

## MOSELLE CROSSING Infantry

Interview with Lt Col Sterling S. Burnett, CO 1st Bn, 317th Inf:

At 0730, 12th, the battalion crossed. Order of crossing: Co B with 1 platoon Co D attached, Co A with 1 platoon Co D attached, followed by Co C with mortar platoon of Co D attached.

The first wave crossed the footbridge. The site: (782-362). Sixty men approximately crossed by this means and then the bridge was put out of action by an artillery fire. Then assault boats ferried the rest of B Co and all of Co A over. Seven assault boats were available. Then the bridge was repaired and remainder of battalion crossed via the bridge.

On crossing the battalion moved up Hill 380. Cos A and B took up positions on the forward slope of the hill (see overlay) while Co C covered the right flank echeloned to the right rear.

Mortar and artillery fire received on position during the day.

Germans were observed to be assembling in woods (854-312) during 12th from positions on Hill 380.

At 2300, 12th, small arms fire was received on the position. During the night sporadic fighting took place. This fighting took place within the defensive position during the hours of darkness. About 0300, 13th, an artillery and mortar preparation was received. Then an enemy force of infantry moved through the 2nd Bn on the left and enveloped the left platoon, Co B, 1st Bn.

After daylight, 0600, all members of the enemy force were either killed or captured. The entire force: 50, of which 27 PWs.

0515, 13th, the battalion CP, 300 yards from the MLR (see overlay) was attacked by an enemy patrol of 12 men. Inside of 10 minutes the enemy patrol was neutralized, either dead or captured.

At 0600 a German assault gun moved on the position of Co C. Crushed a 57 MM of the AT Co, but was knocked out by the 3" TD gun, 610 TD Bn. Survivors of assault killed trying to escape from wrecked vehicle.

That ended day's activities. Reorganized on forward slope of hill.

During darkness 12th, 13th The bn motor pool on reverse slope of Hill 380 was attacked by a force of German (number unknown). Repulsed by action of jeep drivers, 500 yards from MLR. No vehicles destroyed.

At 1000, 14th, battalion ordered to move to HILL 407 (MT ST JEAN). Order of march Cos C, A, and B. Route of march (see overlay) via LANDREMONT, it was planned to follow the road BELLEAU and SIVRY. At (845-282) enemy was dug in. Co C was subjected to heavy automatic and artillery fire. At approximately 1300 the bn CO ordered a withdrawal to the West of LANDREMONT. There reorganization took place and the bn set out eastward through the valley North of their previous route, North of Hill 340 to Hill 375, the NW end of MT ST JEAN. Order of March: Cos A, B, C. Co A seized Hill 375 (MT TOULON). Co B passed through and seized MT ST JEAN. After dark a platoon of tanks came up. One platoon of TDs covered the right flank of the battalion on the advance to Hill 375.

When the bn was pinned down at (845-282), a platoon of tanks (2nd Plat, Co A, 702nd Tank Bn), was called for. The tanks were told to shoot only when infantry officers pointed targets. However through misunderstanding resulting from lack of communication the tanks fired into Co C, killing 20 men. Voice was only means of communication. The tanks were buttoned up.

At 1730 Division ordered the bn to withdraw from MT ST JEAN and organize MT TOULON. Organization completed. Mortar and artillery fire was placed by enemy on position. Also small arms fire.

At 0430, 15th, received order from regt to withdraw from MT TOULON and attack LE MIN A VENTS. Bn moved out 0700. Order of march: Cos B, A, and C. At 0715 bn ordered to return at once and reoccupy original defensive positions on Hill 380.

*Chas. J. ...*

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Patrol information and information from regimental S-2 indicated that there had been heavy counterattacks against Hill 380.

At 1000 the bn attacked to the West. Co B on right, Co A on left, and Co C in reserve. The tanks followed in the rear. of assault rifle companies. The radios were set on the second bn channels, thus direct communication was obtained. with the right company of 2nd Bn. Full and complete coordination was secured. When attack launched each unit knew exactly location.

An enemy force was trapped between 2nd Bn on Hill 380 facing East and 1st Bn attacking to West up Hill 380. The enemy was attacking from NE of Hill 380. By 1200, 15th, 1st Bn had occupied original defensive positions on hill. Tanks of no value in attack. Fear shoot into 2nd Bn.

At 1400, 15th, Bn OP located an armored column moving from E to W toward ST GENEVIEVE. Were within 2000 yards of position (835-315). Engaged by TD platoon and the Bn AT Platoon. Were repulsed.

Attack on MT TOULON light casualties.

On morning of 13th Platoon, Co B on left 20 casualties.

Total for bn for night counterattack on 13th approx 60.

Received some arty support of Co C in attack on MT ST JEAN when held up E of LANDRE MONT. Against ST GENEVIEVE HILL (380) no arty.

No air support.

Key terrain feature: Hill 380, Hill 340, MT ST JEAN, MT TOULON.

Enemy extremely aggressive. Vicious night fighter. Uses a lot of firepower. 120 MM mortars, assault guns, 50 MM guns, (assault guns with souped up 75). Uses accurate arty.