

4517 ASU ROTC
Oklahoma A&M College
Stillwater, Oklahoma

29 May 1947

Mr. Hugh M. Cole
Chief, European Section
Historical Division
War Department
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Cole:

Your letter received requesting a narrative of the fight by CCR, Seventh Armored Division, at Sillegny in September 1944 and for other pertinent information covering the operations of CCR, Seventh Armored Division.

From notes which I made covering the attack at Sillegny, I will give you what information I can. I cannot supply definite information on some of your questions.

I was acting Chief of Staff of the Seventh Armored Division, having replaced Colonel Mahoney. Colonel Mahoney took command of CCR and was injured prior to September 15th while CCR was attacking Metz. A Lt. Colonel, name unknown, replaced Colonel Mahoney in command of CCR.

At 1000, September 15th, I took command of CCR and at 1400 moved to the east to cross the Moselle River and widen the then small bridge-head which was at that time approximately 1500 yards in depth and 2000 yards in width. CCR crossed the Moselle River under heavy artillery fire, and just west and north of Arry, brushed aside a German holding force, capturing a small detachment of Germans, thirteen in number. At dark on the night of the 15th of September, the head of CCR was two miles west of the Moselle River. The advance of CCR was continued during the nights of September 15-16, brushing aside small German detachments, and advanced to about one and one-half miles east of Lorry, at which time the advance was stopped due to road blocks of fallen trees. The advance was stopped at about 0230, 16th of September, and CCR went into a protective bivouac. At daylight, 16th of September, CCR had a fight with Germans outposting Murulluer. The Germans were defeated and driven back to Murulluer. Twelve German prisoners were taken.

The remainder of September 16th and 17th was devoted to removing road blocks and securing a line of departure at the east edge of the woods, which was west of Sillegny. During September 16th and 17th, while removing the road block, CCR suffered casualties from German artillery fire, on which we were unable to place counter battery fire.

September 18th, at 1530, CCR launched its first attack on Sillegny with two companies of the 38th AIB and the armored units of CCR. One supporting engineer company of two platoons acting as Infantrymen composed the reserve. The other Infantry company of the 38th AIB was

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back with Division Headquarters, being used to protect that headquarters. The infantry phase of the attack was broken up by heavy enemy artillery fire, but CCR tanks silenced enemy anti-tank guns. The infantry was badly disorganized by the enemy artillery fire, but was reassembled and reorganized by the Infantry Battalion Commander, Lt. Col. Rosebro, and myself, and launched another attack at 1900, 18th September, and drove to within 50 yards of the town. The attack was then stopped, and the Infantry dug in.

Col. Rosebro was killed while up with the front line Infantry units. Through lack of leadership on the part of some of the junior officers, Col. Rosebro had gone forward where he could personally direct the attack. He was a very fine and brave officer.

The third attack was launched at 0430, 19th September, but was again stopped at a point about 30 yards from the town of Sillegny. The early morning of the 19th of September, the company that was back with division headquarters was sent forward in trucks and rejoined the command. At 1315, 19th September, the fourth attack was launched. This attack captured the town of Sillegny, driving the Germans to the north-east. The German artillery was so heavy that troops in the town, except a small detachment, was forced to withdraw to the west to the high grounds overlooking the town. A small detachment of one officer and approximately 30 men remained in the east portion of Sillegny.

During the afternoon of the 19th of September, the Germans launched a counter-attack with tanks and infantry. The counter-attack was broken up by CCR with the aid of two flights of P47s, which were in the air with a mission to bomb several nearby forts. Their original mission was diverted by CCR control tank against the counter-attack, and with some help from the artillery of the 5th Division which had moved into position north and west of CCR.

During the late afternoon of the 19th of September, Germans infiltrated back into Sillegny and surrounded the detachment of one officer and 30 enlisted men that had remained in Sillegny. At approximately 1730 an attack to rescue the detachment was launched by a platoon of tanks. As a result of the attack, 27 men were able to withdraw and rejoin their unit. Two of the tanks of the attacking platoon were destroyed.

The 38th AIB dug in on a hill overlooking Sillegny about 400 yards southwest of the town. At about 1800 an enemy artillery shell hit a tank passing the CP of CR (about 10 yards away), killing two men and injuring the S-3, Major Laurir; the artillery liaison officer, Captain Sharp, a radio operator, and myself. I was not seriously injured and continued on duty

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until about 1400, September 20th.

CCA was ordered to attack to the east through CCR. The attack was planned for the morning of 20 September, CCR to remain in position and assist the attack of CCA by its fire. CCA did not attack until about 1600, September 20th. The attack was repulsed, and CCA withdrew to the line established by CCR.

The enemy had the advantage in artillery fire of all types, since our big caliber supporting artillery was still west of the Moselle River. Also, the weather was such that it was impossible for our observation planes to take the air, while the Germans had good observation and command of the high ground.


During the attack on Sillegny, three Battalion Commanders were killed and one injured. This accounts for the changes in the command of the 38th AIB. After Colonel Rosebro was killed, the AIB Executive Officer took command. He was killed and was succeeded by the next in command. The division then sent a Lt. Colonel, name not remembered, forward to take command of the 38th AIB. He was wounded.

I do not have any records of the initials of Lt. Col. Rosebro or the name of the 38th AIB executive.

When the attack began at Sillegny, the 38th AIB was minus one company. The engineer company of two platoons came from the Seventh Armored Division Headquarters and had to be utilized as infantry in the attack against Sillegny.

I know that I have not been of much help in giving to you the names of the officers commanding the 38th AIB during the attack. I hope that the narrative will be of assistance to you.

Sincerely,


PETE T. HEFNER, JR.
Colonel, Infantry