

MOSELLE CROSSING: 702nd Tank Bn.

Tactical employment: Co A attached to 317th CT, Co B to the 318th CT. The original plan: Each tank company to cross with the CT to which it was attached. However since the tanks had to wait for the completion of the heavy ponton bridges, Companies A and B crossed after the foot elements of the two CTs. The Shermans were able to cross after 2000, 12th.

On arrival at the far shore Co A was parcelled out to the battalions of the 317th, one platoon per battalion. One platoon occupied a position on the reverse slope of FALAISE HILL, two on GENEVIEVE HILL. Co B remained intact in a reserve position covered by an orchard near the river (797-295).

The morning of the 13th the enemy counterattacked. Using the FORET DE FACQ as an assembly area, three major thrusts were directed at the bridgehead. Each thrust featured a team consisting of a platoon of tanks coordinating with a company of infantry. One thrust was directed through ST GENEVIEVE, across the ridge to the town of BEZAUMONT, and westward to the bridge. Another was aimed through ST GENEVIEVE, downhill to LOISY, then southward to the bridge. The third came through ATTON, southward to the bridge. The bulk of our infantry occupying the forward slopes of GENEVIEVE HILL were cut off by these thrusts.

Utilizing the dense early morning mist, characteristic of the MOSELLE VALLEY in this region, the enemy pushed through GENEVIEVE and occupied BEZAUMONT. The infantry and TDs at LOISY were pushed back and the enemy counterattack carried to within 200 yards of Co B's position. There the 11 tanks of Co B apparently unnoticed by the enemy opened up on the enemy, knocking out two tanks, and turning him back. The tanks fired from set locations.

Co A which had been pushed from the hill, reorganized, and in staggered line formation proceeded up GENEVIEVE HILL, followed by the infantry. A turning movement was effected on BEZAUMONT, resulting in the capture of the town.

On the 14th at 0900 Co B with 3rd Bn, 318th CT, attacked MOUSSON HILL.

The mission was accomplished by noon. The morning of the 15th the enemy counterattacked from FORET DE FACQ, captured ATTON, and LOISY. The men on MOUSSON HILL were cut off. After three days they were relieved.

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During the period 12th to the 15th, the tanks performed missions of infantry support, outposting, and morale.

In general the terrain in this region is unsatisfactory 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 en 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.

The weather during this period was satisfactory. The tanks were not roadbound. Since the en had the roads and other natural approaches well zeroed in the tanks moved crosscountry as often as terrain permitted.

Few mine casualties. Minefields becoming more deliberate. En using Mark IVs with souped up 75s.

(This summary was based on interviews with Lt Col Ralph Talbot, 702nd T Tank Bn; Capt Francis McDermott, CO Co A; Lt William B. Miller, CO Co B; Lt John Croxton, CO 1st Pln, Co A; and interviews with numerous enlisted personnel. Conducted by T/Sgt C.J. Angulo)