

(Moselle Operation - 2d Bn 317th Inf. Cont - Captain Mullen \*)

( Captain Mullen) " On the 8th of September, the battalion was in an assembly area in the Foret de Puvénelle , and intensive reconnaissance was being made preparatory for the next river crossing. This reconnaissance continued up until the 10th, when, on the day of the 10th, we marched on foot to Fey en Haye. Reconnaissance was still being made in the vicinity of the Bois de Cuite for possible crossing sites.

" At this time there were two plans:

1. The Engineers would bridge the canal and the river with a footbridge.
2. The Engineers would bridge the canal, but we would cross the river in assault boats .

A point being considered for this operation was located at (1:100000-78.9-30.5). It was doubtful as to whether the Engineers could bridge the river; so we were given seventeen assault boats for the battalion. In the plan which was evolved; however, it was decided that we would cross the canal on the bridge and take the boats across the river. The order of march which was decided upon provided for companies G, E, and F to go over, followed by the attachments. The plans for the attack were generally as follows:

Company G would attack through Loisy, up the hill to the east, and take St. Genevieve.

Company E would advance on the right of G , and would occupy the crest of the hill.

Company F would be prepared to be committed on either flank. Heavy weapons would be dispersed as prescribed. by order.

(5) We were to jump off at 0400 , on the 12th of September."

The date for the attack was selected at the latest possible time to give ample opportunity for reconnaissance.

The battalion moved from the Fey en Haye to the rear of the Bois de Cuite into an assembly area , at 2300, 11th of September. The routes from the assembly area down to the boats had been well marked by the engineers. These markers were supplemented by men who were to lead the columns to the exact spot where they would enter the boats. These guides were located near ( 77.8-30.2 1:100000).

"Company G got off at 0315, started across the footbridge at the canal at 0345. Company E left at 0315 , to cross behind Company G, and the leading platoon reached the bridge on schedule , crossing in the proper order. Company G made the boats at about 0400. Now , the rest of the column of Company E became separated from the leading platoon of E. Meanwhile , Company F came in ahead and crossed instead of the rest of E Company. This placed Company G, one platoon of E, and all of Company F across the river. The rest of E then came across in the boats by 0545. Enemy mortar fire had picked up the forward slope of the hill across the river, at 0300 , and Company F lost men as a result of mortar fire during their crossing of the canal. The river was now being shelled with mortar and scattered artillery fire, and the first boat to hit the water had been met with machine-gun fire, coming from the road Loisy-south and from the high ground to the east. There were about eight machine-guns firing on us from there."

(Moselle Operation-2d Bn 317th Inf. Cont- Captain Mullen )

" Our artillery opened up from 0345 to 0415, with a heavy barrage, a four battalion concentration. Approximately 52 machine-guns fired overhead fire from the forward slope of the Bois de Cuite . The weather was not too bad, a rainy mist or drizzle, and visibility was good, for this country. We tore up Hill 380, and by 0650, fired a flare , signifying that we were on our objective. During the period , now, while we reorganized our companies , we received sporadic artillery and mortar fire. <sup>B/</sup> At 0800, we had Company G, <sup>(P)</sup> and one platoon of E on the hill . The platoon of E was to protect the left flank of the battalion.

913 " On the morning of the 13th, the enemy started an artillery and mortar preparation from the vicinity of the Forêt De Facq; and jumped off to an attack , by 0430, with Infantry and an estimated <sup>(P)</sup> 35 tanks. As a result, Company G, which was holding St. Genevieve, was shot up, and driven out of St. Genevieve , by 0530. Then, the tanks came down along the road to the south , cutting into the battalion CP, dispersed the troops there, and caused them to lose Bezaumont. Some were caused to withdraw to the river , while part of Company G withdrew to Hill 380. At this same time, the enemy tanks roared through Loisy and overran the CP of the 317th Infantry, leaving about 120 dead.

" Under the darkness of the morning of the 13th, the enemy was able to infiltrate through the battalion sector, up Hill 380, and engage Company E. However, after daylight, they were driven off, and Company G had retaken St. Genevieve by noon of the same day .

" At about 0900, 13 th of September, I had seen the first tanks of the 4th Amd. Division cross the bridge over the river, The enemy withdrew at the sight of the armor, and our tanks passed through Loisy. Then, the armor was shelled , and stopped ; passing through St. Genevieve later in the afternoon, proceeded to the east. "

( Moselle Operation -2d Bn 317th Infantry Cont. - Capt Mullen)

" The next morning ( 14 Sept), the Germans launched the same counter-attack with the same effect. This time Company G lost the retaken ground and all of its machine-guns. The company commander was cut off, and was isolated with four or five of his men in the Foret De Facq . We ran the enemy out of St. Genevieve again before noon , but this time the 1st Bn cleared the town and occupied it with a sizable force. ( It is well to note that the 2d Bn had operated as a battalion with about <sup>(1) 2/3</sup> half of its strength, units having been cut off in counterattacks and great numbers wounded or killed.) Company E took over the hill in the vicinity of Landremont.

" On the morning of the 15th, while the 1st Bn of the 318th Infantry, was on route to St. Genevieve, the enemy counter-attacked again. The battalion of the 318th had been in Nomeny at 1800, on the previous evening, and they were due to arrive at 2100 on the 14th. The 1st Bn , of the 317th Infantry had been pulled out of St. Genevieve to occupy high ground to the south. Now the enemy attacked Landremont Hill from the northeast, at about daylight, and broke through at about 0500. The 1st Bn , 317th was called back to relieve this situation at Landremont. Starting at about 0400, and going through 0530, the enemy had placed effective mortar fire on Company E , forcing it off the hill. I got back 9 men of the original 21 men of the 3rd platoon. ( Normal strength of a rifle platoon is 45) The 1st Bn came back , and , attacking the hill from the south, forced the enemy off to the north by 0700. ( Actually, Captain Mullen states that he contacted Major Sterling Burnette , commanding the 1st Bn, and told him the situation. The battalion came up the hill at 0720 and occupied the heights . )

" Now the 1st Bn occupied its original position, Company E was ordered into St. Genevieve , while the 2d Bn was to occupy its original position.

( Moselle Operation -2dBn 317th Inf. Cont. - Capt. Mullen )

" Company E moved into St. Genevieve at about 1500, on the 15th. At about 1700, I contacted a Major from the 318th Infantry, who had come into the town with tanks. He said that he had orders to to move to Port sur Seille , on the north. I also ran into Lt. Col. Douglas from the 319 Infantry, who said that he was coming in to relieve Company E, and that a battalion of the 318th was on the way with a company of Medium Tanks.

" When the battalion of the 318th had arrived with their tanks, E Company withdrew, at about 2000, 15 Sept, and occupied its original positions on Hill 380. The weather had been bad;rain had also hindered operations to some extent."

\*\*\*\*\*

This concludes the interviews with Captain Mullen , which had taken place at the CP of the 2dBn on succeeding days of static operations. Some of these statements were backed by the statements of enlisted personnel made at this time. Pertinent statements are available in the form of questions answered by the following.

S/Sgt. H.G. Johnsey- Company E.

S/Sgt. J.B. Yeater- Company E ( Later Co <sup>4</sup> missioned )

S/Sgt. J.A. Tofte - Company E

\*\*\*\*\*

Lt. Theron E. Burts Jr.