



# 35<sup>th</sup> Signal Construction Battalion



## The Rhine Crossing

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### THE RHINE CROSSING

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Beginning of March 1945 the First, Third, Seventh, and Ninth United States Army were alerted for a push towards the Rhine and the eventual crossing of the river. The experience gained from other river crossings, especially the crossing of the Roer were very useful.

This report gives a picture of signal activities in a large operation such as the crossing of the Rhine River. The story cannot give a complete picture of the operation.

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the 6M pull line and brought the end of the cable to the east shore. Sufficient cable was pulled across to permit at least 100 feet of cable to be placed in the river to avoid too much tension on the cable, due to the strength of the river current. A like amount was left on the west side of the river. Both ends of the strand were then fastened to heavy tree trunks some distance from the river shore line and messenger and cable buried (18 inches deep). From the strand dead end, the cable was buried to the termination point on the west side to an iron fence and on the east side to a large tree where 16 pair terminals were spliced to the two ends of the cable by the cable splicers. A total of 1800 feet of cable was used.

The installation of the submarine cable was completed at about 2030 and the cable terminals spliced in and tested at about 2330. The Company placed five spiral cables from the west terminal to Defiance Switch in Remagen and these were terminated in the Defiance Switch on terminal strips, ready for cross connecting as needed. "Notorious" Command Post was notified and were to connect to the east terminal if any trouble developed in their existing circuits.

The following morning the work was completed by backfilling the trenches properly and cleaning up.

On 11 March 1945 a Construction Team of the 35th Signal Construction Battalion placed two 15 quad cables across the Rhine at Bonn, South of Remagen. This Team placed the cables across the Rhine from a ponton boat. Specially built reels were used for the cable and they were mounted on specially built jacks. The ends of the cables were secured on the East bank and run to the West bank, after which BD-102 terminals were cut in, on the side for pair distribution. Spiral-Four cables which ran from III Corps Command Post at Theinbach to the Rhine, were cut in to the West bank terminal and then were extended from the East bank terminal to 9th Infantry Division Command Post at Kasbach. On the East side of the Rhine, several sections of Spiral-Four had to be replaced before the job was completed because of damage by enemy shellfire. These cables were placed well out

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in fields along main roads but Engineers in building up shoulders and cutting down trees damaged the cables. Since they were the most important communication link between First United States Army and the Rhine Bridgehead, they were re-routed for their entire length (approximately 20 miles) along a railroad. Underground cable was rehabilitated between Duren and Buskerchen during the period 5 March to 14 March 1945. A large underground cable network was rehabilitated from Buskerchen to Bonn to Remagen. Work was immediately begun to rehabilitate underground cables on the East side of the river and by 24 March 1945 circuits were established from Linz to Konigswinter. On 25 March 1945, work was begun on a cable going East across the Rhine from Bonn toward Mennet, and on a cable going East from Konnet to Sand.

The mission of the 39th Signal Heavy Construction Battalion was to provide the Ninth United States Army with wire communication across the Rhine. Through information previously received by reconnaissance and captured records, there was known to exist a 103 pair German military submarine cable connecting Rhineberg and Friedrichfeld. On the morning of 24 March 1945, immediately after the assault, two line crews proceeded to the Rhine bank and located a favorable crossing spot. Meanwhile a cable crew proceeded across the river to locate and test the German cable terminal. The cable was found damaged by artillery with a 30 foot section removed by the Germans, but otherwise in good condition. The line crews hauled the reel of Spiral-Four to the East bank of the river. Approximately 200 feet of the loose end was fastened to a Navy Landing Ship Vehicle and towed across the river about 200 yards downstream of "H" bridge. On reaching the West bank, the cable was pulled up on the bank and lashed to a pole. When tests were made the cable found to perform excellently. The cable lying on the ground was buried in the river's edge in order to prevent injury by tanks and artillery. The cable remaining on the reel on the East bank was removed from the reel, payed out, and buried for one-quarter of a mile in the direction of Friedrichfeld where a test station was located. These circuits formed the only wire communications across the river for 3 days. The cable crew was at work testing, locating, and

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