

## MOSELLE CROSSING Infantry

Interview with Capt Charles Gaking, S-3 2nd Bn, 318th Inf:

The 2nd Bn crossed the MOSELLE between 10 and 11, the morning of the 12th, Sept. Position was taken up on slope of Hill 380 1000 yards NW of BEZAUMONT (814-302). Co G had been left on the West side of the MOSELLE vic of MARBACHE and BELLEVILLE outposting the riverline at those points. Thus the bn consisted of 2 rifle companies and the heavy weapons company. While setting up positions the bn was ordered by regt at 1400, 12th, to send four squads out as roadblocks, one 500 yards South of LE PONT DE MONS (796-279), one North of LOISY (798-315), another outside of BEZAUMONT on the road to LANDREMONT (812-297), and the fourth at VIL AU VAL. Two hours later at 1600, 12th, the order was changed; the two squads at VILLE AU VAL and LE PONT DE MONS were withdrawn, and Co F was sent to the roadblock N of LOISY, while Co E covered the block at (812-297) East of BEZAUMONT. Thus at that time the 2nd Bn was left only with a headquarters. The vehicles had not been crossed yet. Furthermore Two companies from the 3rd Bn, 318th Inf, were despatched to hold the roadblocks at VILLE AU VAL and LE PONT DE MONS. Therefore the 3rd Bn was left with only one company. During the remainder of the day positions were consolidated.

The night and early morning, 12th and 13th, at 0200 the enemy laid down an artillery concentration on the CP of the 2nd Bn. The counterattack from the East towards BEZAUMONT was heard a few hours later. The counterattack actually took place at approximately 0300. It was aimed at ST GENEVIEVE and the high ground between ST GENEVIEVE and LOISY. The artillery barrage kept coming on and lasted two hours. At 0430 elements of the 317th Inf passed through the positions of the 2nd Bn, 318th Inf. These elements stated that they had been attacked by tanks and infantrymen and that the enemy had overrun their positions. At about that time a report was received that tanks were coming down the road from LOISY and that the co holding the roadblock North of LOISY was withdrawing. The bn had no defense except the CP group. It was decided to withdraw to the area of Co L, 3rd Bn, 318th Inf, vic LE PONT DE MONS. The vehicles had come across at 2100, 12th. With these the withdrawal was commenced. On the way to LE PONT DE MONS the bn was stopped by the Exec Officer of the 318th Inf. The Exec O had decided to build up a firing line along the road vic (798-297). Capt Gaking went over to the regimental exec o to talk over plans. Just then an en tank came around bend in road from LOISY. It opened up with canister shot. The firing line had no cover, it broke and ran. The men were in an open field with no foxholes. When the line broke the men took cover in a ditch. They were armed with carbines and pistols, but no bazookas. The tank came within 5 yards of position. A few men gave up. A second en tank was 50 yards behind the first. Infantrymen came along with the tanks, some riding the tanks. There did not seem to be any means of communication between tanks and infantry other than voice. At 0500, the 13th, the men gave up.

The en herded all the PWs together and forced them to follow the tanks in the direction of the attack. Some tanks from Co B (795-295) opened up and knocked out one tank. An infantry with a bazooka knocked out the lead tank at (799-296). The en turned. There had been an en assault gun between the tanks. When the tanks were hit, it turned and headed North. Meanwhile the 318th CP had been scattered. The en infantry had taken cover in the ditches. The firing had let up somewhat. Whenever the en tried to move our tanks opened up with machine guns. In the meantime Lt Col Golden had stopped the men retreating over the footbridge, reorganized, and set up a firing line along road just North of LE PONT DE MONS. To Capt Gaking, one of the men captured, it seemed as though the Americans were striving to pin down the en, and then surround the en infantrymen. Gaking therefore tried to delay and when the Germans proceeded to crawl along the ditch, he would stand up to draw fire which fire would the en to stop.

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Interview with Capt Gaking S-3 2nd Bn, 318th Inf. cont

Most of the Germans had withdrawn except for 12 remaining to guard the 40 or 50 PWs. Among the captured were 3 captains and 1 colonel. Our artillery then opened with a concentration. All PWs took cover in the ditch. About halfway between Loisy and (799-296) Capt Gaking with five others made their escape. Made way back to Lt Col Golden who put Gaking in charge of 2nd Bn. Capt Gaking picked up 18 men from various companies and put them under Capt Frank Williams and ordered them to regain BEZAUMONT. Did so capturing 87 PWs. Later remainder of Co F and Headquarters Co, and Co H(?) took over BEZAUMONT. Outposted town with 3 tanks. Waited for further orders.

On evening of 13th at 1800, orders from regiment to move out from BEZAUMONT. The 317th Inf had reorganized. The attack had been driven and off and 3 or 4 en tanks knocked out. The 317th Inf had succeeded in regaining the high ground NE of BEZAUMONT. Capt Gaking was ordered to come back and relieve the 3rd Bn on the roadblock established South of LE PONT DE MONS (796-279). Set up CP just South of PONT DE MONS. During the afternoon, 13th, Cos K and L, 3rd Bn had retaken LOISY. Capt Gaking was ordered to take Co F which then consisted of 70 men and relieve the men on the roadblock outside of VILLE AU VAL. Co E was pulled back and one platoon of Co E took over the roadblock S of PONT DE MONS.

Morning of 14th at 0600, second counterattack on LOISY. Beaten off. Cannon Co, 318th, with 6 105 Inf How, direct fire, pointblank range. Shot up personnel. Cannon Co location: (805-312).

By now 3rd Bn reorganized, almost full strength. At 0900, 14th, attacked and took ATTON. Then proceeded to MOUSSON HILL. Communication tanks and infantry by voice. Holler above noise of motor. Same day Major Connaughton took over 2nd Bn.

The en counterattacked and cut off 3rd Bn on MOUSSON HILL. En moved into ATTON. Radio only means of communication with men and 1 plat of tanks on MOUSSON HILL. Counterattack on hill every 2 hours. Ran low on supplies and ammunition. Some dropped from plane (arty cub). 314 FA Bn

Meanwhile 1st Bn, 319th Inf, relieved at NANCY. Came up and received mission of attacking LOISY and NE. The 1st bn with 4th Armd ordered back to attack ST GENEVIEVE. Met en ST GENEVIEVE, deployed and attacked. Took over ST GENEVIEVE. Then a co, CCB, 4th Armd ordered to attack in conjunction with 1st Bn, 318th Inf, to clear out woods N of ST GENEVIEVE and take MORVILLE. The 1st Bn 319th Inf went up to LES MENLES and relieved MOUSSON HILL. The day of 15th passed and mission completed at 1800 night of 15th.

All German tanks referred to Mark IV.