

Co A cont

Early the following morning the en counterattacked from ST GENEVIEVE with infantry and tanks. The men recalled the details with clarity and their versions dovetailed.

At 0330 Sgt Murray sent Polin, Szywansky, and Reidenbach to lay on the embankment and watch. For about an hour the en artillery shot over the tanks. It seemed that the mortar was attracting the fire. Between 0500 and 0600 red, green, and white flares were seen. From the embankment were seen approaching tanks loudly. The men on watch along the embankment flattened. One returned to Capt McDermott to give the alarm.

At this time Dunsavage was on turret guard of one of the tanks. He heard an en tank approaching. All the men agreed that the motor was not heard. What was heard were the steel tracks and the breaks when the en vehicle stopped to fire. It was still too dark to see much. The en infantry started to shout. Apparently they had just discovered the tanks. Dunsavage grabbed the 30 cal AA gun and swung it around in the direction of the voices. The en tank let go and placed a couple of shots in Polin's tank which was guarding the rear of the platoon from the direction of ST GENEVIEVE. Dunsavage then hopped on the gunner's seat, flipped the power traverse, and tried to traverse the turret to the left. The tank was facing in the direction of BEZAUMONT. However the turret started sparking because of a short circuit. He then tried the manual traverse and hollered to the driver to take off. The tank would not start at first. Meanwhile Dunsavage thought that his tank had been hit because of the reflection from Polin's burning tank. Finally the driver got the tank going on the road to BEZAUMONT. The dust caused by Dunsavage's tank to some extent screened the other tanks and enabled them to make a safe getaway. The other tanks had highballed it down the road through BEZAUMONT down the hill where reorganization took place.

It is worthy of note that Lt Croxton's Platoon located a few hundred yards NW of Murray's tanks failed to hear the enemy. Lt Croxton stated that they did hear vehicles but thought them to be friendly. During the early morning infantrymen from Co G were forced back from ST GENEVIEVE and passed through Croxton's platoon toward the bridge. The infantrymen looked badly beaten up and claimed that they were trying to form a line. However they showed little inclination to remain with the tanks. Later Lt Croxton heard sounds which seemed like tanks closing. The noise came from area where he had placed the other two tanks. He didn't dare use the radio. He called several times. No answer.

The next morning the company reformed at the bottom of Hill 380. Capt McDermott decided to bring the company up the hill to the BEZAUMONT-ST GENEVIEVE road, wheel to the right across the road, and effect a turning movement on the town of BEZAUMONT.

The tanks proceeded up the hill to the road and stopped. The infantry had had not followed the tanks. The tanks went on alone.

Lt Croxton took his platoon across the road and commenced to swing sharply to the right, in the direction of BEZAUMONT. Murray's platoon was to take the right of the road but instead went to the left staggered behind Croxton's platoon. An en tank appeared to be in position beside a barn in BEZAUMONT. Some en fire seemed to come from a high wall of a graveyard to the left of the town. Croxton's tank was nearest the hedgerow and the road. Talin, Deem, and Grattup to Croxton's left in that order. Croxton hugged the hedgerow. A shell passed over his head and hit Reidenbach's tank farther up the hill. It was possible to spot the dust raised by the muzzle blast of a stationary tank in the town. The whole company began pouring stuff into the town. In the meantime Starner and Williams had taken the right of the road near the ruins and fired fourteen rounds apiece into BEZAUMONT. At the same time that Reidenbach received his hit, Capt McDermott and Talin were also hit. Reidenbach's crew bailed out. Lt Croxton backed his tank up in an attempt to get the men

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on the back of his tank. He was waved aside. Apparently they saw the source of the en fire. Croxton then tried to manoeuvre so as to protect the crew. Finally all the crews were safely carried to the other side of the embankment where reorganization took place.

During the morning the sunlight had been blinding, and had interfered with the observation of the men.

Lt Croxton believed that he saw smoke from the stationary tank in the town after he had placed 1 AP and 2 HE in that direction.

After the reorganization the infantrymen started pushing up the hill. The German infantry took off.

Census: 3 Co A tanks out, 7 en tanks sighted, 6 destroyed.

The night of the 13th Lt Croxton took his platoon of 4 tanks to ST GENEVIEVE. The intention was to employ the tanks for purpose of morale. However two tanks were placed as listening posts towards LOISY and two covered the approaches to the town from NE. The other two platoons did the same for other battalions.

On the second morning the 1st Bn attacked through LANDREMONT toward BELLEAU. At noon, 14th, Lt Croxton took his platoon to help the infantry attack through LANDREMONT. The infantry had sent a man to get the tank platoon. Croxton was merely told that the infantry needed tanks. He tried to find Major Burnett of the 1st Bn, 317th, but was unable to locate him. At 1300 he found the infantry pinned down by machine gun fire from the town. Apparently there was some infantry east of the town, and the tanks were ordered to fire only when infantry officers pointed definite targets.

Then an infantry officer ran up and said that his men along the creek to the right of the road were pinned down by machine gun fire. However the tanks were cramped within a narrow region. Canalized by ST GENEVIEVE Hill on the left and the creek on the right, the tanks were forced to work down the road in columnar formation. The two leading sprayed the area with machine gun fire. Croxton sighted a pillbox and placed three shots in it.

The infantry then claimed that the ~~infantry~~ tanks were firing on their own men. The tanks then passed through the infantry and tried to deploy to the right of the road. All along this road the tanks were vulnerable to observation and fire from MT TOULON AND MT ST JEAN.

Croxton's turret gun had hit a tree along the road and the traversing gear had broken. However the platoon continued to deploy as four tanks.

The platoon followed the road to BELLEAU. There they crossed the bridge and deployed in a field just beyond. The infantry were at least one mile behind, and Lt Croxton had not been told the infantry objective. Deciding to save the platoon, Croxton recrossed the bridge and returned along the road in column.

On the night of the 15th 3 companies, G, H, I were pinned in a draw on hill S of VILLE AU VAL. A colonel decided to load ammunition on the tanks and take the tanks up the hill. The tanks proceeded along the North edge of a wood (810-273). They were in columnar formation. An infantry company was met attempting to retreat in an organized fashion. The suddenly hell broke loose on the tanks. There were only three tanks, 1st Platoon under Lt Atkins. Two tanks equipped with flat block tracks were stuck in the mud. Williams' tank with chevron tracks was able to keep going. The ground was slippery. The Col said to dismount. The en was shooting airbursts with mortars. Williams pulled up in the woods. The col was shooting machine gun trying to cover the tanks mired in the open. Then about 200 yards to the east a German started opening up with a machine gun. Lt Atkins tank turned over. Starner and Williams were able to pull back. The crew of Lt Atkins' tank was saved.

And a tank was saved.

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Starner and Williams got their tanks up the hill through the forest to the CP. When it was dark they went to the top on foot to reconnoiter to find a place for the tanks. At 0200, 16th, got the tanks up to the top. The infantry was not there. Many dead Germans were around. Apparently the infantry had withdrawn.