with snow and mud. Positions consisting of fox holes and squad shelters, most of them full of mud or water, had been prepared previously by other units. There were mine fields and barbed wire entanglements out to the front. Trip flares and antipersonnel mines were scattered along the front in the gaps between occupied positions. (19)

The Battalion Commander's plan for the relief of the 1st Battalion, 23d Infantry, was company for company; C on the left, B in the center and A on the right. B would take over the positions of D Company and Battalion Headquarters Company would relieve Battalion Headquarters Company, installation for installation. (See Map D)

The Company Commanders had received their orders for the relief while on reconnaissance with the Battalion Commander earlier in the day. The battalion was to be ready to move by motor at 0900 hours the 10th of December. (20)

#### NARRATION

##### THE RELIEF

Early in the cold gray dawn of 10 December, the 1st Battalion, still wet, cold and tired, from its motor march across FRANCE and BELGIUM, dug itself out of the snow in its bivouac area in the vicinity of ST. VITH, BELGIUM.

(19) A-13  
(20) A-13

After a "skimpy" hot breakfast, companies were formed and began preparations for the move to the front lines. Men and equipment were checked, the men counted off and truck numbers assigned. Approximately fifteen or twenty men had to be evacuated to the rear because of trench foot. This was caused by the lack of dry socks and overshoes. A last minute police of the area was made and the companies formed.

The battalion was formed in the woods, ready to move, but as often happens in motor moves, the trucks had not arrived. After waiting approximately two hours, stomping around in the snow to keep warm, the trucks arrived. The battalion was loaded and the movement to the front began.

The road was rough and covered with ice and snow. This slowed down the movement of the column and it was late in the afternoon before it finally stopped in the vicinity of the Command Post of the 1st Battalion, 23d Infantry. This command post was located on the western slope of the SCHNEE EIFEL in a German pillbox in the SEIGFREID LINE at a cross road about 3,000 yards east of SCHLAUSENBACH, GERMANY, (21) and about a mile from the front line positions which were located on the eastern slope of the ridge.

The battalion was met by the Commander of the 1st Battalion, 23d Infantry, his staff, and one officer from each of his companies.

The battalion detrucked and its units marched the last mile to their front line positions, guided by one officer per company and one noncommissioned officer per platoon left by the 1st Battalion, 23d Infantry.

Some of the men of the 23d were already formed, waiting to load on the trucks that brought the 1st Battalion up, and start their movement to the rear. Several remarks were made by these men as to how lucky we were to be moving into this "quiet sector". It was better than a rest

camp, according to them, there was no close order drill up here.

The relief was made without incident and it was well after dark when the last positions were finally taken over. It was to be another cold sleepless night for most of the battalion.

The kitchens were brought forward and set up several hundred yards behind the front line positions in the vicinity of the Company Command Posts. A meal was prepared, mostly hot coffee and cold sandwiches, and the feeding began. The men ate in shifts, a few from each squad sector at a time. It was well toward mid-night when the feeding was completed.

In spite of the fact that the men had been told that this was a "quiet sector" and that they had nothing to worry about, most of them were a little nervous and jittery. This could be expected since it was their first time in battle positions and they had only been on the Continent five days.

The night passed without any activity from the enemy, but, one of A Company's Officers and a guide that was left to show the men their positions were shot and slightly wounded by one of A Company's Outposts while they were checking positions. As stated before, the men were a little jittery. (22)

Schedules of patrols, overlays of their routes, the front line positions, and final protective fires were turned over and explained to the unit commanders by the officers left behind by the 23d Infantry. All information concerning enemy positions, activity, and that pertinent to the friendly positions, patrols and terrain were turned over to the respective unit commanders. (23)

(22) A-13  
(23) A-13

At 2045 hours 10 December the relief was finally completed as ordered "gun for gun, and man for man". The companies were disposed as follows: C on the north, B in the center, A on the south, and D in general support. (24) (See Map D)

#### THE DEFENSE

The battalion was defending a front of approximately 3,500 yards, running generally along the eastern base of the SCHNEE EIFEL. The terrain was very rough, consisting of a series of wooded ridges and gullies running generally east and west. In some places heavily wooded ridges ran well out in front of the positions. The terrain in front of the positions, between these jutting wooded ridges, was generally rolling open fields. Fields of fire across these areas were generally good and the wooded, rough terrain offered good cover and concealment for the defensive positions.

Due to this extended frontage and the terrain, it was necessary to employ all of the rifle companies and all of their platoons in front line positions. This left only the few administrative personnel and cooks in reserve.

The positions were organized in a series of squad and platoon strong points and outposts. (See Map D) The gaps between, in some cases over a hundred yards in width, were covered by fire and roving patrols. Mortar, cannon and artillery concentrations were plotted to cover all of the gaps and dead spaces to the front.

The heavy machine guns were employed behind the front lines higher up on the slope of the ridge. These were used to assist in covering the gaps and as breakthrough guns or reserves, in case the line was penetrated. They constituted the defense in depth and could support the front line positions, to some extent, with overhead plunging fire.

The 81-mm mortars were employed by section on the western slope of the ridge so as to give maximum support to the battalion.

All of these positions were inherited from the 9th Infantry. They consisted mostly of one and two-man fox holes, most of them built up with logs and covered with dirt. Some squad shelters had been constructed of logs and covered with dirt. Although the floors were muddy, they offered some protection from small arms fire and the weather. (25)

Activity for the next five days, 11 - 15 December, consisted primarily of patrolling to the front and flanks, improving defensive positions, registering the mortars, and catching up on administrative work. Enemy action consisted of sporadic artillery fire and minor patrol activity. The weather remained cold, wet and foggy. (26)

During this period the "trench foot" rate increased and many men were evacuated. This was due primarily to the lack of overshoes. The supply of overshoes was critical and although the supply personnel did all in their power to get them, there were not enough for all of the men. Every time a man was evacuated from the front lines it left an empty fox hole. Since there were no reserves, this increased the gaps in the now over-extended front line and reduced the combat efficiency of the units as a whole. (27)

During the night of 15 - 16 December enemy activity increased. More patrols were observed and there was a definite increase in the sound of moving vehicles in the vicinity of WASCHIED, to the front. The battalion S - 2 reported to regiment the movement of enemy convoys along the front and was criticized for reporting movement of "convoys", he was told that "motors" was the correct word, since all that had been heard was

- (25) A-11
- (26) A-13
- (27) A-1, p. 19

automotive engines. (28)

On the morning of 16 December at 0530 hours heavy artillery and mortar fire began to fall all along the front line positions and on units well to the rear. This fire continued until 0615 hours. (29)

At approximately 0800 hours an estimated company of Germans attacked the battalion positions in B Company's area. The Germans advanced across the open fields in what appeared to be a column of platoons in line, with some elements working their way up the wooded ridges that jutted out to the front. Riflemen and machine guns opened fire, mortar fire was called for and placed on the wooded ridges and by approximately 1000 hours the main attack was stopped.

During this action several small patrols succeeded in infiltrating through B Company's lines. One of these of approximately eight or ten men, dressed in white snow suits, succeeded in getting within approximately 100 yards of the Command Post of Company B before they were either killed or taken prisoner. The company cooks and administrative personnel were all fighting in defense of the Command Post. It was approximately 1700 hours before all of these patrols were eliminated -- either killed or taken prisoner.

The prisoners were immediately sent back to Battalion Headquarters for processing. One of the group, an officer, had a copy of the German attack order.

The attack order was translated, in part, by a German speaking corporal assigned to Battalion Headquarters, and it was found that this action was no minor patrol activity, but part of a large scale offensive. Regiment was immediately notified by telephone and the order was sent back by special motor messenger. The prisoners were sent back as soon as possible.

(28) A-1, p. 18  
(29) A-8

B Company's casualties for the days action were comparatively light, five men slightly wounded and one officer killed. The enemy lost approximately twenty-five captured, an undetermined number wounded and it was estimated that better than half of the company were killed.

There was no further enemy activity reported in the battalion area during the remainder of that day and night, however, there was an increase in the number of "Buzz Bombs" that came flying over. Previously there had been only one or two a night.

The morning of the 17th brought increased activity along the entire front of the 106th Division. At 0800 hours the Germans launched another attack in the 1st Battalion sector, this time in the sector of C Company. This attack was similar to the attack in B Company's sector the day previously and with the assistance of the battalion's mortars and heavy machine guns, was repulsed about 1300 hours.

Eight of the men from Company C were wounded and none killed. Approximately thirty Germans were captured and many more killed and wounded.

It was the morning of 17 December when battalion headquarters first learned of the magnitude of the German offensive. On the 16th, the Germans had attacked in force along the entire division front. A large force, reinforced with tanks, had attacked in the LOSHIEM area to the north that was thinly held by the 14th Cavalry Group and the southern flank of the 99th Infantry. This force had broken through the defenses and elements were advancing south down the road, from AUW toward SCHLAUSENBACH, our regimental headquarters.

Another large force had broken through the defenses between the 423d and the 424th Infantry to the south and were advancing to the northeast toward SCHLAUSENBACH and ST. VITH.

The 422d, 423d and part of the 424th Infantry Regiments were completely encircled. The 598th Artillery, supporting the 422d, had

taken a terrific beating from the German Artillery on the morning of the 16th and was forced to abandon its positions. (30) The regiment's supply routes had been cut off and there was no means of resupplying food and ammunition, other than by Air Drop. This was requested but never received due to weather conditions.

The Regimental Antitank Company and Cannon Company had taken up defensive positions north of SCHLAUSENBACH to protect the Regimental Command Post and try to stop the German advance from the north. Early in the morning of the 17th the 2d Battalion, on the left of the 1st Battalion, was pulled back and now was in position to the right of Cannon Company, facing to the northward generally along the MERTESBERG HEIGHTS from SCHLAUSENBACH on the left to HILL 636 in the SCHNEE EIFEL on the right. In its hurried move, early in the morning, the 2d Battalion had to abandon its kitchens and duffle bags, there was no transportation available to move them. (31)

This caused a gap between the 1st and 2d Battalion running from the front line positions west to the top of the SCHNEE EIFEL. A composite provisional rifle company was formed from elements of the 3d Battalion on the south, and sent up to fill gap that now existed between the 1st and 2d Battalions. A platoon of Company C pulled back from its front line positions on the left of the battalion and tied in with the composite company. (See Map C)

Around noon German vehicles including ambulances and foot troops were observed from the Battalion Command Post moving down the road from KOBSEID to SCHLAUSENBACH. A battery of German horse-drawn artillery was observed going into firing positions in an open field in the vicinity of KOBSEID to the rear of the battalion positions. Artillery and cannon fire were called for, but there was none to be had.

(30) A-13

(31) A-1, p. 85

Both units were out of firing positions. An 81-mm mortar, from D Company was brought back from its position covering the front and set up to fire to the rear. One round, with eight increments on it was fired at the artillery battery, but it was never seen when it landed. Ammunition was very low so this was the only round fired.

At approximately 1630 hours artillery began to fall around the 1st Battalion Command Post. The Command Post was in a German pillbox that had had some additional rooms built of logs and covered with dirt added to it. One round hit just outside of the addition and blew a hole in one side. One of the logs from the wall crashed inside and struck the Battalion Commander on the back of his head, critically wounding him, he died the next day while being evacuated. Regiment was notified and the Battalion Executive Officer was told to take command. One enlisted man was slightly wounded and the Command Post was set afire.

Since the German artillery had fired on the Command Post and elements of Battalion Headquarters Company that were located nearby, the Command Post and the elements of Battalion Headquarters Company in that vicinity, were moved to another pillbox approximately five hundred yards to the south. This pillbox was occupied by the artillery liaison officer and his party. It was very crowded, and practically every-one spent a sleepless night. No meals had been served from the kitchen since that morning.

There was no further enemy activity in the 1st Battalion area for the remainder of the night.

#### THE WITHDRAWAL

At 0900 hours on the 18th, battalion received orders to send an officer to regimental headquarters for orders. The S - 3 was sent and returned with word that the regiment was going to withdraw in the direction

of SCHONBERG, in an effort to break through the German encirclement. The I. P. was the cross roads at the old 1st Battalion Command Post location and the movement was to be down the road to the south. The order of march was the foot troops of 2d Battalion, Regimental Headquarters, 1st Battalion and 3d Battalion. The time of crossing the I. P. was 1200 hours. The motors were to move under regimental control by a different route and be picked in the vicinity of SCHONBERT later. This included all communication equipment except the SCR 300s and SCR 536s, leaving no communications with regiment.

Radio or telephone were not to be used to notify the front line companies of the movement since wires had been tapped on several occasions during the last twenty-four hours.

The S - 3 was immediately sent, by jeep, to give the movement orders to the front line companies. They were to take with them all the ammunition and food they could carry. Both were in short supply at this time, since no trucks had been able to get through to the rear for replacements. We were completely encircled by German troops and armor.

The kitchens and all other equipment were to be destroyed with as little noise as possible and left behind. The heavy weapons were to be hand carried and the companies were to move out as soon as possible. The order to march for the battalion was C, 1 Sec of D, B, 1 Platoon of D, Battalion Headquarters, D (-), A and 1 Sec of D. A Company was to constitute the rear guard for the battalion.

At approximately 1200 hours the 2d Battalion and Regimental Headquarters Company started passing the I. P. Due to the distance from the front line positions of the 1st Battalion to the I. P. the troops did not arrive in time to follow the 2d Battalion. The 2d Battalion and Regimental Headquarters continued to move, leaving a large gap where the 1st Battalion should have been. As the column passed the 3d Battalion area

to the South. The 3d Battalion fell in the column following the 2d Battalion. By the time the 3d Battalion had cleared its assembly area the 1st Battalion had arrived and fell in behind them, bringing up the rear. (32)

Once started the movement to the rear was very slow. There were frequent stops, to check compass directions and to reconnoiter to the front for possible enemy positions. There had been no reconnaissance and the movement was entirely by compass direction only. The location of enemy troops was not known and there was always a possibility of ambush.

Although the column moved only approximately three miles before it stopped in its assembly area in a small patch of woods just west of OBERLASCHEID, it was getting dark when the 1st Battalion closed in its small sector of the regimental area. (33) (See Woods A - Map E)

Immediately upon arrival in the assembly area, the battalion commanders were ordered to report to the regimental command post for orders. Upon arriving at the command post they were oriented as to their present location on their maps and given the location of their final assembly areas for the attack the next morning by the Regimental S - 3.

The Regimental Commander gave the attack order. The strength and location of the enemy in the vicinity of SCHONBERG was unknown. The 423d Infantry Regiment was to attack on the left of the 422d from the south. Their location at this time was not known since contact had been lost earlier in the day.

The mission was to capture SCHONBERG and continue the withdrawal to the west in an effort to break through the German encirclement.

The regiment was to attack three battalions abreast, 1st on the right, 2d in the center, and 3d on the left. The 3d Battalion was to try

(32) A-13

(33) A-1, p. 112

and gain contact with the 423d Infantry on its left.

The direction of attack was to be generally northwest until within approximately 1,000 yards to SCHONBERG, then it was to change direction and attack to the west. The 1st Battalion was to cross the SCHONBERG - ANDLER road and attack to the southwest. Its zone of attack was bounded on the left by the SCHONBERG - ANDLER road and on the right by the AUW RIVER.

In the event the 3d Battalion was pinched off by the 423d Infantry, which was attacking from the south, it would follow the 2d Battalion and be prepared to attack in either the 1st or 2d Battalions zone.

The battalions were to move individually cross-country by compass direction to their final assemble areas which had been designated by the regimental S - 3. 1st Battalion, Woods B, 2d Battalion, Woods C and 3d Battalion Woods D, and be prepared to launch the attack at 0700 hours the 19th of December. (See Map E)

At approximately 1830 hours the 1st Battalion started its move across country by compass direction only to its final assembly area in Woods B, a distance of approximately 1800 yards. (See Map E)

It was rough going cross country with the ground covered with ice and snow. Like the regimental march, there had been no reconnaissance and the direction was by compass only. There were frequent stops to allow patrols to search the area to the front for any enemy before it moved. This gave the men a little time for a much needed rest. They had been hand carrying their heavy weapons and all the ammunition they could since the march started. Even though they were tired, cold and hungry their morale was excellent and their spirits high.

It was approximately 2400 hours when the battalion finally closed in the little patch of woods that was its final assembly area. The companies were assigned sectors and each was responsible for its own

security, tying-in with units on their right and left. Since this patch of woods was so small, hardly large enough for a company to disperse in, much less a battalion, there was no difficulty in coordinating the security. There were no fox holes and the men were too tired to dig so they slept on the top of the ground. The area was so small that there was little room for dispersion and the men were bunched up.

The 2d Battalion had closed in its final assembly area in Woods E (See Map E) and was contacted by a patrol from the 1st Battalion, there was no communication between battalions or from battalions to regiment. The battalions were on their own.

The battalion attack order was given at approximately 0045 hours. The battalion would attack SCHONBERG from its present position in Woods B, its area of departure, at 0730 hours on 19 December, seize that part of SCHONBERG in its zone and continue the attack to the south toward ST. VITH. The attack was to be in a column of companies in the following order: C Company with a section of machine guns from D, B Company with a section of machine guns from D, Battalion Headquarters, D (-) and A Company would bring up the rear. Company A was to furnish a patrol for protection of the right flank, which was exposed. The direction of the attack was to be to the northeast until the leading elements crossed the SCHONBERG - AUW ROAD and then southeast toward SCHONBERG. After crossing the road, the battalion zone was bounded on the left by the SCHONBERG - AUW ROAD and the AUW RIVER on the right. The 2d Battalion was to be on the left. The men were cautioned to use sparingly the little water and food that they had, those that had it, as there was no more to be had at this time.

At 0700 hours on the 19th a messenger was sent to contact the 2d Battalion to see if it was ready to start the attack at 0730 hours. The messenger returned stating that the 2d was ready.

At 0730 hours, C Company moved out of the woods leading the attack. Its leading elements had advanced approximately 400 yards when it was pinned down by machine gun and rifle fire from a house approximately 150 yards to its right flank. The section of machine guns from D Company were set up in the edge of Woods B and opened fire on the house. The enemy fire stopped and approximately a dozen German soldiers ran from the house and disappeared over a ridge to its rear. C Company then continued its advance.

The 2d Battalion on the left started its advance on time and moved up an open draw to its front. This draw was fairly deep and offered good cover from the flanks. They had not received any enemy fire during their advance and by the time C Company had resumed its advance the 2d Battalion had cleared the "SKYLINE DRIVE", a road running northeast from RADSCHIED. (See Map E)

By this time the leading elements of C Company had crossed the road and made contact with the 2d Battalion in a draw on the other side. C Company Commander, using his SCR 300, reported to the 1st Battalion Commander that he had made contact with the 2d Battalion and was continuing the advance.

The last elements of C Company had just left the assembly area when four German tanks came rolling down "SKYLINE DRIVE" on the right flank and opened fire on the remainder of the 1st Battalion in Woods B.

(See Map E)

The men in the woods did not have any fox holes and as stated before were bunched close together because of the small area of the woods that was the final assembly area. Due to this situation it was believed that there would be many unnecessary casualties if the battalion remained in the woods, under fire from the tanks, so it was decided to withdraw to the rear and try to advance up the draw that the 2d Battalion had used.

(See Map E) This offered good cover and concealment from the flanks and more room for dispersion.

The battalion, less C Company, withdrew and started to advance up the draw. The leading elements had just crossed "SKYLINE DRIVE" when tanks moved up from the rear and opened fire. The battalion was pinned down out in the open, but dispersed. The tanks that were on the right flank moved down the road and opened fire from the right flank. There were some foot troops with the tanks at this time and they were firing machine pistols and rifles. A section of heavy machine guns from D Company was set up and started firing on the foot troops. They fired for about thirty seconds before they were knocked out by 88s from the tanks. A rocket launcher team with its two rounds of ammunition, that was all it had, tried to get in a position to fire but was knocked out of action by the tanks. The riflemen were returning all the fire they could, but rifle fire cannot stop tanks. This fire continued for about twenty minutes, causing many casualties and would have continued until the entire battalion was wiped out if someone had not waved a white handkerchief and started walking toward the tanks. The firing slowed down and other men joined the white flag. During this lull in the tank fire some of the men and the Battalion Commander and his staff made a run over SKYLINE DRIVE and escaped, only to be captured two days later while with remnants of several other units, they were defending another small patch of woods. The remainder of the battalion was either killed or captured.

This brought to a conclusion the actions of the 1st Battalion, 422d Infantry Regiment, in the "Battle of the Bulge." (34)

In summary, the 1st Battalion, 422d Infantry, fresh from the States and with no combat experience, took over a defensive sector of approximately 3,500 yards along rugged terrain in adverse weather

conditions and held it against two major attacks. It withdrew only on orders from higher headquarters and made a successful day and night march of approximately six miles cross country, by compass direction only, hand carrying its weapons, and started an attack on the city of SCHONBERG.

Although the battalion failed in its attack and was, either destroyed or captured, it is believed that its actions during the entire time it was committed in the front lines assisted in slowing down the largest German offensive during the entire period of the war.

This action caused the Germans to commit forces and expend ammunition and materiel which otherwise could have been used in his main attack toward the east. (35)

Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges, First Army Commander, said of the 106th's stand:

"No troops in the world, disposed as your division had to be, could have withstood the impact of the German attack which had its greatest weight in your sector. Please tell these men for me what a grand job they did. By the delay they effected, they definitely upset von Rundstedt's time table." (36)

(35) A-13  
(36) A-14, p. 9

## ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

### 1. SUPPLY

There was a shortage in supply of many items of clothing but the shortage of overshoes caused many men of the battalion to have to be evacuated to the rear because of Trench Foot. These men's feet had been wet practically ever since they landed on the continent. There had been continuous rain and snow while the battalion was making its four day motor march across FRANCE and BELGIUM to its defensive positions in the SCHNEE EIFEL. The men had had no opportunity to dry their clothing or feet.

Due to the extended front occupied by the battalion in its defensive positions, it was necessary that every man possible be used in occupying front line positions. When men were evacuated it left empty fox holes and extended gaps in the lines, weakening the defense as a whole. During the time the battalion occupied its defensive sector more men were evacuated for trench foot than for any other cause. It is believed that if they had been properly supplied with overshoes that the trench foot rate would have been greatly reduced.

### 2. DEFENSE OF AN OVER-EXTENDED FRONT

Although the battalion was defending an over-extended front of approximately 3,500 yards and had no artillery support, it successfully repulsed two major attacks by German foot troops. This success was due primarily to the organization of the defensive positions. These positions were organized in a series of mutually supporting strong points on commanding terrain with good cover, concealment and fields of fire to the front. The gaps between these positions were covered with mutually supporting rifle fire, machine gun and mortar fire and roving patrols. Although several enemy patrols infiltrated through the front line positions during these attacks and advanced almost to the company

command posts, they were either killed or captured by the company administrative personnel and cooks. Since there were no reserves, the companies had a well organized plan for the defense of the command post.

### 3. THE WITHDRAWAL

The battalion received orders at 0950 hours to withdraw from its present positions and follow the 2d Battalion in a regimental move to the rear. The IP was the cross road at the old 1st Battalion Command Post and the time for crossing was 1200 hours. Neither telephone nor radio was to be used to notify the front line companies of the withdrawal. Since the battalion was in defensive positions along a 3,500 yard front about a mile from the IP and a special messenger had to be sent to each front line company to give the order, it was practically impossible for it to assemble and pass the IP on time. The battalion was late crossing the IP and the 2d Battalion moved on. This left a gap in the column of several hundred yards. This caused no serious consequences in this move but had the enemy been in close pursuit of the 2d Battalion, which it was capable of doing at this time, it could have cut the 1st Battalion off from the main body, leaving it without any support whatsoever.

### 4. RECONNAISSANCE

In both the regimental move to its assemble area and the 1st Battalions move to its final assembly area from the regimental area, no ground reconnaissance was made for routes or suitable assembly areas. This led to a slow march cross country by compass, stopping often to check direction and reconnoiter to the front. This slow march and the stopping and starting caused undue fatigue to the personnel and the column to bunch up. Both the regimental assembly area and the 1st Battalion final assembly area were inadequate for the proper dispersion of the troops. These areas had been selected from a map. Due to the

inadequacy of the 1st Battalion's final assembly area it had to withdraw when attacked by tanks and was later encircled by tanks out in the open and completely annihilated, either destroyed or captured.

#### 5. HAND CARRIED HEAVY WEAPONS

The order for the withdrawal was that weapons and all ammunition possible would be hand carried. The machine guns and mortars of the rifle companies and the heavy weapons company were hand carried cross-country over rough terrain covered with ice and snow, for a distance of approximately six miles. It was well after midnight when the troops closed in the battalion final assembly area after this long march with no hot food since early morning. Although these men were tired, wet and hungry they were up early and without any breakfast, were ready to launch an attack on SCHONBERG, as ordered. Many did not live to tell their story, they are to be commended.

#### 6. COMMUNICATIONS

When the battalion was ordered to withdraw from its defensive positions and send its <sup>Mortars</sup> mortars ahead under regimental control, it lost its radio communication with regiment and the other battalions. After the battalion had received its attack order and moved from the regimental assembly area, it was on its own. It had no communications with regiment other than foot messenger and when the regimental command post moved forward its location was not known to the battalion. In this particular situation there was no alternative and it is doubtful whether or not communications would have changed the outcome of the attack, since there was no support to call for, neither troops, tanks, or artillery. However, it is a point to be considered and remembered that communications in the attack is a necessity if you are to accomplish your mission.

#### 7. INFANTRY AGAINST TANKS

Tanks caused the complete destruction of the 1st Battalion. When

tanks appeared on the right flank of the battalion and opened fire on its assembly area as it was starting its attack on SCHONBERG, there was no alternative but to withdraw from the woods to avoid unnecessary casualties. The assembly area was so small there was not enough room for dispersion of the troops and there were no fox holes. After the men had withdrawn from the woods and started to advance up a draw that offered protection from the flanks, more tanks came up from the rear and opened fire on the battalion, pinning it down. There was one man with a rocket launcher and two rounds of ammunition who started out to try and get one of the tanks but the tanks got him first. Machine guns and riflemen opened fire but this fire had no effect on the tanks. This attack by the tanks ended the operations of the 1st Battalion, it was either destroyed or captured.

#### LESSONS

1. In operations that require men to spend long hours in rain, snow and mud, it is imperative that proper footgear be provided for protection against these elements to obtain the maximum combat efficiency of any unit.

2. Over extended defensive positions of a battalion without artillery support, can be successfully defended against major attacks by foot troops, by taking advantage of positions that offer good cover, concealment and fields of fire and by coordinating the fires of the battalion heavy machine guns and mortars to cover the gaps between defensive positions.

3. In giving orders for a move of any type and a time for crossing a IP it is imperative that consideration be given to the time it would take all elements of the unit to prepare to move and the distance it has to cross the IP on time.

4. In all movements of troops to final assembly areas a thorough reconnaissance should be made of both the route and the assembly area to determine the best route and the adequacy of the assembly area.

5. Heavy weapons, machine guns and mortars, can be hand carried over rough terrain for a distance up to six miles in an emergency.

6. In an attack communications with higher headquarters is imperative if the mission is to be accomplished.

7. Infantry alone cannot fight tanks with no antitank weapons and expect to win the battle.