

MOSELLE RIVER CROSSING 318th Inf R 5 Notes

Interview with Lt. Col. SNOWDEN, former CO, 2nd Bn, 318th Regt.

"On the 4th of September, 1944, we were moving into the woods west of ROZIERES. Our Bn CP was located here in the BOIS DE LA COTE EN HAYE. We were the 2nd Bn of the 318th Inf. The 3rd Bn was located, as shown, near MARBACHE. The 1st Bn was at this time part of GCB of the 4th Armd Div and was with the unit in reserve, in the vicinity of COMMERCY.

The Regt CP of the 318th Inf was located at (645245) (on the 1:100,000) south of MINORVILLE.

The Division Field Order given at about 2100, 4 September, 1944, providing for the attack across the river on the 5th, was issued. However, the 3rd Bn had been ordered to move up to seize the area BELLEVILLE-MARBACHE and had started its move to an assembly area northwest of the town from the BOIS DE LA COTE EN HAYE. This move about 1500, the 4th. The 2nd Bn was to move on the area MARBACHE-LIVERDUN from the vicinity of the BOIS, attacking from the BOIS DE LIVERDUN. The 2nd Bn started its move in the afternoon of the 4th, and arrived in the assembly area BOIS DE LIVERDUN after dark. The 3rd Bn was already in position by this time, east of MARBACHE.

Neither battalion was to attempt a river crossing.

Just before daylight, on the morning of the 5th, the 3rd Bn launched an attack.

This was well supported by artillery fire."

The enemy was well emplaced along the western edge of the woods at (785245) and the battalion ran into heavy woods fighting with the enemy. Infantry supported by mortar and arty fire.

"The 2nd Bn, on the 5th, however, engaged in a reconnaissance in force in the BOIS DE LIVERDUN. This was followed by recon of the Regt and its staffs with the company commanders, and the commander of the support weapons, in preparation for the attack on the 6th. This attack per Regt order was set up for 0600.

Company E was to attack on the left abreast of G on the right. The Bn was to be supported by a platoon of the 702 Tk Bn. This was to come from Co B. TD support was to be by Co B of the 610th TD Bn.

At H-hour, 0600, on the 6th, the 2nd Bn attacked the enemy located in the western edge of the FORET DE LAVANT GARDE. We opened fire with a 10-minute arty preparation from H minus 10, increasing in intensity at H minus 5, thickened by the fire of all MG's and by the 75mm and 3" guns of the TD's. Arty was from the 314th FA Bn and the 315th was prepared to fire in general support on call. We ran into a battalion of enemy Infantry supported by mortars, arty and 20mm Flak. We were on our initial objective by 0830, 6 Sept."

"The 3rd Bn had come down to this area on the night of the 4th, attacked on the morning of the 5th, and by 1600 of that day was on its objective, the high ground north of MARBACHE. Both battalions fought off enemy counter-attacks for 3 days."

"During the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th, we cleaned out the woods LIVERDUN-MARBACHE-BELLEVILLE up to the river. Then both battalions improved their positions. On the night of the 10th, the 2nd Bn (less Company G, which was left at MARBACHE) moved back to its initial assembly area in the BOIS DE LA COTE. The battalion had been relieved by the 1st Bn, 319th Inf."

"On the 7th, the CO of the 3rd Bn, Lt Col JOHN SNOWDEN, had been killed. Major HARL E NEUSSNER had assumed command on the 10th. The 3rd remained in position until relieved on the 11th at BELLEVILLE by a detachment from company G (occupation force). During the night of the 11th, the Regt moved into assembly positions in the woods about 1,000 yards west of BELLEVILLE. On the night of the 11th, the 2nd Bn moved from reserve positions to positions Southwest of DIEULOUARD to support the crossing of the 317th Inf on the 12th."

The 317th Inf attacked across the river on the morning of the 12th of September following a heavy arty preparation. The principal crossings of the MOSELLE and canal were made in the vicinity of the city of DIEULOUARD at approximately 0400. All troops were under fire during the crossing. The 2nd Bn of the 318th Inf followed the 317th Inf in the role of a support unit, at approximately 1100, moved to position on the reverse slope of hill at (813310) (1:50,000 sheet) south of ST. GENEVIEVE.

The 3rd Bn, 318th Inf crossed the river and by 1500 had occupied a position 500 yards west of BEYAUMONT.

" At 1600, the 2 Bn was ordered to send E Compa. to form a road block near ANTREVILLE (see sketch) F Company to form a block near LOISY. The 3rd Bn was to send a company to the vicinity of VILLE AU VAL. Now, the 2nd Bn had only 30 men left, with the CP group and the Mortar platoon of the Heavy Weapons Company. We had received our orders to accomplish all this at about 1400, and had completed the job by 1800 on the 12th. The Regtl CP moved over at approximately 2000. Meanwhile heavy enemy arty had begun to shell the entire area which we were holding. From about 1500 and during the late afternoon of the 12th, the arty barrage began to increase in intensity. By 2230 it had reached a point where we were under terrific arty, mortar, and MG fire. The arty included medium caliber. The entire area of ST. GENE-VIEVE, LOISY, and LE PONT DE MONS was covered now with fire. The reverse slope of Geneveive Hill was receiving terrific mortar preparations."

"The first warning of a counter-attack came at 0130, 13 Sept, when Capt FRANK A WILLIAMS, who was at the road block at LOISY, called and said that the enemy was in-filtrating into our positions on his right. He asked permission to swing the left road block around to meet this. It was granted. At 0200, Capt. WILLIAMS called again, giving the information that he had spotted 8 tanks coming toward his position with an estimated battalion of Infantry, some mounting the tanks. Capt WILLIAMS held the road block from 0200-0330, knocking out 1 tank with a bazooka and disabling a second. He notified us at 0330 that the position was then untenable. He was ordered to withdraw to LOISY and fight a delaying action against the counter-attack."

"The attack then developed across the nose of the hill, striking southwesterly from ST. FENEVIEVE, over-running the 2nd Bn CP at 0345. At the same time, enemy tanks were heard moving down the top of the ridge, south from ST. GENEVIEVE to BEY-AUMONT. The 2nd Bn of the 317th Inf, plus two companies of the 1st, forced from their positions by this counter-attack, fell back into the 318th Inf area."

(Lt Col. GOLDEN of the 318th Inf, testimony supported by Capt MULLER of the 317th Inf, Major HAYES of the 317th Inf, and enlisted personnel, states that conditions were now very bad. Units were mixed, personnel from different companies and battalions were forced into the same position. Armor, Engineers, and Infantry were intermingled and control by any unit commander over all his men was impossible. Communications were disrupted.

"At this point, officers, regardless of unit or branch, jumped into the fray, meeting the emergency, taking command of groups of men of fighting strength, marshalled them into lines and led attacks against the enemy. Majors were commanding platoons and Captains were leading battalions."

"At 0400, 13 September, we had only 30 men left at LOISY, and these could hold no longer. The order was given for the 2nd Bn CP group, together with the motor vehicles, which had crossed the river during the night, to withdraw to the 3rd Bn area and form a line to defend against the on-coming counter-attack. Upon arrival at the 3rd Bn area and at 0430, I found that German Infantry had already infiltrated that position, and had dispersed L Company (0400-0430). We then moved back to the position where I thought the Regtl CP to be located. (Located at ()).

"We went about 200 yards up to the Regtl CP, where I found most of the CP personnel dead. The ditches were full of wounded. I found remaining there Major HOWARD (Medical), Major EDWARD LE BLANC (S-4), 1st Lt ROGER F BONE, (ass't S-3) and Capt. Conaway (HQ Commandant). The enemy had charged down the road to the CP with MG, SP guns, and tanks.

Col E A MCHUGH had been wounded; Lt Col ROY HERTE was missing; Captain LEWIS PICKERING (S-1) was missing; Major JOWARD JOHNSON had been wounded and evacuated; Lt HARRY E SADLER (S-1) had been killed; and Mr DODD, our WO, had been wounded and evacuated. I seemed to be the senior officer in the Regt, so I took command.

"I deployed all the men I could get together along the ditch beside the road. I stopped two of the tanks from Co A, as they came down the road, and direct that one fire at an enemy tank approaching from BEYAUMONT. The other was to fire along the road at a tank coming south from LOISY.

The determined stand made here by men of the 317th and 318th Infantry Regts stopped the threat between 0430 and 0500, 13 Sept. A column coming, however, from the road from BEYAUMONT threatened to drive a wedge between this group and the 313th FA Bn (Apros. 500 yards) east of LE PONT DE MONS, cut off our men along the road to the west and surround them pinning them against the river.

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"With Major LEBLOND, I moved to the vicinity of PE PONT DE MONS, where I found Major NEUSNER with I Company and the reserve platoon of "K" Company. I immediately placed them in position. The road was blocked to the south and east and the men were deployed in a defensive position along the road and slope of the hill to the east. We stopped all personnel of our units from crossing the footbridge to the west or swimming the river, and placed them in position to make a stand in and around the civil buildings of LE PONT DE MONS. (The roads were jammed now with traffic coming over the bridgehead, and that withdrawing, down the valleys in the face of enemy tanks)"

"At 0500, tanks and tank-destroyers were jammed into LE PONT DE MONS. I ran all vehicles down into a field along the river. I ran the tanks into position down the ridge to a point behind a wall near LE PONT DE MONS. This by 0600, 13th Sept 1944. Now a barrage from Co B (702 Tk Bn) tanks broke up the enemy attack and started them on a retreat. I ordered a tank company forward, with our Infantry behind them driving the enemy back up hill 382, to the southern edge of LOISY. At 0900 the order was given by me for an attack on BEYAUMONT. This was made by a mixture of troops: one company of 2nd Bn 318th Inf with the reserve platoon of "E" 318. (Capt GAKING) One reserve platoon of "K" 318. One MG platoon of "M" 318, "I" Company of 318, under Major NEUSNER, one Company ("E" I believe) of the 317th under Capt. MULLEN.

"MULLEN held hill 382. Major NEUSNER held south of LOISY. The 2nd Bn and the tanks of Company "A", 702 Tank Bn, were ordered to attack. On this attack, we lost 5 tanks. The enemy lost about 7. The 2nd Bn (318) took BEYAUMONT and established contact with a company of the 1st Bn of the 317th, which held above LANDREMONT."

"On the rest of the 13th, we consolidated our positions, and I officially assumed command of the 318th Infantry. We returned the 317th troops to 317th control and prepared to hold our positions for the night of the 13th-14th of Sept. On the 14th, the 317th Inf caught a counter-attack at LANDREMONT. I threw in a platoon of division engineers at noon near LOISY to repel a counter-attack. We now stood with the 3rd Bn, 318th, at LOISY; and the 2nd Bn 318th at BEYAUMONT. (1st Bn was still with the 4th Armd Div) The Regt CP was at LE PONT DE MONS on the 14th. Now, our company "G", (which had remained behind) arrived from MARBACHE at 1300 (14 Sept). The 2nd Bn consolidated and relieved "K" Company on the road block. The 3rd consolidated south of LOISY, and with 1 platoon of tanks started attacking LOISY at 1500. LOISY was taken. They continued on, gained ATTON and proceeded to attack MOUSSON HILL to the north. Assault guns remained in reserve at LE PONT DE MONS. The rest of the tanks went with the infantry toward MOUSSON HILL. The infantry rode the tanks to ATTON. There the columns split. The infantry went straight up to the north, attacking up the hill. The tanks went to the east and up the hill. All had gained the objective at 1900, the 14th."

"On the morning of the 15th, we suffered another enemy counter-attack against LOISY and ATTON. ATTON was captured by the enemy, and the 3rd Bn of the 318th was cut off at (0630) on MOUSSON HILL. The enemy was then driven out of ATTON and the attack on LOISY was beaten off by the division engineers placed there. The 1st Bn of the 319th crossed the river, and came over on the morning of the 15th and moved to LOISY in reserve. Meanwhile, the 1st Bn of the 318th was ordered back from CCB of the 4th Armd Div. It was expected to arrive around noon. At 1200, a heavy counter-attack started to develop again at LOISY, getting under way at approximately 1300. This attack engaged and pinned down the 1st Bn of the 319th. Assault guns and one of our tanks companies (minus a platoon on MOUSSON) were committed here. The tanks suffered heavy casualties. By 1330, a radio message stated that the 1st Bn, 318th Inf, with a company from CCB, was about 3 miles east of ST. GENEVIEVE, and at approximately 1415 this battalion, with the components of CCB attacked and captured ST. GENEVIEVE. They continued toward LOISY, dispersed the left wing of the enemy attack, causing the entire counter-attack to fold and retreat. This battalion was then ordered to follow up the enemy and clear the FORET DE FACQ, seize the town of MORVILLE. This task was accomplished by 1700--15th Sept. The 1st Bn of the 319th Inf was then ordered to continue from LOISY, with tank support, occupy ATTON, proceed to the north and attack LES MENILS. LES MENILS was ours at approximately 1900. (15th of Sept.)
1 Co. CCB 4th Armd

Col. MILTON C. SHATTUCK former Ass't C/S G-3 of XII Corps had assumed command of the Regt on the 14th. During the afternoon of the 14th, Capt WILLIAMS had directed very effective TD fire, from a position south of VILLE A VAL on the FALAISE."

"The remainder of the day of the 15th of September, we spent in consolidating our positions "