

Paris
UNIT: Co A 1st Bn 317th Inf Regt, 80th Inf Div

PERIOD: 11 Nov 1944

ACTION: LORRAINE Campaign (Crossing of the NIED River)

SOURCE: Sgt Benjamin Topolewski, then Pvt and machine gunner,
Pfc Everett M. Bailey, rifleman, acting squad leader at
time of the action.

PLACE AND DATE OF INTERVIEWER: ST AVOLD, FRANCE, Co A CP,
16 Dec 1944.

INTERVIEWER: Lt S. J. Tobin

MAP: 1/50,000 - METZ - Sheet No 34-13, GSGS No 4471.

Note: These men seemed to be still shaken and hazy as to their
experience at HAN sur NIED.

At about 1230 the infantry started from the second patch of woods which was about 600 yards from the bridge. After the leading units had gone about 200 yards the enemy opened up on the men with everything. The men were in the open field where there was practically no cover. Up ahead about 50 yards or so Sgt Topolewski saw Capt Craig at (041447) peppering the men up to get down to the bridge. The Capt was in the open and standing on the road. Every time the enemy would fire a burst of 20mm the men would hit the ground and had to be encouraged to start again.

The Germans had MGs emplaced on the other side of the river at (053446) and at (053438). These placed crossfire on the advancing infantry. The men from A Co pushed thru this on down to the railroad embankment. Many were hit along the way. At (045443) Pfc George Swanson, one of the men from the weapons platoon, wounded and captured a German who had either been in a fox-hole on the west side of the river or had been driven away from the bridge. The MG which gave the most trouble was located on the forward slope of the high ground NE of the town and about 500 yards north of the first house on the left side of the road. After crossing the bridge, a few Krauts who were along the railroad embankment on the west side of the river, were taken prisoner just before Capt Craig and his group crossed the bridge.

Sgt Topolewski was with Capt Craig and the first group that rushed across the bridge. They took cover in a ditch along the road and in back of the first house on the right. Sgt Topolewski and a

few of the other men went into the house. A German MG was zeroed in on the entrance to the first building and the MG section was held in the house for some time. Meanwhile Capt Craig with six other men had moved down to the next building about 50 yards down the road on the left. After about an hour and a half Sgt Topolewski and the others who were in the first building were able to join Capt Craig in the other house. There the Capt checked their ammunition and equipment and posted them in defensive positions. After they had been in the house about two hours other men started coming across. Men from the weapons platoon of Co A who were among the first to cross the bridge were Sgt Winifred Martin, Pfc George Swanson, Pfc Lewy Snellgroves and Benjamin Topolewski who was a private at that time.

When the attack jumped off to take the bridge Pfc Bailey, 2d platoon Co A, was crawling down a tank track which was the only place any cover was available. The Germans were firing with everything they had; AA, tanks and MGs. After he had gone about 150 yards down the track he heard Capt Craig shout "Lets go". He jumped up and crossed the road to the right and followed Capt Craig and his group across the bridge. As they crossed the bridge Bailey remembered seeing only one tank which was in the center of the bridge. He saw several piles of explosives on the bridge as he crossed and said that he ran faster than he knew how. He went with the group to the first house on the right and took cover in the ditch when an enemy MG opened up on the house. When Capt Craig rushed for the house on the left he and several others went with him. He ran in the house on the left side of the road and went upstairs. From the upstairs window he spotted some Jerries in a trench about 50 yards from the house. In a few minutes he was joined by a BAR man by the name of Nye. He remained in the upstairs room during the afternoon sniping at the German positions on the hill and keeping the enemy in the trench pinned down. Just before dark eight Germans ran out of the trench and were mowed down by the MGs of a tank which had moved up along side of the building.