

Shoot-Out at Rimling Junction, January 8–9, 1945

by Rufus Dalton, 397-H

Why another article about the battle of Rimling? That is a good question. I feel one last one is due because the story of the last two days of that battle has not been told. This was when the very life of the 2nd Battalion, 397th Infantry was on the line with a pitched battle going on within the town itself. The stories of the individual men involved have not been fully told. This article is an attempt to use their stories to give a composite feeling of what those last two days were like.

The Rimling battle lasted from 0005 hours, January 1, 1945, until shortly after dark on January 9. It might be helpful to outline the main events of those days. I used *Operations of the 397th Infantry Regiment 100th Infantry Division* (the monthly narrative report submitted by the 397th's commander) to glean the following:

December 31

- 1st Battalion was in position at Bettviller.
- 2nd Battalion was in reserve around Guising and Gare de Rohrbach.
- 3rd Battalion was on the main line of resistance (MLR), in and around Rimling.

January 1

- 3rd Battalion at 0005 was hit by a major enemy attack and held, but the 44th Division, on the 3rd Battalion's left flank, fell back, exposing the Battalion's left flank.

January 2

- 3rd Battalion held onto its position.
- 1st and 2nd platoons of Company G (2nd Bn.) were moved up to the MLR to shore up the left flank of the 3rd Battalion.

January 3

- 3rd Battalion held its position, but the 2nd Platoon, Company G was driven back. Part of this lost land was regained by a late afternoon counterattack by the 1st Platoon, Company G.

January 4

- 3rd Battalion holding stubbornly.

January 5

- 2nd Battalion relieved 3rd Battalion on the line; Company E moving up to take over Company I's sector along the western end of le Schlossberg hill and Company F. moving up to take over Company K's sector on le Schlitzen hill.

January 6

- 2nd Battalion finished its relief of the 3rd Battalion, which moved back into reserve.

January 7

- 2nd Battalion maintained its same position on the MLR. German troops were seen massing along with tanks.

January 8

- Several hours before dawn, the Germans came with a massive attack that overran Company E and penetrated into Rimling.

January 9

- Again in the early hours, the Germans, with tanks, attacked Company F's position, overrunning it and penetrating further into Rimling.

As the elements of the rifle companies were overrun, all of the men who survived fell back into Rimling and continued the battle there, joining those who had been fighting in town. I feel it was the combination

of these men, all fighting stubbornly, that allowed the 2nd Battalion to hold on until a new MLR could be established at Guising.

This article is written about those last two days, using personal stories told to me by men from Companies E, F, G, and H. Cannon Company's T. Sgt Charles F. Carey, Jr.'s story is well told by *The Story of the Century*, (pp. 117–119) and I will not try to retell it in detail here. He received the Medal of Honor for his brave actions.

Some of the stories are long and some are short, but I believe they provide a good patchwork quilt of what went on there—much of it in confusion because much of the fighting was at night.

After the 1st Platoon, Company E made its escape from entrapment just before dawn on the morning of January 8, they moved into Rimling, taking up positions in buildings around Company E's headquarters. 1st Platoon's Dick Drury recalls, "The building across the street [from Company E's Headquarters] held some remnants of Company E. Pete Petracco (platoon leader) took charge here and sent 1st Platoon's 1st Squad, under S/Sgt. Dan Lynch and about six others down the street to occupy the building opposite the church. It was a municipal office building. So, Pete and Capt. Garden [Company E commander] occupied the last two houses on that street." This means that Co. E was now set to defend from three buildings on the southwest outskirts of Rimling. The rest of that day, January 8, was relatively quiet with occasional artillery coming in. Pfc. Bill Ditto, who was in Pete Petracco's house, recalls that Petracco sent his men down into the cellar for the night because of the incoming artillery. Captain Garden decided to send rotating patrols out into the night to secure the immediate area. Pfc. Dick Drury recalls, "Our patrol started out on that secondary road to Guising and turned south. On our patrols, we would go out to that depression [just north of the 81mm Mortar's position], spend 5–20 minutes, then return to town." [For Drury's complete story, see the July 2002 *Newsletter*].

About daybreak of January 9, the Germans launched a major attack coming over and around le Schlitzen Hill on the northern end of Rimling. They also sent troops to infiltrate Rimling from the southwest, in Company E's area. This probably was in conjunction with the German combat unit that ran into Company H's Mortar Platoon (See Holiday 2003 *Newsletter*, p. 22). Ditto recalls that Petracco called his men up from the basement to defend from the windows of their building. A strong fire fight ensued to keep the Germans out of the buildings. Here is Ditto's story,

We had prepared for an attack and had a machine gun set up in a window covering the approach into town from the area from which we had moved [Hill 375)]. At that time I was our squad's BAR man. The house we were in had taken some kind of shell earlier, and the outer wall had been knocked off, leaving a passageway a few feet wide that was evidently an entrance hallway, with a brick wall still intact behind the outer wall. I was assigned to cover that approach from the hill. When the first tentative attack started, it was discovered that the machine gun had a broken sear, and would only fire single shot. Immediately, Pete had a couple of men start pulling the shells from the machine-gun belt and putting them in the BAR magazines. It was as if that BAR was a replacement for the machine gun. I know that I really wore it out in the few hours we were there. It actually melted the snow a couple of feet either side of it on the remains of the wall of the house that I was using for a gun rest. The Bronze Star I received for this action credited me with having killed 10 enemy soldiers, but I did not keep count. I promise you, I was too busy trying to stay alive and protect the area from encroachment as well as I could. The one German I do remember, I saw crawling up behind a big log slightly to my left. I tried to keep him from knowing that I saw him, but when he rose up behind the log to fire his Burp Gun, I did fire a short burst. His rounds hit the brick wall behind me on either side of my head. He just fell forward across the log.

Over in Sgt. Lynch's building, Pfc. Drury recalls,

I was stunned to see three German soldiers already through the back fence and about fifteen feet from our rear windows. I shot all three of them and they fell close together. Later, Sgt.

Lynch went out to check on them and they were still alive. I believe he had them put in the cellar with the civilians.

Meanwhile, over in Captain Garden's building, Sgt. Jim Nance who was radioman for the Captain recalls these events,

At the CP we were all ordered to take positions at the windows of the house we were in. We could hear German voices hollaring as well as the German tanks and artillery and small arms. This attack was aimed at taking Rimling and they were throwing all they could at us, men and tanks. I was on my knees at the window overlooking the side of the house with a hand grenade on the window sill, ready to pull the pin if the Germans came to our building." Apparently, the concentrated firing from the other two buildings kept the Germans from getting across the street and into Rimling from the southwest.

Concurrent with this, following the intensive barrage of about 0300 on January 8, the German tanks and troops that had overrun Company E and bypassed Company F's foxholes on Le Schlitzen hill hit the northwest end of Rimling. *The Story of the Century* reads,

About 200 German infantrymen and 12 tanks attacked in a two-pronged drive. Pushing around Schlitzen Hill from the north and south, the Germans entered the houses on the western part of Rimling and began crossing the west side of the rectangle of streets in the central part of the town. The lead tank of the German northern prong came into town accompanied by infantry who, as usual, preceded and flanked the tank or rode upon it.

When the Germans reached the junction where the Guising Road, on the west side of Rimling, is joined on the north side by the Epping-Urbach road they came under fire from Company H's heavy machine guns. Machine-gun fire from the one tank responded and knocked out one of the machine guns, but the others continued to fire and helped stymie the German attack which broke off shortly after full daylight, and the tanks pulled back out of town leaving a good number of German infantrymen located in the buildings near the intersection. Later in the day, sometime before noon, the German tanks returned; moving into that northwestern end of town. At that intersection already noted, a fierce fire fight broke out, centering around the heavy machine gun manned by Pfc. Ellis Hall and Pfc. Robert L. Gorrell. The heroic action of these machine gunners is recounted in *The Story of the Century*, pages 115-116. More detail will be found in the personal story of Company H's Bill Eckard, later in this article.

After the German attack had been halted earlier that morning, T. Sgt. Charles F. Carey Jr., acting platoon leader of the Antitank Platoon, assembled a squad of men from his platoon. "His idea was to check on how far the enemy had penetrated the town during the darkness and see if he could put the western gun [antitank gun that had been knocked out during the night] back into action." [Re. *The Story of the Century*, p. 117.] In an amazing show of bravery and leadership, he cleared out most of the Germans from those buildings; rescued the AT gun crew and put it back into service; and destroyed a German tank, killing its crew.

The first day's attack on Rimling had not been very successful for the enemy. The resistance by the 2nd Battalion had been greatly increased in midmorning when Company K moved from its reserve positions into the town and set up its CP on a side street just to the south of the Epping-Urbach road. [*The Story of the Century*, p. 118]

The Germans weren't finished yet, however. Before dawn the next morning, January 9, the Germans launched an attack that overran Company F's positions on le Schlitzen Hill and carried them deeper into Rimling. Pfc. John Sommer of Co. F was in one of those foxholes up on the reverse slope of le Schlitzen Hill. In the face of tanks, his unit fell back into Rimling, into the intersection where the main action had

taken place the night before. These are his words as written in his book, *Retrospective View from a WWII Foxhole*, by his permission,

Intense shellfire, probably both American and German, fell on us as Americans and Germans converged at this intersection. Illumination from the exploding shells acted like a strobe light giving an eerie stop-action effect. When one of these shells exploded, I was astonished to see the back of a German soldier standing immediately in front of me. In this nightmarish confusion, intermingled Germans and GIs did not fire at one another. The remnants of our platoon regrouped in a partial basement that had about three steps leading from the street to its dirt floor. We took turns standing guard outside the door to give an alert if a German were to throw a hand grenade into the basement. A sergeant in our platoon refused to enter the basement because of this danger. After standing guard outside the door and reentering the basement, I sat on something that felt like a couch. To my surprise, the couch moved. My resting place turned out to be a live 4-legged couch, namely a cow. It was common for people in Alsace to keep livestock in partial basements under their home. Part of our platoon then regrouped in a house near the intersection. At daybreak, I looked out of a front upstairs window to survey the situation. As I did, a soldier from the first floor of the house across the street fired at me. The bullet narrowly missed my head and entered the ceiling behind me. Later, an older soldier (in his mid-twenties) and I occupied a back room that was behind a street-facing room. A GI in the front room fired a bazooka through the front window at a German tank coming down the street. The tank stopped and we heard the frightening grinding sound of the tank's traversing turret from the back room. Fortunately, the tank crew abandoned their effort to fire into the window because the narrow street prevented the tank's long cannon from traversing into position to fire into the window. DeAmicis, several other GIs and I moved to the attic to cover an open field behind the house. A fellow soldier who had lost his glasses fired a shot at a man who was carrying two buckets while walking through the field. We immediately told the GI to stop firing when we saw milk streaming from a hole in one of the bullet-penetrated buckets. Intense shelling had destroyed the roofs and portions of the end walls on the building in our location, [so] we could look directly from our attic to the one in the adjacent house. As we did, we saw a door begin to open in the adjacent attic. Fortunately, we did not fire into the door as several GIs entered through the open door. Soldiers in combat must often balance their actions against survival instincts. In retrospect, I think one of the soldiers in the adjacent house was Sergeant Charles Carey, who went house to house with several other soldiers and captured many Germans. Later that day, I went into a courtyard-like area adjacent to the house; there I found grain in a burlap bag and ate several handfuls. Looking toward the street and just to the right of the open gate to the courtyard, I saw the body of Lt. Rosse. He apparently was shot as he started to enter the courtyard from the street. I think the sniper that killed him was the same one that had fired at me earlier from across the street. Lt. Rosse was an outstanding platoon leader who had received his battlefield commission only a short time earlier. His death was very depressing to us.

The surge into Rimling carried the Germans past Company F's CP. Approximately 30 men of Company F were cut off and captured along with six men of the antitank squad.

I believe the capture of these men is the same as that related in Richard I. Van Deusen's article in the Holiday 2005 edition of the Newsletter. Evidence seems to indicate that a German unit entered Rimling at night by stealth before the major attack that was accompanied by tanks. I believe it was this unit that captured the Company F CP.

As on the previous day, the battle began to abate up into the morning, but the Germans were well ensconced in the northwest end of town and individual skirmishes continued. Sgt. Carey was again actively moving about the town doing heroic things as recorded in *The Story of the Century* (pp. 117–119). The streets were even more dangerous on that second day and, sadly, he paid with his life.

One of the men who accompanied Sgt. Carey on his first patrol on January 8 was Pfc. Bill Moseley of Company F who was on detached service, assigned to Lt. McAllister, S-2 at Battalion Headquarters Company. These are some of his recollections,

In the building housing the 2nd Battalion CP was where I first encountered Sgt. Carey. He was in and out of this house and during that time performed many acts which certainly confirmed his heroism and aggressive action. He was certainly entitled to the Medal of Honor. During this period I did go along with Carey and several others patrolling the streets of Rimling. Carey was very aggressive and did, for example step in front of a house, fire several shots, and yell to the Germans to come out. He brought back several prisoners and put them in the basement of the house. He continued to go out and, as I was told, he shot enemy emerging from a German tank. His reported comments were: Wait until they (the Germans) are half way out of the tank so they won't fall back". Carey continued to bring in prisoners and, at one time, he was told by one of our officers that we could not handle any more prisoners and not to bring any more in. It was my guess that we had about 70 POWs in the basement. While in this house, a German tank came down the street and stopped in front of the upper window. From this window, a member of the S-2 Squad did fire a rifle grenade into this tank and set it on fire. [Note: This must have been on January 9 as tanks did not penetrate this far on January 8]. The tank proceeded down the street about half a block to the next corner where it was abandoned. Also, during this day we learned to cook and eat some limed eggs and dry beans found in the house. Also, we found some Cognac and Benedictine, so made a supply of B&B's in a water can. I am not sure when Carey was killed. He had gone out on a mission to get more prisoners. Those who accompanied him said that, when Carey was shot at, he turned and said, "they almost got me". He turned around again and the next shot did get him in the head and killed him."

During these two days, there were forward observers in the dangerous church steeple in Company E's area. These were Lt. Murry Abrams for Company H's Mortars and Sgt. Robert W. Senser for the Regimental Cannon Company. Sgt. Sensor's story can be found on page 119 of TSC. Here are Lt. Abrams' recollections:

I was sent into Rimling at night with Pfc. George Hamm as my radio man. We took up residence in the basement of the priest's house which was located across the street from the steeple which was to be my observation post. Early the next morning, I climbed into this steeple and realized I had no idea where the mortar positions were located. I issued an order to fire two shells to try to determine their location. That day (January 7) passed uneventfully except for a few sightings of German tanks and at night I retired to the basement of the priest's house where ten men from different units were quartered. In this same basement about twenty inhabitants of the town were huddled for safety. The basement was a welcomed luxury after living in a foxhole for a month. The basement was divided into three rooms; a small kitchen, a large room where the refugees were quartered, and a room where we made ourselves comfortable. I had stationed a man at the front door of the first floor and a Sergeant [Abrams recalls this as being Sgt. Robert Senser] at the window. I assigned another man to our field telephone in the kitchen. I removed my shoe packs and stretched out on the floor and fell asleep. In a short time we were on the end of a terrific shelling by the Germans. [This was the shelling that took place at about 3:00 AM, Jan. 8 that preceded the German thrust that overran Company E]. The soldier who was manning the telephone ran in to report something strange coming through on the phone. I picked up the phone and asked if I was speaking with Company E. A voice with a heavy German accent replied in the affirmative. I asked his name and the phone went dead. Just then, the man whom I had posted on the front door came running down to report that German soldiers were in the street. We all ran to the front door and, in the light of the [burning] buildings we saw those familiar helmets advancing down the

street. [I figure this was a German patrol that had slipped into town right after the shelling had lifted and was not a part of the main thrust, which included tanks that came in at the other end of town]. One German stopped at the corner of the house whose doorway we were occupying. One of our men shuffled his feet in the plaster and the German shot a burst of bullets at us. His aim was high and the plaster from the wall came down on us. Then we saw a man creeping along a wall that was about 15 inches high in front of the house. When he reached the opening, he threw an object which hit the man next to me. This turned out to be a hand grenade that did not explode. He then shouted “*Raus*” and I do not recall ever being more frightened in my life. In a voice that seemed to emanate from my stomach I ordered the men to go back in the basement. I then went into the side room where the Sergeant was at a window. I told him that the rest of the men were downstairs. I then had to pass back through the doorway into the part of the hall facing the front door. I wondered if my carbine was in firing position or on safe since I might have to fire quickly. There was no way of checking short of pulling the trigger, so I proceed through the door. There was nobody in sight, so I walked down the hall and turned into the stairway to the basement. Then I posted men at all the openings. About ten minutes later we heard a shot upstairs and the Sergeant came running down. I went back upstairs to watch and found a dead German lying across the front door way, apparently killed by the Sergeant. I saw the hand grenade that had not exploded lying in the hallway. All seemed to have quieted down. So, I sat down and proceeded to keep the first watch. After a few hours, I went down into the basement to wait for daylight. This was the longest night of my life. In the morning, I went back upstairs preceded by a girl refugee who volunteered to accompany me. [This girl was named Marie. Her story was recorded in the *Century Sentinel*, March 17, 1945 and is in the 100th Division web site; titled “A Girl Named Marie”]. When she reached the first floor she signaled me that all was clear. The two of us went from room to room until we checked out the entire house. Upstairs there was a corpse of an older woman who, evidently, had died some days ago. Since it was very cold the body had not decomposed. I then called the men up from the basement. We had not received any K or C rations for some time. There just happened to be a live cow nearby that had been hit by shrapnel in one of its front legs. As an act of mercy and, of course, to fix some food, I shot the cow between the eyes. We hacked at a hind quarter with our bayonets until a male refugee provided a saw. We sliced the meat and immediately put the slices into a frying pan. It probably was the toughest steak I ever ate. The next day, [January 9], when we moved out, the girl who had been so helpful begged me to take her with us but, since we left Rimling riding on tanks, it wasn’t possible.

Pfc. Keith Hadley was down near the intersection where most of the action took place on January 8th and 9th. He was at the Company H, CP building, having just come in from being a member of a forward observation team for 81 mm Mortars with Company E. Here are his memories:

The wild action that I must have told Rufus about started at about 0300 hours on January 8 as described on page 115 of *The Story of the Century*. This description of the action and that I observed from the second floor of the H Co. CP, I believe is pretty accurate and as I remember the events. I probably told Rufus of looking out the second story window and shooting a 45 pistol at a probably wounded German soldier riding on a tank that was moving down the street—all of the time with machine gun and rifle fire and grenades and other explosives and fires and all hell breaking loose in the area.

The story in *The Story of the Century* must have come from the write-up of the citation for Gorell and was probably mostly true to the events. It matches my memory of the all hell breaking loose and what I saw—while scared witless. In any case, the disturbance on or about 0300 hours seriously disturbed my sleep—if my turn at guard duty and the news of the action in the infantry areas up front wasn’t already doing so. I have a memory of seeing American GIs, maybe several dozen plus,

who were prisoners being marched up the street in the opposite direction that is shown on the map that the tanks came into Rimling. This probably happened several hours after the “all hell broke loose” event. There was no more sleep for anyone that night.

Somewhere I was handed a German flare pistol and stood discreetly, intermittently, in the doorway of the Co. H building and fired several flares into the air above the street which illuminated the scene in the street for the few minutes of each flare light. The flare pistol shot a shell that looked like an overgrown shotgun shell. The Germans were guarding the American GIs and herding them down the street. There must have been a lot of other American eyes watching, and not able to do anything about it. The now POWs and Germans were soon out of town.

I remember a next morning daylight happening which included a dozen or so Germans that had surrendered and were being disarmed in a courtyard near the Co. H building. I was near the action for some reason. I especially remember a real “smart-ass” semi-tall blond, arrogant young German ‘superman’ that was just asking to be shot—not by verbal request—but by his attitude. Such was the mood at that moment—if he hadn’t of shut up after some rifle butt persuasion he might have been shot.

Regarding the tank incident recorded on page 118 of the *SOC*, the tanks had come back into Rimling, as shown on the map about noon or so or later, with no visible German troops with them. I was upstairs in the Co. H CP and saw them move in, not boldly standing in a window and watching in full view, but sneaking a peak now and then. All the time, I was scared that they would turn a gun in our direction and fire if they saw something to shoot at. Obviously none of our troops were showing themselves anywhere except as absolutely necessary. As far as we knew there might be German foot soldiers across the street. The tank stopped on the street, probably waiting for targets of opportunity to shoot down the street. In any event, we didn’t announce our presence, not wanting to attract a tank shell in or direction.

1st Lt. Laudone, Executive Officer of H Company, scurried around downstairs and found a bazooka. Recall that a bazooka came in two pieces to make it easier to carry. This one, for some reason didn’t lock together in one piece. I dimly remember that they did, in fact, tie it together somehow, with medic first-aid tape. Laudone brought the bazooka upstairs to where I was. I guess you can say that he nominated me to fire at the tank. I guess I was calm enough and somehow qualified to stick my brave neck out in the vicinity of the window to shoot the bazooka at that tank. I remember sliding around the window corner and aiming the bazooka at the tank—aiming at the joint between the tank body and the turret—and pulled the trigger to fire. The bazooka round hit the tank about where I had aimed—with the usual big bazooka round explosion. I had figured that hitting the tank in that location might at least gum up the turret and the gun wouldn’t be able to swing in our direction. Nothing happened to the tank that you could see from the widow. The tank crew might certainly have heard the explosion and, maybe, got a headache from it. The tank was still sitting there, apparently ready to go. Let me add, I recall that as I fired the bazooka, Laudone had approached the door of the room that I was in. He got some of the blast from the bazooka. My memory is that he wasn’t hurt but was a bit shook up. [Keith is pretty sure this tank was the same that Sergeant Carey later set on fire and shot the tankers as they came out].

There were Germans in the building across the street from me. One had taken a shot at me earlier in the morning of this day, I believe January 9. In the room where I was standing when I received the near miss, there was a large wooden European type wood closet. The masonry buildings of France didn’t have built-in style closets. The local citizens used these portable closets, and one in this room was about 7 feet tall and 7 feet wide and maybe two feet thick. The closet, for some reason was sitting in the middle of the room. You could stand behind it and look out through the front windows of the room without being observed by the Germans from across the way. At some time while I was in that room, I moved somewhere so I could be seen from across the way. There was a rifle shot into the room and in my direction, fortunately doing me no harm. That rifle shot went through the closet and left two holes, one in the front side and one in the backside of the closet. Well, it was easy to stand behind the closet, line up the

holes, and see that they lined up to a window in the building across the street. So, now you might want to know what I did about this situation. Well, with a bayonet, I proceeded to enlarge the hole in the back side of the closet so I could get a rifle into the hole and see the rifle sites. I then went some place in the house looking for an M-1 rifle that had been well zeroed in—the someone who loaned me the rifle assured me that it was zeroed in. With this bayonet preparation, I could shoot at the window across the way without being observed and, for a bonus, without being shot at again. That window across the way was maybe 2 feet by 2 feet in size—likely smaller—and too dark to see into, and must have had a German behind it with a rifle ready to shoot someone. I must have been that someone. Anyway, I put the M-1 through the hole in the back of the closet, aimed carefully, and put a clip full of bullets into that window. Whether I killed the German or not, I will never know, but I got some satisfaction for his shooting at me.”

July 2010 Association Newsletter

Shoot-Out at Rimling Junction, January 8–9, 1945 (continued)

by Rufus Dalton, 397-H

The first part of this article was in the July 2010 issue of the newsletter. The story continues with Pfc. Bill Eckard's remembrances. He had just returned from a hospital in England to rejoin his Company H unit in Rimling on the night of January 7.

After reporting in to his CP, he was sent to join a section of heavy machine guns supporting Company F on Schlietzen hill. When his position was overrun in the early hours of January 8, he fell back into the outskirts of the town, ending up in a house along with several others. These are his recollections as taken from his Memoirs of a WWII Heavy Machine Gunner.

The two-story house was built of native stone. The walls were several feet thick. A large window faced west, toward the street. There was a 3-foot diameter hole in the north wall, which faced me, created by a shell explosion. I decided to take cover in the house. When I was about 5 feet from the house a firm voice quietly said, "Halt". I stopped dead in my tracks. The voice gave the daily password—like "Star," I said, "Burst." The voice said, "Come in." I climbed up into the hole. Someone grabbed me and jerked me forcefully into the room and pushed me to the floor. A voice said, "What's your name and outfit?" I said, "Eckard, H, 397th." A voice, which could only be from T/Sgt. Pat Miele, hissed, "Eckard, sit down over there (pointing to a corner) and be quiet." Another voice asked what weapons I had. I replied, "A 45." He said "Damn! That makes nine of us, and only one M-1 rifle, a couple of carbines and a couple of pistols." Later, someone told me the man speaking was 2nd Lieutenant Frank Rosse from Company F.

As my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I counted nine GIs. I knew only one, T/Sgt. Miele my Platoon Sergeant. What had happened to the riflemen and my fellow machine gunners on the hilltop? I wondered what units the other GIs in this room belonged to. I was glad to be among friendlies. I dug my chin down into my chest, huddled my body into a ball, closed my eyes, shut down my brain and rested. We sat quietly, waiting, listening to the sounds of an infantry tank battle from down the road toward the Company F and H CP's in the town, perhaps 75 yards away. We continued to huddle along the walls of the room, staying away from openings where we could be seen. We watched out the windows—waiting. Something moved behind the house across the street. German infantry, carrying rifles, machine guns and mortars moved in a line toward the firefight.

Time passed. We could hear German tanks joining in the battle around the company CPs. We watched the German infantry silently walk behind the houses on the other side of the street toward the fighting. I thought that if we did not take some action we might be cut off. However, that would be foolish; we did not have the weapons or men to engage the German infantry or tanks. We sat, watching and waiting—maybe something will happen?

Then we heard the noise of a tank coming toward us, down the road I had walked from Schlitzen hill. In a short time he came into view, a big black blob, moving very cautiously down the road toward our house. We could hear his radio transmissions but could not understand the German words. He stopped at 10 to 15 yards from the house, near the 57mm antitank gun, and rotated his turret so that the long artillery weapon pointed at the hole in the wall. He sat buttoned up. We could not see any German infantrymen around or behind the tank.

We sat quietly; nobody moved. I wondered when he would fire into the room and bring the house down upon us. We heard more tank artillery fire down the street in the area of our company CP. I could hear our 81mm mortar shells hitting in the streets outside our building and near our company CP. We waited in absolute quiet, giving the tank the first move. His radio crackled with orders. Finally, the tank slowly retreated back up the road out of sight. We began to breathe again.

Lieutenant Rosse decided to leave our house and work his way to the Company F CP through the back yards of the houses on our side of the street. He ordered us to stay in this house until he returned. Then he climbed out of the hole in the wall and disappeared around the back of the house into the snowstorm.

The battle down the street intensified and then suddenly stopped. Everything became quiet. We sat quietly not knowing the fate of the GIs down the street. We watched for German infantry snipers in the houses across the street. We waited for something to happen. The heavy cloud cover began to dissipate; the first gray light of dawn showed and the morning sun shined through. The temperature remained well below freezing. Time passed. We sat in the house waiting for Lieutenant Rosse to return. We could smell the smoke from burning houses and barns. Nobody talked.

Suddenly the quiet around us was broken by a voice yelling something from the direction of the Company F CP. We waited, hunched back into the shadows in the corners of the room. He yelled in German, in a loud voice, "come out with your hands up." One of the GIs in our group crawled across the floor and looked out the window. He reported one lone American soldier, carrying a submachine gun, yelling toward the houses on the other side of the street. He was walking in the middle of the road with no protection or cover. Why didn't the Germans fire at him? We watched as 30 to 40 armed German infantrymen filed out of the houses, with their weapons held over their heads and stood in the street. Several other GIs from a patrol walked up the street to assist that lone GI—T/Sgt. Charles F. Carey, from the 2nd Battalion Anti-Tank Platoon.

One of the people in our house yelled, "Hey, we have a bunch of GIs in here." By that time several GIs from T/Sgt. Carey's patrol had walked further up the street toward us. They motioned us to come out while the others guarded the German prisoners. As we exited through the hole in the wall and began to walk down the street, one of our group called, "Here's Lieutenant Rosse." Several of us walked over to the snow-covered body lying on the doorstep of the house next door to where we had hidden. He was shot through the forehead, probably by a sniper from one of the houses across the street. He died within 10 feet of returning to help us. He is buried in the American Cemetery at Epinal, France. I have visited his grave three times. He was later posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal for "Gallantry in Action" during the period January 5–8, 1945.

T/Sgt Carey called us over to the German prisoners. He told us to search them. We removed their helmets and tossed them into the deep snow. Then we searched their clothes and threw all weapons, knives, and personal stuff into nearby snow banks. T/Sgt. Carey ordered the prisoners to be marched down the street to the Company H and F CPs. We split the prisoners in half and about 20 were taken into the Company H CP and moved down the cellar steps. One of our German speaking GIs told them to sit down and be quiet. Our German prisoners outnumbered the American GIs. Later that day the prisoners were moved to Battalion HQ for interrogation.

I returned to our Company CP and reported for duty. Our officers and sergeants had conferred and made new assignments for the four heavy machine guns. One was positioned on each of the house's three floors; the other gun was set in a large barn at the road intersection leading to Gros Rederching and Guising. Our defensive position had the shape of a triangle with 150-foot sides. The machinegun crew in the barn occupied one corner, the riflemen in the Company F CP another corner, and the machine gunners in the Company H CP the other corner. I was assigned to the machine gun sitting in the living room, guarding the front, right and left ground level of our position. Other men were ordered to the two machine guns at windows on floors above me.

There were two windows and two doors in the living room. The main field of fire was in a western direction, through the 5-foot wide by 4-foot high window, into the front yard and to the 150-foot length of the Guising Road located at the far end of the yard. Stone and wooden farm buildings restricted my field of fire on both sides of the front yard. The far side of Guising Road was lined with houses built on the hillside, behind an 8-foot high stone retaining wall. I also had a good field of fire out the window to the road and buildings on my left. To my right, through a door was a hallway, opening to the front door of the house and the stairs leading down to the cellar. To my rear a door opened to what might have been a dining room.

The second floor gun was located outside of the house in a barn at the far-left corner of the yard. The barn sat on the northeast corner of the intersection of the Guising road and the road along the south of Rimling. The men assigned to man the machine gun in the barn were Pfc. Robert Gorell, from Alma, CA, as first gunner; Pfc. Ellis Hall, from Granit Falls, NC, as second gunner and a third man, (name unknown) as ammunition bearer. Pfc. Gorell was Captain Maiale's messenger, flag bearer, bugler, and also, a close friend of mine Pfc. Hall served as the Captain's Jeep driver. Their orders were to stop any tanks or infantry coming toward the intersection from the stone quarry. From my position, in the front room of the Company H CP, I could only see the backside of the barn.

The riflemen of Company F CP protected those men in the barn and the Company H CP. They were located in a house at the far right corner of the yard in my field of fire on the Guising road, probably 150 feet away. Only a few riflemen were available; most had been captured up on the hill in the initial attack.

We waited for the next tank and infantry attack. German tank engines started with a heavy roar from the direction of the stone quarry. We were too physically exhausted to contemplate what could happen next. We did not have much time to wait. The next attack began about 11 AM; tanks and infantry came from the stone quarry and moved first toward Gorell and Hall. Some infantry men rode on the tanks, while others moved along the side of the tanks to protect them. I fired at German infantry moving behind the houses on the far side of the Guising road and as they moved into the houses across the street in front of me. They were threatening both CPs.

Hall and Gorell watched the lead tank and infantry move toward the intersection; they opened fire. The tank crews returned fire with their machine gun at point blank range, slightly wounding both men. The tank was also under fire from the Company F CP. The tank crew began to return fire at that house, perhaps 150 feet away. I watched the German tank artillery shells, from my position, as they flew across the yard opening in front of me, along Guising road.

As the tank moved toward the intersection, Hall continued to fire his machine gun from the barn, and Gorell sprayed the area with a submachine gun. The German foot troops scrambled to find cover. One of them was able to throw a grenade into the barn wounding the Company H ammunition bearer. The explosion blew manure, straw, and debris over the gun and the men. The machine gun stopped firing. The driver of the lead tank turned east, down the road toward the Bettviller-Guderkirch intersection. If he continued he would pass the south side of our house. Those of us in the Company H CP followed this tank's movements by the sound of his engine, at the same time we fired on any German infantry who exposed themselves.

German infantrymen also came at us from the north, down the Guising Road from Schlietzen hill, taking the Company F CP defenders under attack. All of our machine guns were firing as other GIs fired their rifles and carbines. Upon direct orders from Captain Maiale our 81mm mortars, which were set up southeast of the town, and our regimental field artillery fired continuously at our house, and into the barnyards and nearby streets. German snipers continued to fire at any target in our building. I lobbed a hand grenade through the front window, but cannot remember the target. I was too busy to be afraid.

Another tank now moved forward, taking the street intersection position that the first tank had just left. Although Hall and Gorell were now almost surrounded, they chose not to leave by their escape route. Instead they cleaned off the gun and began firing on the second tank. The tank tried to swing around to fire on the barn, but the street was too narrow for this maneuver.

Then the German infantry rushed the barn in an attempt to take the machine gun by force. Hall and Gorell fired at point-blank range, killed eight, and drove off the rest. But one of the German soldiers threw another grenade, which caused a heavy barn door to fall on the two men. Once more hay and debris showered over them.

Those of us in the company CP could only wonder at the silence as the machine gun stopped firing. Nobody in our house could see the other end of the barn where Hall and Gorell had set up the gun. And we could not see the intersection; the barn and some closer buildings blocked our view. Neither could we cross the yard nor go around the other buildings because German snipers were active. We waited for the machine gun to begin firing again.

Our artillery and mortars continued to fire at the intersection and our house. I could hear at least one tank creeping through the buildings and backyards to my left, out of my line of sight and fire. The tank was slowly moving forward, feeling his way, looking for us. In the room behind me, Lieutenant Laudone and two sergeants were at a better position to look through a window to see the tank. I turned and asked them if they could see the tank; they shook their head “no.” They told me to watch out the window on my left while they frantically attempted to snap the two halves of a 2.35-inch diameter rocket launcher together. Lieutenant Laudone and the two sergeants had just managed to tape the two halves together when a Tiger tank appeared from behind a shed, creeping up on the left side of our house. A black Tiger tank was something to behold. It was monstrous, dwarfing American and British tanks. Goose bumps rose on my arms. I could feel the hair crawling on the nape of my neck. The only noise was artillery and mortar shells exploding and the growling tank engine.

The Tiger series of tanks weighed 55 tons, was armored with an 88mm gun, several machine-guns and had a crew of 5 men. They were protected by armor varying between 10 to 39 inches thick in their front, and moved on 30-inch wide treads. They were powered by a 700-hp motor, which would drive them at about 23 miles per hour. The tank sat there about 10 yards from the southwest corner of our house; most of the tank’s body was hidden from me by an old wooden building located between the tank and our house. The tank commander knew we were in the immediate area but was not sure exactly where. From the angle that the tank approached the house I could see only about 3 to 4 feet of the long barrel of the 88mm gun and a foot or so of the right front corner (the far side) of the tank. The tank was slowly bouncing on its springs, up and down. I will never forget the picture of the 88mm gun bouncing an inch or two, up and down, then, up and down.

One of the sergeants whispered, “wait until he moves closer to us, so the full bogie wheel and some of the tread is exposed.” The tank slowly moved forward, the gunner rotated the 88mm gun directly at our house, then toward my window, then pointed the gun directly at my room, at me. The 88-mm gun looked like a long, telephone pole sticking out of the tank turret. Was he preparing to fire? What should I do? I began to shrivel into myself to present a smaller target. I have laughed at my actions in this engagement many times over the last half century. If the tank had fired a round or two, he probably would have brought the house down on us, perhaps starting a fire, which could have driven us outside if we were still alive.

The tank moved forward a few more feet; the 88mm gun still pointed at me. Could that gunner see me in this room? I slowly turned my head and looked at Lieutenant Laudone and the others. They had taped the two halves of the rocket launcher together and were loading an 18-inch long rocket into the rear of the launcher. Lieutenant Laudone wound the wires from the rocket to the battery in the launcher and tapped the sergeant on the helmet. The rocket was ready to launch. The sergeant took aim through the window at the unprotected bogie wheel and tread. I was sure the tank was only a few feet away from us, outside the window, but it must have been about 8 to 10 yards. A moment before the rocket was fired, Lieutenant Laudone moved toward the rear of the rocket launcher to check something. The round fired and burning particles of powder flew into his face blinding him for a short period of time. The rocket flew true, into the bogie wheel. The explosion blew metal from the tank and wood from the nearby building against our house and into my room. As the dust cleared, the tank commander turned his gun turret away from our house. I expected the gunner to fire but then realized that the tank commander probably wanted to know if our bazooka shell had damaged the turret or gun. The tank driver then started to move forward but his damaged 30-inch wide tread jammed into the bogie wheel, stopping forward movement. The tank driver tried to move forward several more times but could not break the jammed wheel loose. The driver then changed to reverse gear and backed the tank out of my sight behind the wooden building and then retreated. We took in a big breath of the dust-laden, frozen air! We followed the sounds of the tank’s movement as he slowly moved back to the road intersection, now guarded by the silent machine gun. Captain Maia le came into my room. We listened as the tank returned to the intersection. We heard German infantry assembling around it. Suddenly, Hall and Gorell, who had dug out of the debris, began to fire again. Under fire, the German soldiers screamed at each other, the tankers, and at us. The fire so surprised and disorganized the Germans that they scattered, or tried to take cover behind the tank. We

wondered why they did not turn the corner around the barn and rush at us through the yard. I continued to fire at German infantry trying to get into the house across the street directly in front of my gun.

The yelling increased in intensity as a German officer ordered his men and tanks to attack us. Then screams filled the air. We later learned that one of the German tanks had suddenly turned and backed up crushing the German captain beneath the tank tread, killing him instantly. The attacks on our building and on the Company F CP continued. All of our machine guns were firing.

Hall and Gorell continued their steady fire and were able to keep the German infantry pinned down, but a German soldier in a nearby building fired a Panzerfaust (a tank destroying, rocket-like weapon, larger and more deadly than our bazooka) at the barn. The old stone and mortar side of the building caved in on the gun and the two men. Gorell was killed instantly; Hall was blown about twenty feet and knocked out. The Germans did not realize that the gun was buried, or that the barn was now occupied solely by the dazed Hall. The German infantry broke off their attack and assembled around their tanks. In the company CP we waited for some sign that all was well in the barn.

A while later a man came out of a side door in the barn running toward me. I swung my machine gun to fire at him and then realized it was an American—Hall—he was a small, short guy. He headed for the front door of our house, just to my right. He tripped on the door sill, stumbled, and fell on the floor. Somebody grabbed him and pulled him deeper into the house. When he caught his breath, he moaned that Gorell had been killed. He guessed one of the German tanks had fired point blank at the gun, causing the barn to explode and collapse on the two men.

German infantry began to infiltrate toward our building by working their way between the two buildings across the street from my position. Each time a group moved from the back yard to the front of the house I fired a full burst until they stopped moving toward us.

Captain Maiale called Battalion HQ and again requested artillery fire on our house and the surrounding area, including the intersection. He expected another attack immediately. We were ordered to stay back away from the windows and down near the floor to minimize our chances of being hit by our own artillery fire. The artillery and mortar rounds crashed into buildings, houses, and the ground around us. I don't know why our artillery did not hit our house. One direct hit would probably set the house on fire, perhaps causing us to evacuate.

During this noisy chaos a German tank gunner began to fire his heavy artillery shells into the large, two-story, stone home across the street from us. These shots were fired at similar spaced time intervals, every 15 to 20 seconds. About 6 to 8 shells were fired at the same spot in the wall, making a 2- or 3-foot hole. I could not make any sense out of the German tanker firing into a house that I suspected was occupied by German soldiers. More tanks had gathered at the road intersection. They were moving around, slipping on the snow and ice. A tank began to fire his cannon or 88mm gun across my front, at the Company F CP.

The battle around our CP tapered off. The German tanks and infantry fell back to positions away from the intersection and our CP. Some other GI took over the machine gun and I went down to the cellar to rest. In no time I fell asleep. I was awakened and ordered to meet with Captain Maiale. He told me to accompany him, as his bodyguard, to a meeting of company commanders at the battalion CP. I picked up an M-1 rifle and my .45 caliber pistol. In the dark of the night, the two of us left the house and cautiously made our way several hundred yards to the southeast to the battalion CP. I was stationed outside the house while the officers decided what to do tomorrow. After the meeting broke up, we returned to our CP. I went back to my machine gun guarding the front of the house. Although guards were posted, nobody slept much that night.

I was not aware that after midnight German infantry reentered Rimling from the north and west. They moved silently through the street and buildings and captured the Company F CP on Guising road, less than 150 feet from our house. Some alert GI from Company F had pushed the "send" switch on a hand held radio so that we could hear the quiet German voices, but most words were garbled. We waited on full alert, expecting an attack through the yard toward our house. As time passed, the area became quiet.

Without any warning, I heard a voice yell out from the Guising road, "Don't shoot, we are Americans." I was unable to determine whether a German or an American was speaking. A group of people started to

walk south on Guising road, from my right to my left, crossing in front of my machine gun. Some wore German gray overcoats and others wore American white parkas. I could not see clearly in the frozen, gray, foggy night air. They looked like floating ghosts. I called for help. Captain Maiale came to my gun. He said, "Fire over their heads." I fired several 5-second bursts over their heads. The group stopped; half fell to the ground; some moaned; someone cried out, "Don't shoot we are Americans, the Germans are making us cross in front of you." Someone yelled, "You have hit some of us." They slowly got on their hands and knees and then stood up, standing still. A moment later, still moaning and yelling at us, they bunched together and moved slowly to my left, toward the barn where Gorell's body lay. I hesitated to fire at the gray overcoats because I feared the GIs were forced to wear German overcoats and the Germans were in American parkas. A few more people raised up on their hands and knees and crawled toward my left, then stood up and moved behind the barn, out of my sight. One body lay on the street in the snow, in plain view. I wondered if I had hit one of our men. The area became silent. I waited with the machine gun at ready, but nothing moved. Everything was quiet. The ghosts had gone.

The Story of the Century reports that 30 men from Company F were cut off from the rest of the company and captured. Six men from T/Sgt. Carey's platoon were also captured. I assume these were the men who were marched across in front of my gun. Four of Carey's men escaped to the attic of the building.

I was ordered to the machine gun in the attic and to stop the German soldiers using a trail leading toward our position from the stone quarry area. Each time one of us climbed (actually ran) up the stairway to the second floor, a sniper's bullet would slam into the wall on the right side of the steps. That impact area continued to grow in size to about a foot long and some depth into the wall. We were unable to locate the sniper.

We would set ourselves at the bottom of the stairs and then rush up past the point of impact. Rushing was not an easy task because of the thick layers of cold weather clothes we wore and the loads of ammunition we carried. Someone noticed that the wall where the sniper bullets hit was smoking and showed a small flame. After I successfully ran up the stairs, several tracer bullets slammed into the wall and started a larger fire in the lathe and plaster.

We couldn't just walk up to the wall and chip out the burning portion. That would have been a field day for the German sniper. I noticed a bookcase filled with books. I carried several armfuls of books as close to the burning area as I thought prudent, then crawled toward the fire on the floor. While lying on the floor, I threw the books at the wall until the smoldering wood and plaster broke off and fell away. The house did not burn and we were all relieved. However, at sometime while I was running up or down the steps, I must have turned an ankle because it began to swell and pain. Soon it hurt to stand on it.

The Germans kept moving toward us on the trail from the quarry, and I kept throwing machine-gun fire at them. They would be hit by the bullets; fall down on the ice and snow; and slip or slide out of my sight (a building blocked my view of the lower part of the trail). There must have been a bunch of Germans lying in the snow. Those infantrymen finally stopped using the trail and I backed away from the gun to rest.

Around noon I was ordered to the gun in the front room to guard the area in front of the house against another German attack. Their artillery was exploding around our house and the town as usual. I watched the house across the Guising road looking for a sniper. The German soldier who had fallen to the snow-covered road early that morning—when I had fired over the heads of a group of people—was still lying in the middle of the road. That soldier slowly got up on his knees, stood up, picked up his rifle and casually walked toward the house that hid the sniper. I was too stunned and in shock to sight the machine gun on him. When I finally turned the gun to fire, he had disappeared behind the barn. I was unable to believe what had happened. Now we had another sniper in that building.

As the afternoon hour moved on toward darkness, I was told to be on the lookout for T/Sgt. Carey and his patrol. They were returning to our area to rescue a sergeant and his bazooka team who were in a loft of a nearby barn. The barn was a part of the buildings used by Company F for their CP. The team had escaped into the loft when the Germans captured the Company F CP. Captain Maiale was standing in the hall on my right. I saw a GI who I assumed was Carey walking across the open yard in front of my gun. A

shot rang out; he ducked and turned to look back to his men and muttered something, which I did not understand. From the angle of my position to him, and the building across the Guising road, I assumed the sniper had him in his sight. The next shot knocked his head back and he fell to the ground. Nobody was able to reach him in the open yard.

German artillery and infantry small arms fire continued to strike against and around our house into the evening hours, but no combined tank-infantry attacks were made against us. As darkness approached, we were ordered to prepare to leave our positions and fall back when it became totally dark. Division ordered our regiment to establish an east-west line running roughly through Guising. Lieutenant Laudone called me to the cellar. I limped down the steps and reported to him. He said, "Eckard, when we leave I want you to take the German prisoners back to Regimental HQ. You make arrangements with Barnes (our Jeep driver). After turning the prisoner over to the Military Police, you go to the Battalion Aid Station and get that ankle fixed." That was great news, I would ride out of Rimling; the other troops would walk out through the snow. My guess was that about eight of us from Company H remained active, our two officers, a couple of sergeants and a few other men. My count did not reflect the men of our mortar platoon who had saved us from being surrounded.

I found Pfc. John Barnes and we exchanged our orders. He said he was to leave the house a few minutes before the troops evacuated. Both of us had been ordered to be certain that, whatever happened during our withdrawal, we must leave the town as soon as possible. All artillery units in the division and many long-range artillery units from higher headquarters were to fire at different times so that all the shells landed on Rimling at the same moment. In an artillery man's language it's called TOT or Total on Target. The Germans would not have any warning before all the shells hit them simultaneously.

As dusk fell, German artillery and small arms fire stopped. The area became quiet. Perhaps they had had enough fighting for the day. I left the machine-gun position, picked up my M-1 rifle and some ammunition and went into the cellar to get the prisoner. He was a young German soldier about my age—about 19—dressed in the usual gray overcoat. He had no hat or helmet.

Barnes, the prisoner, and I stood in the front doorway waiting for the signal to leave the house. I somehow made that German soldier understand that if he made any noise or called to his fellow soldiers, I would shoot him in the head. I held my loaded .45 caliber pistol to his head and put a finger to my lips, indicating quiet. We had to assume that German snipers were still alert in the buildings across the Guising road. If a sniper noticed us leaving and fired, we could become engaged in a fire fight and be unable to leave Rimling before the TOT barrage.

The wind blew the low hanging clouds away. The temperature was cold, below freezing. An almost full moon lighted the snow-covered ground. We were wearing our parkas with the white side out. I thought, that's great, the prisoner is in gray overcoat, just the perfect target to expose Barnes and me.

The three of us were to leave the house first, before the others. Barnes, the prisoner and I had about 10 yards of space to walk across to get to the shed where the Jeep was parked. Barnes turned and told me the bad news; the Jeep had not been started since he arrived at the CP. It had sat in the cold air for four days. Again I thought, great! Let's hope it starts. I wondered if I could walk out with the injured ankle.

As the time to leave approached everybody in the house was alert for any German activity. Barnes was told to go. He stepped out the front door, turning right toward the shed. I nudged the German prisoner out the door a moment later, fully expecting to be fired upon by a sniper. My prisoner walked 5 yards behind Barnes, looking straight ahead; his hands were down at his sides. I walked close to the German, holding my pistol against the back of his head, making sure he could feel the barrel. If I went down from sniper fire, he would also. My rifle was cocked and ready in my left arm. That was the longest, quietest, brightest, and scariest 10 yards distance I have ever walked. Barnes reached the shed and quietly pulled the doors open. The front of the Jeep faced toward the shed doors; the Jeep's canvas top was not installed. Barnes sat down in the driver's seat. I motioned the prisoner to sit in the front passenger seat and I climbed up into the elevated back seat. Barnes turned the ignition key; the starter motor noise seemed as loud as an airplane engine. The engine turned over but would not start. I knew we were going to alert the Germans and they would attack.

Looking over the Jeep hood, I saw movement at the front of the house. The shadowy shapes of the rest of the men from the company moved out of the front door of the house, turned to their left, past the living room window, across the front of the house, then turned the corner and disappeared. We three were the last to leave. Barnes tried to start the engine two more times; the third time it caught and started. He did not wait for the engine to warm up but slowly drove off across the front of the house. He moved between houses, sheds and barns and finally found the road and headed east toward the Bettviller intersection. I did not notice any American troops on the road until we had made the right turn to go south to Bettviller. I relaxed at this point and noticed the pain in the right ankle. We slowly drove between the lines of exhausted and dispirited American troops, leaving Rimling to the Germans.

Others had their own memories of our Rimling departure:

Richard Drury recalls, "We were dreading another night of patrols when the word was passed that we would make a run for it that night. I believe it was around 2200 when we took off down the street by the CP, down to the bridge and uphill to the road to Bettviller. Huffing and puffing we began to count noses. My God! Olsen wasn't with us. It was like a jail break when we took off, but nobody remembered seeing Olsen in the last hour or so. It was like a kick in the stomach. He was well liked. What could have happened? Then I remembered how Olsen could drop off to sleep anywhere, anytime. Later we learned that he had survived as a POW. I would love to read or hear his story. Our spirits were down. Then came a sight, straight out of Hollywood. This defeated mob on the road saw over to our right, on a rise, our tanks hub to hub, 10 to 12 in a row. They were waiting for the last stragglers to clear the town of Rimling. It was a wonderful and reassuring sight to see and realize that a good solid MLR was already in place. That security helped as we bedded down in the straw of a barn for the first good night of sleep."

Sergeant Jim Nance recalls, "When it seemed that we were doomed and that the Germans would get us all, the radio message came across that 'help is on the way.' We had no idea of what help they were talking about, but our orders were to evacuate the building immediately and to proceed to the outskirts of Rimling. We moved out through the snow and past the tank destroyers who were firing continuously at Rimling. Company E was the last company in the battalion to get out of Rimling. As soon as we had left, our artillery leveled Rimling." Nance recalls that two of their men, Smith and Pexton who had gone out to repair the phone line (probably to 2nd Bn. CP) got left behind and were met by the Germans overrunning our positions. Nance says that Pexton was captured but Smith ran and hid and eventually slipped away to get back to our lines.

Pfc. Bill Moseley, 2nd Battalion CP, remembers, "On January 9, we were told to leave Rimling and we did so very late that evening. We were escorted by some tank destroyers and were probably taken back to Guising. When we left, we left all the prisoners in the basement. Maybe we should have done differently, but did not feel that taking a number of prisoners with us that time made any sense"

Company E's S/Sgt. Dan Lynch recalls, "There was a tank destroyer parked in front of the house, and it had destroyed at least one tank. But, when we left they had to leave it there and they destroyed the inside."

Pfc. Keith Hadley almost got left behind like Pfc. Olsen. He was in an upper floor of the Company H CP when everything got quiet. He went down to check and no one was there. As he walked through the deserted streets of Rimling, he ran across a buddy who had returned to find him and they went out to catch up with the others.

That is the story as best I can determine. It is amazing to me that the Germans allowed us to escape without bringing down their artillery on the Bettviller/Guising route by which we left. It is also amazing to me that the word "surrender" never was considered as an option by our leaders in the face of being literally surrounded.

Postscript: A 3rd Battalion unit played a part in those two days. The map shows Company K CP, but I am not sure it wasn't Company L. From studying the movement of the units based on operations report, Company L was in Rimling on January 8 to 9 and Company K was just north of Guising. Bob Wagner notes in the May 2003 Newsletter, that Company L was in Rimling on January 7, providing evidence they

were the company and not Company K. I would like to hear from anyone from the 3rd Battalion who was in Rimling on those two days.

Holiday 2010 Association Newsletter