

The following article was published in the June 26, 1945 edition of the "Lorraine Cross" the 79th Division's bi-weekly newspaper.

315th's ABLE COMPANY AWARDED PRESIDENTIAL CITATION AFTER HEROIC ACTION AT EMBERMENIL

"By direction of the President, xxx Company 'A', 315th Infantry Regiment, is cited for the extraordinary gallantry and heroism it displayed in moving against overwhelmingly superior enemy numbers and fire to seize and hold the high ground east of Embermenil, France, during the period 20 October 1944 to 22 October 1944."

Colonel Andrew J. Schriver, of Mt. Holly, Pa./ commanding the 315th, was reading that portion of the War Department General Orders in which Able Company was particularly interested. The regiment had just finished carrying a big hod in Alsace, and most of his attentive listeners had to think twice to identify the action at Embermenil by that time. But they had no difficulty remembering two endless, action-filled days and nights that found the frantic krauts defying cold steel and hand to hand combat, fighting at times within the company CP. Embermenil was where clean-up squads, after the action found dead GIs and jerries slumped in the same foxholes.

God And The M-1

"Jumping off on the morning of 21 October 1944," Col Schriver read, "Company 'A' pressed forward over open terrain toward an enemy-occupied hill, a wooded crest affording excellent concealment for the thoroughly aroused defenders. As the attack progressed, the second and third platoons were subjected to extensive machine gun fire from the front and both flanks, while the first platoon, in reserve was momentarily pinned down by flanking automatic weapons fire. xxx"

"I remember that part of it," said S/Sgt. Antone C, Soares, of Hayward, Calif., wounded at Embermenil and back in action in Alsace. "After we had started up that damned hill my whole squad was pinned down by a jerry machine gun. Then I saw something that revived my faith in God and the M-1. Although pinned down, my boys brought fire to bear with their rifles, and first thing you know those same kraut machine gunners were pinned down. I took a couple of men and circled around to capture the six-man crew."

"Although the second platoon commander and his platoon sergeant were both wounded," Col Schriver continued, "both the second and third platoons ignored this distracting fire and, with fixed bayonets, assaulted and seized their objectives on the wooded hill. xxx"

“We started up that hill without any cover at all,” said Sgt George Helm, of Fort Worth, Tex., another who earned a Purple Heart at Embermenil and returned to the line. “For the first time in my life I saw men skipping over machine gun bullets.”

“At 2400 hours,” Col Schriver read, “the enemy counterattacked with three tanks, supported by an estimated company of infantry. So determined was this effort that men at the Company CP, forced into foxholes, were literally run over by the tanks and subjected to .75 millimeter fire at pointblank range. xxx”

“Never saw so much shrapnel,” recalled PFC Leroy Zweibel. “Main thing was that everybody kept going, no matter what. I remember one shell fragment the size of my helmet that just missed my shin. It would’ve taken off my leg like a bologna slicer.”

“The company gun section,” Col Schriver continued, “carried its share of the fighting to the enemy in an action so valiant that each member of the section was subsequently killed or wounded. Riflemen fixed bayonets and pressed the enemy in fierce hand to hand fighting. Until 0600 hours the following morning, the enemy persisted in his all-out attempt to wrest the hill from Company ‘A’. xxx”

Jerry Casualties High

Captain Raymond Harvey, of Sulphur, Okla., the company commander, spotted five krauts attempting to flank one of his squads. He charged them head-on, killing one and capturing four. “The carbine,” he remarked afterward, “is a mighty handy little weapon.”

“Enemy casualties were approximately 30 killed and 175 wounded, plus 78 prisoners,” Col Schriver concluded. “Company ‘A’s’ casualties totaled 57, ten of whom were killed in action. By its heroic action in storming, seizing and holding a strategic high point against overwhelming enemy superiority, Company ‘A’ contributed substantially to the success of the regiment in this action.”

That was Embermenil.