

Summary of Interviews
Moselle Operation
80th Infantry Division

Interviews by 1st Lt. T.E. Burts, Jr

317th Infantry (Regt)

Source: Lt. Col. L. E. Fisher, Regimental Executive Officer
Major J. D. Hayes (Evacuated) - Former S-2 of Regiment
Captain S. A. Ford (Evacuated) - Former S-3 of Regiment
Captain J. E. Mullen (Evacuated) - Former CO, Company E.

Preliminary Reconnaissance Phase: Second Attack Date , 12 September.

The entire regiment was , on the 7th of September, back on the west side of the Moselle River , and the units were dug in with defensive positions , (locations shown in the interview and on sketches). Plans were successively made for attacks to be made on a future date, the date being changed several times to allow more reconnaissance, and to allow units to prepare for a large scale attack in force. The final date selected , announced much later, was the 12th of September.

During the period extending from the 7th to the 11th, reconnaissance patrols were organized by both Engineers and Infantry, and were sent out on successive days for the purpose of selecting the best possible, most strategic crossing site. The factor of surprise was considered most important. Major Hayes, S-2 of the regiment, personally led patrols with Captain Ford to the river. Listening posts were set up. Key terrain features on the east bank of the river were considered. Daylight patrol and recon activity were restricted to afford the enemy no indication of our intentions. A minimum of two vehicles was placed as the restriction for recon parties. Certain areas were cut off from military traffic.

Planning Phase: Second Attack

It was decided to , make use of fords in the vicinity of Dieulouard, to use assault boats here in the initial wave, and to otherwise exploit the terrain, which was the most unlikely spot for a crossing from the the enemy's viewpoint. A canal and two arms of a river had to be crossed before gaining the other side. However an "island" effect was in evidence here as a result of the physical course of the river. This would provide protection from enemy armor on a very vulnerable side. The Engineers would bridge the river at several points from the "island", and would bridge the canal from two points , One canal bridge would be placed north of Dieulouard for the 2d Bn, while another canal bridge would be placed south of the town for the 3rd Bn. Thirty-two machine guns would be emplaced near the crossing point to give overhead fire, these to be emplaced by the Infantry and to be fired by the supporting Engineers. The Artillery was to place preparatory fires on the Loisy Bezaumont road from 0415 to 0445 . Air support was to be used as much as possible and on call. CCA , of the 4th Amd. Div, as planned for the first attempts, would pass through the bridgehead and procede to the east. To confuse the enemy, the same artillery concentrations were fired each day before the crossing.

13 The attack was scheduled for 0400, 12th September. The 2d Bn would cross north of Dieulouard , pass over the flood plain, through Loisy, and take its objective, Genevieve Hill. The 1st Bn would follow over the

same route as that used by the 2d Bn , move up to the right of this unit and secure its objective, the hill NE of Bezaumont . The 3rd Bn would cross south of Dieulouard, move across the "island" and take the hill known as the Falaise.

Action and Bridging Phase:

The artillery and air support came according to plan, and the attack jumped off at 0400 with great success. Units had been guided from assembly areas in the Bois de Cuite to their crossing points by special markers. The Engineers had prepared all bridging facilities and were able to put footbridges in over the canal prior to the H-hour. Although , many casualties were suffered in crossing the river, as a result of the open terrain, the attack progressed so well that units were on their objectives by 0530 . Some difficulty was experienced in getting the heavier bridges into place so that the organic vehicles could cross. However this was done before noon and Engineers and Tank Destroyers were over to support the crossing. The enemy was firing concentrations on all bridges. Both lead units had made use of footbridges over the canal in the initial waves , and had forded arms of the river, making as much use of boats as possible in getting to the other side. Now the problem of defending the bridgehead became paramount .

Defending the Bridgehead: [Interview with LT. E. E. Fisher]

The following days , the 13th, 14th and 15th , were spent in beating off determined counter-attacks coming principally from the Forêt de Facq on the north. The enemy launched a series of attacks , supported by coordinated Infantry and Tank operations, with ample use of artillery and mortar preparations. In spite of the perimeter defense set up by the Infantry regiments , the Germans were able to run tanks down the roads and valleys between units and cut them off on the surrounding hills. On the 13th, the 317th Infantry regiment found itself cut off on Genevieve hill , with our artillery landing on the reverse slope of that hill to displace the enemy lodged there. Engineers along the river were defending their bridges , with an enemy to their front between them and the remainder of their Infantry regiments. From this the idea fixed itself in the mind of the defending Engineers that the Infantry had been wiped out. Our tanks were , with the Tank Destroyers, fighting off the enemy tank columns cutting through the valleys. Each day the enemy launched a counterattack at dawn, pushed through our lines to cut the communications between the troops. Each day, at dawn, St Genevieve was taken and by afternoon had been retaken by our forces. By the 15th, the CP's of one battalion and the 318th Infantry Regiment had been overrun. Loisy had been retaken from the enemy , and a battalion of the 318th , which had been cut off on Mousson Hill , was now free. The 1st Bn of the 318th Infantry, which had accompanied the 4th Amd. Div in its passage through the bridgehead on the 13th , now released from the mission with the Armor , came back through St. Genevieve on the 15th and drove the enemy from the town and hill. The 319th Infantry crossed the river on the 15th and occupied Loisy, tied into the left flank of the 317th . On the preceding day , the 3rd Bn 317th Inf. had beaten the enemy off the Falaise , supported by a terrific artillery "time fire" concentration. Now the enemy was held , Mousson Hill was ours , St. Genevieve was cleared , the enemy had been defeated on the Falaise hill, and thus all key terrain was in our possession , the bridge head defended

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