

SECTION II

INITIAL CROSSING OF THE MOSELLE RIVER

The 80th Division extended its COMMERCY bridgehead and advanced to the east on 4 September 1944.

The 317th Infantry, with the 1st Bn leading, moved to the east on 4 September 1944. This Battalion advanced to seize the road net BERNECOURT - FLIREY - BEAUMONT. Patrols were sent out to the MOSELLE RIVER. The 2d Bn advanced to seize the high ground in the vicinity of THIAUCOURT, and then moved on FLIREY, sending patrols to the MOSELLE RIVER also. The 3d Bn, in reserve, continued to outpost the bridgehead at COMMERCY.

The 318th Infantry (minus 1st Bn attached to CCA 4th Armored Division) moved from its position east of COMMERCY during the afternoon and evening 4 September 1944 toward the MOSELLE RIVER, with the mission of securing HILL 326, south of BELLEVILLE, and the surrounding high ground on the west bank of the MOSELLE RIVER. The 2d Bn was committed to the right sector of the Regimental Zone, with the 3d Bn on the left.

The 3d Bn 319th Infantry advanced eastward 4 September 1944 from the vicinity of JOUYSOUS-LES-COTES. The advance was preceded by a five minute barrage from Battery "C" 905th Field Artillery Bn, which was supporting the 3d Bn. This Battalion seized the high ground northwest of TOUL and at 1153, leading elements were in the town of TOUL. By 1900, the objective, the high ground east of TOUL across the MOSELLE RIVER, was seized with three companies abreast, Company "L" on the north, Company "I" in the center, and Company "K" on the south. One platoon of Company "C" 305th Engineer Combat Battalion ferried the troops across the MOSELLE RIVER. The remainder of the 319th Infantry moved to the vicinity of TOUL, closing in at 2000.

In this operation, the 3d Paratroop Training Regiment confronted the 319th Infantry. This regiment was composed of young and almost fanatical soldiers. The bridgehead across the river did not receive any counterattacks, but the enemy occupied the towns and fortresses of VILLE-LE-SEC and GONDREVILLE, and tenaciously attempted to contain our advance from these advantageous positions.

At 0750, 5 September 1944, three artillery concentrations were fired in preparation for the crossing of the MOSELLE RIVER. High explosive and smoke were used. At 0945, the 1st Bn 317th Infantry moved out to cross the canal in the vicinity of BLEMUD-LES-PONT-A-MOUSSON. Upon crossing the canal, the Battalion received heavy enemy machine gun fire before reaching the river, and was temporarily halted.

The 2d Bn 317th Infantry, moving toward a river crossing site in the vicinity of VANDIERES, cleared PAGNY-SUR-MOSELLE at 1020, but at 1320 this Battalion's advance was stopped by heavy enemy machine gun and artillery fire from the hill east of PAGNY-SUR-MOSELLE. At 1540 the Battalion was still under heavy enemy machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. The 3d Bn was reconnoitering a route for a possible crossing at PONT-A-MOUSSON.

At 1605, one platoon of "G" Company, 2d Bn, had crossed the river, and reported it was receiving heavy enemy artillery fire.

At 1705, elements of Company "L" were stopped under a bridge near PONT-A-MOUSSON by sniper and heavy machine gun fire. Stiff resistance by the enemy caused the platoon of "G" Company, 2d Bn, to be withdrawn from the east bank of the MOSELLE RIVER. Plans were made for a second crossing in the same vicinity later that night.

From its advance east of COMMERCY to the MOSELLE RIVER, the Division had encountered "battlegroups" from the 8th and 29th Regiments of the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, the 2d Panzer Division, the 48th Infantry Division, and the 49th SS Brigade. Now it appeared that the enemy had finally organized his troops to make a stand at the MOSELLE RIVER. The terrain on the east bank of the MOSELLE RIVER offered the enemy excellent fields of fire and observation of the river. In addition to this, the high ground concealed troop movements in his rear areas. This was the ideal area for the enemy to organize his defense line, short of the WESTWALL.

The 3d Bn 317th Infantry moved to PONT-A-MOUSSON at 1730, to force a river crossing. The crossing was delayed by enemy artillery which started large fires in the town, revealing troop movements of this Battalion.

"K" Company, receiving heavy enemy artillery fire, was on the water in assault boats at 0225, 6 September 1944. Elements of "K" and "I" Companies were reported across the

river at 0425, 6 September 1944. Eight assault boats from "L" Company and one boat from "I" Company were reported across the river at 0540.

The 1st Bn 317th Infantry, after withdrawing from the canal, in the vicinity of BLEMOT-LES-PONT-A-MOUSSON on 5 September 1944, made plans to cross the river again that night in the same vicinity.

At 2320, 5 September 1944, the 1st Bn, began movement again to the canal. This movement drew no fire from the enemy, but at 0210, just after crossing the canal, the Battalion was temporarily halted by heavy enemy machine gun fire. Heavy enemy mortar fire was falling on the Battalion at 0305. Two companies dug in on the east side of the canal. Four boats crossed the river at 0340, and encountered much trouble with the swift current of the river.

Maintaining communication with units across the river was a difficult problem, and added to the confusion of forcing a bridgehead under heavy enemy fire.

The 2d Bn 317th Infantry was under heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire the night 5-6 September 1944 and was unable to cross the river. At 0810, 6 September 1944, two companies of the 2d Bn were dug in across the canal, west of the river, near VANDIERES.

The 318th Infantry, clearing enemy resistance west of the MOSELLE RIVER, employed the 3d Bn to launch an attack on HILL 326 the morning of 5 September 1944. At 1020 heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire was encountered and progress was slow. One company had advanced to occupy HILL 220, south of DIEULOUARD, by 1117, but no further progress was made in the attack on HILL 326.

Patrols of the 318th Infantry reported DIEULOUARD cleared of the enemy at 1435, and the bridge across the MOSELLE RIVER at this point, destroyed. The Regiment was ordered to place a reinforced platoon from Company "K" on HILL 220, and the remainder of the Company was to assist Company "I" in taking HILL 326.

On 5 September 1944, the 3d Bn, 319th Infantry continued its attack on FORTS GONDREVILLE and VILLE-LE-SEC. The attack was stopped by heavy enemy automatic weapons fire, but the Battalion consolidated its position one kilometer west of the objective and held the ground for the

night. The 1st and 2d Bns were still in position north of TOUL.

On 6 September 1944, elements of the 3d Bn 317th Infantry, on the bridgehead across the MOSELLE RIVER, were under heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire at 0730. By 1100 strong German counterattacks forced the elements of the 3d Bn on the bridgehead to withdraw to the west side of the river.

The 2d Bn 317th Infantry withdrew on 6 September 1944 to the high ground northwest of VANDIERES. The 1st Bn took up a position west of the MOSELLE RIVER on the high ground north of JEZAINVILLE.

Fierce enemy resistance, made by elements of the 3d Panzer Grenadier and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, forced the Division to make further preparations for a river crossing. These divisions, brought from ITALY to establish a line at the MARNE RIVER, had finally managed to get into prepared positions at the MOSELLE RIVER.

The 318th Infantry, (minus 1st Bn) continued mopping-up operations west of the MOSELLE RIVER. The 3d Bn resumed the attack on HILL 326 at 0730, 6 September 1944. Progress was slow and many enemy in well dug-in positions were encountered in the woods north of HILL 326. By 1530, Companies "I" and "K" seized the objective and held the ground.

Enemy troops still occupied BELLEVILLE to the north of HILL 326. Patrols were sent out at 1755 to clear the town. This action was necessary before the Battalion could advance south to clean out the FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE. At 1915, the 314th Field Artillery Bn was shelling BELLEVILLE and MARBACHE, the latter town being south of HILL 326 and in between the 3d Bn and the FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE. The attack on this forest was to be resumed the following morning.

The attack on FORT DE VILLE LE SEC was renewed by the 3d Bn 319th Infantry on 6 September 1944. The 905th Field Artillery Battalion supported the attack with a coordinated rolling barrage and planned concentrations on suspected locations of enemy troops. Battery "A", 273d Field Artillery Battalion (155 MM guns), in support, fired on the FORT and locations suspected of concealing enemy artillery. The Infantry again withdrew to previously occupied positions about one kilometer west of the objective.

The 2d Bn 319th Infantry had two companies on the line northwest of GONDREVILLE, but its objective was not taken.

From 1 September to 6 September, the 702d Tank Bn (minus "D" Company) remained at CHALONS-SUR-MARNE for maintenance and refueling. The Tank Bn joined the Division on 6 September 1944. "D" Company 702d Tank Bn was attached to the 80th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, protecting the Division's north flank on 6 September 1944.

The 1117th Engineer Group constructed a Class 40 bridge at TOUL on 6 September 1944.

Preparations for a river crossing by the 317th Infantry were continued throughout the day 7 September 1944. The 2d Bn moved into the FORET DE PUVENELLE, near the Regimental CP, at 0200, 7 September 1944. The 1st Bn remained on the high ground north of JEZAINVILLE and the 3d Bn held the high ground west of PONT-A-MOUSSON.

At 0815, 7 September 1944, the 2d Bn 318th Infantry began to move from Division Reserve, south of ROSIERES-EN-HAYE, towards the west edge of FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE. The 3d Bn resumed the attack on MARBACHE. Both Battalions advanced against organized resistance during the day, and at 2040, the 3d Bn had taken MARBACHE. Patrols were sent east to the MOSELLE RIVER.

Meanwhile the 1st Bn 319th Infantry began movement at 0430, 7 September 1944 from the vicinity north of TOUL towards BOIS DE LIVERDUN. At 0650 the Battalion was in the vicinity of this forest and at 1020 was engaged in clearing the woods from north to south. By 1145 the Battalion was nearing the MOSELLE RIVER line and "C" Company had established contact with the 2d Bn 318th Infantry on its left. By 2020, the 1st Bn 319th Infantry had reached a point near the river line between LIVERDUN and POMPEY, where the advance was halted until daylight.

The 2d Bn 319th Infantry outposted the line from the southwest edge of BOIS DE LIVERDUN to the left flank of the 3d Bn north of FORT DE GONDREVILLE. The 3d Bn held the bridgehead east of the TOUL and the MOSELLE RIVER.

On 8 September 1944, the 317th Infantry continued preparations for a river crossing, and actively patrolled the river line.

The 318th Infantry continued the attack on 8 September 1944 in the vicinity of MARBACHE and BELLEVILLE. Enemy sniper fire continued in MARBACHE the morning of 8 September 1944. At 1000 the enemy developed a strong counterattack that forced the withdrawal of two companies of the 3d Bn 318th Infantry to the high ground north of MARBACHE.

The 2d Bn, clearing FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE, met determined enemy resistance. Two enemy tanks tried to overrun "E" Company at 0750, but withdrew under heavy artillery fire. This Battalion was engaged in heavy fighting throughout the day, and by 1700, "G" Company reported the destruction of three enemy tanks. Both the 2d and 3d Bns dug in for the night.

The 319th Infantry continued to hold the bridgehead east of TOUL on 8 September 1944.

At 0935, the 1st Bn 319th Infantry moved from BOIS DE LIVERDUN to the east to relieve the 2d Bn 318th Infantry from its position west of FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE. The enemy attacked from the vicinity of LIVERDUN at 1500 with infantry and armor. This attack was stopped, and a counterattack by the 1st Bn 319th Infantry reinforced by "F" Company and one section of the 610 Tank Destroyer Bn, forced the enemy from the high ground northwest of LIVERDUN. The attack was preceded by a ten minute artillery concentration from two batteries of Corps Artillery 155 MM guns and the fire of the Cannon Company.

The 2d Bn 319th Infantry continued to outpost the river line from the southwest edge of BOIS DE LIVERDUN to the vicinity north of GONDREVILLE. The 3d Bn continued to hold the bridgehead east of TOUL.

Preparations for the river crossing were continued by the 317th Infantry on 9 September 1944.

The 318th Infantry continued mopping-up operations in the vicinity of MARBACHE and BELLEVILLE. The 1st Bn, having been released from attachment to CCA 4th Armored Division the previous day, closed into an assemble area in the BOIS DE LA COTE-EN-HAYE near the Regimental CP at 0400, 9 September 1944.

At 0600, 9 September 1944, the Anti-Tank Platoon of the 318th Infantry heard enemy troops moving about in the vicinity of the west edge of FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE, north

of LIVERDUN. Two concentrations of artillery were fired into this area and one enemy tank was flushed thus forcing the enemy foot troops to withdraw. These troops were observed moving south towards LIVERDUN.

A plan of attack for the 2d Bn 318th Infantry was developed with Companies "C" and "F" of 319th Infantry supporting. This Battalion was to move south through FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE, clearing the enemy from the woods as far as the river. The 3d Bn 318th Infantry was to move on BELLEVILLE and MARBACHE, clearing the FORET DITE ENTRE-DEUX VOIES north of MARBACHE.

By 1730, 9 September 1944, BELLEVILLE was cleared of the enemy, and at 1940, patrols of the 3d Bn were again entering MARBACHE. The enemy had withdrawn his main force through the woods to the south into the vicinity of POMPEY.

"A" Company 319th Infantry, holding the high ground northwest of LIVERDUN, was to attack that town immediately after the bridges near LIVERDUN had been bombed by the XIX Tactical Air Command. When the air support did not arrive, Company "A" was ordered to attack at 1745. The northern part of LIVERDUN was captured by 2100 and positions were consolidated for the night. It was planned to resume the attack in the morning to clean out the remainder of the town.

The 2d Bn 319th Infantry (minus "F" Company, attached to 1st Bn) continued to outpost the river line between the BOIS DE LIVERDUN and GONDREVILLE along the MOSELLE RIVER. The 3d Bn continued to hold the MOSELLE RIVER bridgehead east of TOUL.

Air support from the XIX Tactical Air Command was given the 3d Bn, resulting in the bombing of FORET DE HAYE to the front of the Battalion.

The 317th Infantry continued extensive preparations for a river crossing. The 1st Bn moved from a position north of JEZAINVILLE to the FORET DE PUVENELLE, northwest of JEZAINVILLE, on 10 September 1944. The 3d Bn moved from the vicinity of PONT-A-MOUSSON to the eastern edge of BOIS LE PRETRE. The 2d Bn moved from FORET DE PUVENELLE northwards to the southern edge of BOIS LE PRETRE. These movements to the woods were effected to help conceal troop concentrations in connection with the planned river crossing. Companies "B" and "K" maintained patrols along the river front.

The 318th Infantry continued to mop up FORET DITE ENTRE-DEUX VOIES and FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE. "F" Company was relieved by "A" Company in patrolling the river line between MARBACHE and POMPEY. The 2d Bn moved from FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE to the BOIS DE LA COTE-EN-HAYE and closed into the concentration area at 1410.

The 3d Bn, clearing the FORET DITE ENTRE-DEUX VOIES between BELLEVILLE and MARBACHE, moved to the BOIS DE LA COTE-EN-HAYE, closing into the concentration area at 1530. The 1st Bn remained in the woods west of BELLEVILLE.

This movement of the 318th Infantry was the beginning of preparations for a crossing of the MOSELLE RIVER.

During the attack of the 318th Infantry on HILL 326, FORET DE L'AVANT GARDE, and the towns of BELLEVILLE and MARBACHE, the 314th Field Artillery Bn in direct support of the 318th Infantry, fired a total of 2542 rounds of ammunition.

The 319th Infantry maintained outposts along the MOSELLE RIVER from POMPEY to GONDREVILLE. Company "A" resumed the attack from the northern part of LIVERDUN at 0700 and by 1130, with the exception of a few snipers, the enemy was cleared from the town.

The 3d Bn, in position before GONDREVILLE and VILLEY LE SEC, attacked both these towns. Elements of Company "L" were in GONDREVILLE at 1100, and found the enemy had withdrawn most of his troops the previous night. Companies "I" and "K" moved on the town and fort of VILLEY LE SEC at 1240, and by 1600 that day both objectives were being rapidly cleared of the enemy. Positions were consolidated, and patrols were sent to the east towards the FORET DE HAYE, west of NANCY.

The Division completed its preparations on 11 September 1944 for a river crossing of the MOSELLE RIVER at DIEULOUARD.

The 319th Infantry prepared to attack the FORET DE HAYE and NANCY. Reconnaissance in force was made to the edge of FORET DE HAYE, north to FONTENOY, and then southwest along the MOSELLE RIVER back to GONDREVILLE. One squad on patrol east of VILLE LE SEC knocked out four enemy machine-guns.

The 2d Bn 319th Infantry relieved the 1st Bn of outposting the river front from POMPEY to GONDREVILLE. The 1st

Bn reverted to Regimental Reserve.

Field Order Number 11 issued at 1700, 11 September 1944 directed the Division (Reinforced) (less 319th Infantry and 1st Bn 318th Infantry) to attack at 0400, 12 September 1944, force a crossing of the MOSELLE RIVER in the vicinity of DIEULOUARD, and establish a bridgehead from PONT-A-MOUSSON south to MILLERY.

An estimated 5,000 - 6,000 enemy combat troops with a high percentage of automatic weapons and unknown quantity of artillery, were facing the Division from the eastern bank of the MOSELLE RIVER.

The general plan provided for the XII Corps to cross the MOSELLE RIVER and continue the advance to the east. The 80th Division was to secure a bridgehead in the vicinity of DIEULOUARD, and expand it to the north and south.

The 35th United States Infantry Division was to envelop NANCY from the south and east and then move north to meet the 80th Division. The 4th Armored Division was to envelop the enemy's flank and seize LUNEVILLE and VIC-SUR-SEILLE.

The XX Corps, on the 80th Division left, was to advance to the east with the XII Corps.

Attachments to the Division at this time were: 610th Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed), 633d AAA AW (Mbl) Bn, 702d Tank Battalion and one platoon of the 60th Field Hospital.

Supporting units were: 404th Field Artillery Group, 1117th Engineer Group and the 2d Platoon of the 613th Clearing Company.

The 317th Infantry was to seize the high ground across the river east of DIEULOUARD with the 318th Infantry (minus 1st Bn) crossing later and moving north to the high ground east of PONT-A-MOUSSON. The 1117th Engineer Group was to support the bridging operations.

American fighter bombers from the XIX Tactical Air Command bombed MOUSSON HILL at 1715.

To prevent disclosure of the crossing, all movement of troops and equipment to position for the attack was made after darkness. A minimum essential reconnaissance of the

river front and approaches to DIEULOUARD was carried out.

At 2110, the 2d Bn 317th Infantry started to move south from the BOIS LE PRETRE to a position just south of JEZAINVILLE and northwest of DIEULOUARD. The 3d Bn also started to move south from the BOIS LE PRETRE to a position just south of JEZAINVILLE and northwest of DIEULOUARD. The 3d Bn closed into the assembly area at 0100 and the 2d Bn at 0145, 12 September 1944. The 1st Bn, moving from a position north of JEZAINVILLE, in the FORET DE PUVENELLE, closed into the forward assembly area at 0300.