

MOSELLE CROSSING 702nd Tank Bn

(The following story was obtained by a mass interview of a representative group numbering approximately twenty ^{men})

Notes on terrain from personal observation; In the vicinity of DIEULOUARD the MOSELLE meanders wormlike through a flat floodplain Northward. To the East looms stolidly a series of big hills. From these dominating eminences the enemy could observe all activity on the West side of the river. Successful assault of these heights was a prerequisite to securing the bridgehead.

In general the terrain in this region is unfavorable for tank warfare. Too steep heights and too numerous wooded areas canalize tank movement along well-defined avenues. From the heights of MT TOULON and MT ST JEAN the enemy could bring to bear observed artillery fire on eastbound traffic. The roads are frequently bounded on one side by deeply ditched streams, on the other side by rises too steep for tanks. Thus deployment and dispersion were limited.

Account: On the morning of the 12th Co A was in a forward assembly area in the BOIS DE BRULE (765-263). At dusk on the same day word was received that the engineers had completed the heavy ponton bridges and that the tanks should cross as soon as possible. At 2230 singly in low gear the tanks commenced the crossing. Previously the 3rd Platoon with Capt McDermott, the CO, had been attached to the 1st Bn, 317th; the 2nd Plat to the 2nd Bn; and the 3rd Plat to the 3rd Bn.

As each platoon reached the far bank it was met by a guide from the battalion who informed the platoon leader where to place the platoon. It was a pitch black night and the tanks blazed their own roads across the island and to their respective positions..

The 1st Platoon led by Lt Atkins met the guide at the road and was directed up the slopes of the hill South of VILLE AU VAL. On these slopes in an open space at the bottom of a patch of woods the 1st Platoon spent a comparatively uneventful night, (804-281). Two tanks were positioned above, two below. The interval between groups was 75 yards. The crews spent the night in the tanks. The next morning the platoon moved to join the rest of the company along the river just North of LE PONT DE MONS.

The 3rd Platoon with 1st Sgt Murray in charge, met its guide and proceeded up Hill 380 until it reached the dirt road between BEZAUMONT and ST GENEVIEVE, (808-299). Outside of BEZAUMONT this road follows a deep cut bordered by hedgerows well over the height of a man. West of the road the ground slopes gently down to the valley floor. Just off the road are some ruins in a patch of vegetation. The 3rd Platoon tanks were positioned to the South of the ruins behind the embankment facing in the direction of BEZAUMONT. The tanks were close together to maintain contact in the dark. Between the road and the river was an infantry mortar platoon.

Meanwhile the 2nd Platoon under Lt John Croxton had been placed off to the West of the ST GENEVIEVE-BEZAUMONT road North of Sgt Murray's position. This platoon occupied ground which slopes away in the general direction of LOISY. In several clusters of small trees the tanks took up position so as to cover the town of BEZAUMONT and northward in the direction of LOISY. In fact Lt Croxton stated that he was unaware of the road to ST GENEVIEVE, and for that reason he found out later that he had not placed his tanks most advantageously.