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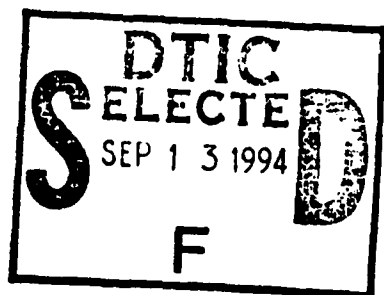



ANTI-ARMOR DEFENSE DATA STUDY
(A2D2)

DRAFT FINAL REPORT
II -- US ANTI-TANK DEFENSE AT MORTAIN, FRANCE (AUGUS



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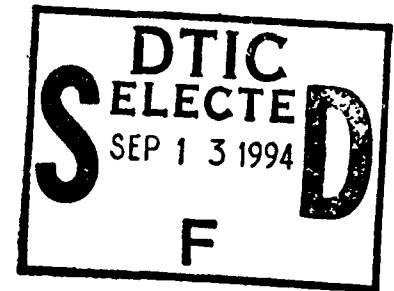
ANTI-ARMOR DEFENSE DATA STUDY
(A2D2)

DRAFT FINAL REPORT
VOLUME II -- US ANTI-TANK DEFENSE AT MORTAIN, FRANCE (AUGUST, 1944)

MARCH 9, 1990

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PREPARED FOR
THE US ARMY CONCEPTS ANALYSIS AGENCY
UNDER
CONTRACT NUMBER MDA903-88-D-1000
DELIVERY ORDER 40

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INTRODUCTION

The information gathered and compiled in the following description was part of an effort performed for the US Army Concepts Analysis Agency under Contract MDA903-88-D-1000, Delivery Order Number 40. The objective of the effort was to collect detailed historical data on at least five combat actions where US forces were defending against enemy armor attacks. The data set will be used in a joint US/UK analysis of the degradation in anti-armor defense effectiveness under combat conditions. The resulting degradation factors will allow projections of the combat performance of future anti-armor defenses to be based upon a balanced combination of historical and instrumented field test data.

A complete description of the work performed by SAIC is found in Volume I, Technical Report. This Volume describes the result of the detailed data collection on the engagements at Mortain, France, during World War II. The engagements examined were Le Fantay, St. Barthelmy, and Abbaye Blanche. Fourteen combat actions were described from these engagements.

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CHAPTER 1

THE BATTLE OF MORTAIN

GENERAL BACKGROUND

For¹ nearly six weeks following the cross-channel attack, the Germans frustrated the Allies' efforts to expand their lodgement area. Finally, the American attack at St. Lo on July 25 ruptured the German lines. By the end of July 1944, US forces had opened a corridor 20 miles wide stretching from St. Lo south to Rennes. The 1st and 3d US Armies of the Twelfth Army Group pushed divisions through this corridor into southern France. From there, they could eventually circle into Brittany to the west, and move east to Paris. Lying within this corridor, approximately 30 miles to the south of St. Lo, the crucial road centers of Avranches and Villedieu were in American hands and provided the only supply route for units exploiting to the south.

For the Germans, the situation was critical. Aided by the defensive strength of the French bocage (hedgerows), the German Army had been able to hold its own in a static situation and confine the Americans and British to a narrow lodgement area for over six weeks following the landings at Normandy. But the breakout at St. Lo transformed this positional warfare into a war of maneuver. Largely horse-drawn, German units were ill-equipped to compete in mobile operations. Allied air superiority, exposing any daylight movement to air attack, further restricted German mobility and sapped morale. Finally, the hedgerow battles had caused a steady drain on men and equipment which Germany, after five years of war, could not replace. Disorganization and low morale plagued German units, particularly their infantry.

Believing that the narrow corridor offered an opportunity to reverse German fortunes, on 2 August Hitler ordered Field Marshal von Kluge (supreme commander of the Germans in France and the Low Countries) to plan a counterattack aimed at

¹ The following narrative is a compilation of various official records and published sources, including the US Army's official history of the Normandy campaign, Breakout and Pursuit by Martin Blumenson; the 30th Infantry Division's history Work Horse of the Western Front - The Story of the 30th Infantry Division by Robert L. Hewitt; numerous unit records and monographs, both American and German; and several secondary sources published in English, German, or French. The Bibliography at Appendix A provides a complete list of sources.

retaking Avranches (see Figure 1). For this counterattack, the German High Command committed four Panzer Divisions of the XLVII Panzer Corps. These were the 1st SS-Panzer Division ("Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler"), 2d Panzer Division, 2d SS-Panzer Division ("Das Reich") supported by remnants of the 17th SS-Panzer Grenadier Division ("Goetz von Berlichingen"), and the 116th Panzer Division ("Windhund"). Together, these units had 120 to 190 tanks. The Germans codenamed the attack "Operation Luettich," Luettich being the German name for the Belgian city of Liege.

The German plan of attack was twofold. First, they were to move west, approximately 20 miles, following roads to the north and south of the See' River to Avranches. With this maneuver, the Germans hoped to reestablish defensive lines along the See' River facing the north, while at the same time cutting off 1st and 3rd Armies' supply routes and effectively separating the two Armies. A supporting objective of the German counterattack was the tactically crucial Hill 314 located just to the east of the town of Mortain. Hill 314 would provide the Germans with unobstructed observation of all US movement south of the See' River, while at the same time the US would be denied the unexcelled eastward observation which the hill afforded.

Von Kluge viewed this counterattack as an opportunity to reestablish a German defensive line. He believed this line could at best allow the Germans to restore a fixed defense and at worst permit a controlled withdrawal of the beleaguered German forces from Normandy, and he planned accordingly. There was only a week to bring any available forces into position, and von Kluge set the time of the attack for the early morning hours of 7 August. But on 6 August, a few hours before the attack was scheduled to begin, Generaloberst Alfred Jodl (one of Hitler's top aides) telephoned von Kluge and informed him that Hitler, hoping to push the Allies into the sea with a more ambitious offensive, intended to make available an additional 140 tanks and a division of armored vehicles for the attack in order to launch a major offensive aimed at isolating and destroying US forces south of Avranches. Von Kluge had not planned such a major operation, and believed it could not succeed. In von Kluge's view the rapidly deteriorating tactical situation did not allow time to assemble more forces, and he was able to convince Hitler that speed was paramount.

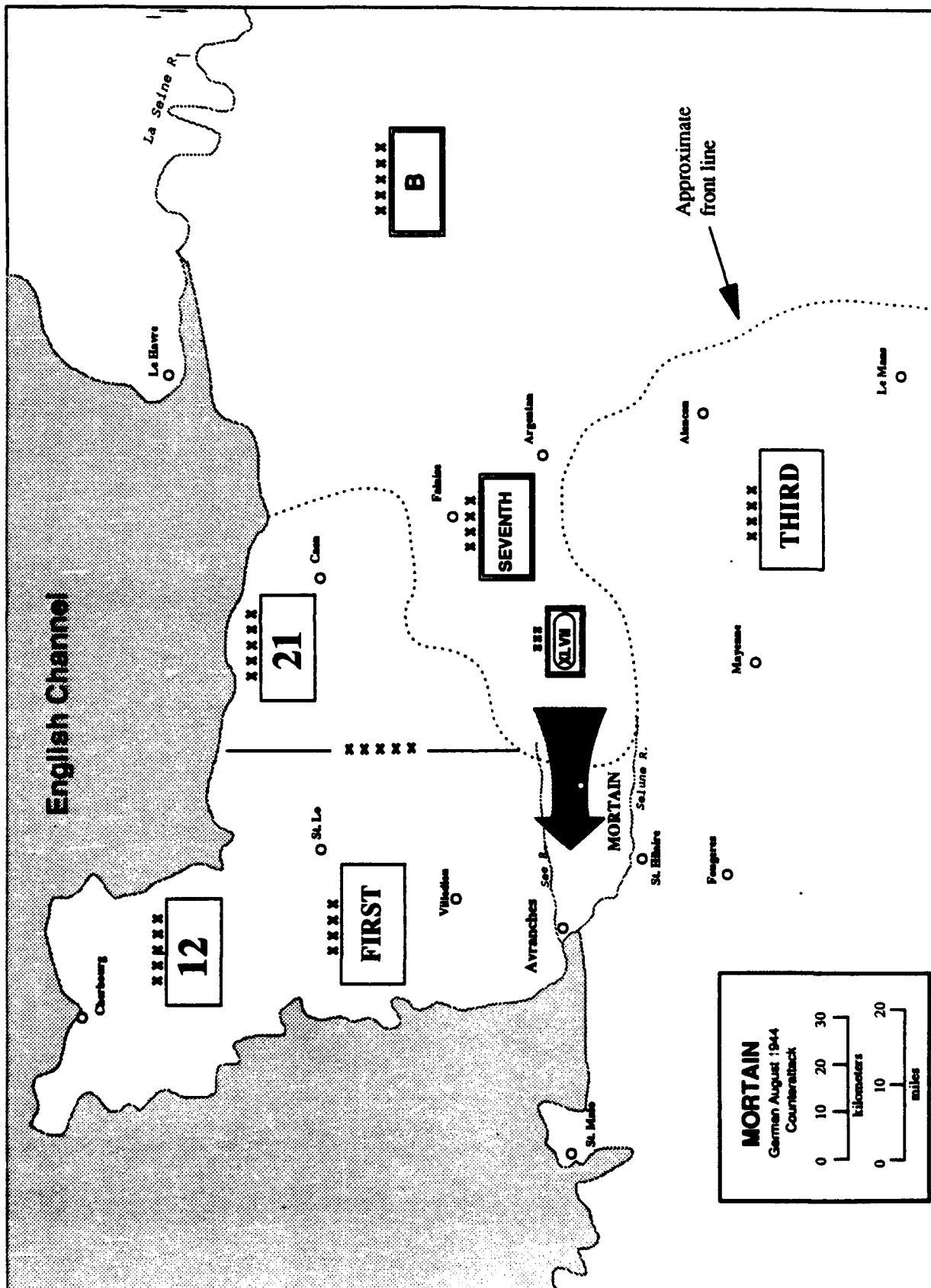


Figure 1

So, under Hitler's scrutiny, von Kluge launched the understrength, hastily prepared counterattack in the early morning hours of 7 August with the goal of advancing west along the See' River to Avranches, while taking Hill 314 at Mortain. The fact that the 1st SSPzD was still about 12 miles west of its planned assembly area at the time scheduled for the attack underscores the disarray of German preparations.

US FORCES IN THE MORTAIN AREA

On the morning of 6 August the US 30th Infantry Division, attached to VII Corps, 1st Army, moved to Mortain where it relieved the 1st Infantry Division. The 30th ID was composed of three infantry regiments (the 117th, 119th, and the 120th), division artillery, and other supporting elements. Attachments to the Division included the 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion (Towed), 743d Tank Battalion, and 531st Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion. Upon arriving in the Mortain area during the evening of 6 August, the 117th Inf Regt occupied positions held by the 26th Inf Regt in St. Barthelmy; the 120th Inf Regt moved into Mortain and positions on Hill 314 relieving the 18th Inf Regt; and the 119th Inf Regt went into reserve about 5km west of Juvigny.

For the most part, the 30th ID simply occupied the 1st ID's defensive positions and had no opportunity to develop its own defensive arrangements. The 1st ID had prepared hasty positions, expecting only to pause before continuing to advance, and the deficiencies of these defenses would hamper the 30th ID's effort to hold Mortain. Traffic snarls delayed the movement of the division to Mortain, and the Division Commander, Major General Hobbs, did not assume command of the sector until 2000 hrs -- only 4 hours before the scheduled German attack. At unit level the situation was often worse. The last elements of the supporting 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion moved into position between 0200 hrs and 0430 hrs, in darkness and only three hours before the German attack. Under these circumstances, it was impossible to prepare proper defensive positions. Available intelligence information suggested that the Germans had only light cavalry forces east of Mortain, and if there was to be any attack, it would probably come from the northeast.

THE INITIAL GERMAN THRUST

The Germans attacked Mortain shortly after midnight, 7 August 1944. They organized a three pronged attack consisting of four German divisions (see Figure 2a), designed to capture Hill 314 east of Mortain and to break through to Avranches. The 2d PzD was at the center of the attack, striking west through St. Barthelmy. The 2d SSPzD was south of the 2d PzD with the mission of attacking west through Mortain. To the north, the 116th PzD was to move west along the north of See' River, protecting the right flank of the operation. (The expected support from the 116th PzD never materialized, and did not play a role in the battle.) The 1st SSPzD, in reserve, was to be used as an exploitation force to capture Avranches.

The 2d PzD attacked in two columns (see Figure 2b). The southern-most column, consisting of 2d PzD tanks and troops, plus one panzer battalion of the 1st SSPzD and the consolidated 17th SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment, attacked St. Barthelmy where they encountered stiff resistance from the 1st Bn, 117th Inf Regt who were occupying positions in the town and to the west along the Juvigny road. After suffering heavy casualties and severe tank losses (30 reported damaged or destroyed), the remnants of the southern column ground to a halt just west of Juvigny. The northern column of the 2d PzD moved west, north of the 1/117th, and onward to le Mesnil Tove where they encountered elements of the 39th Inf Regt of the 9th Infantry Division. They continued westward and stopped about 1km west of le Mesnil-Adelee, within observation of 1st Bn, 119th Inf Regt.

The 2d SSPzD, responsible for taking Mortain and Hill 314, also attacked in two columns. 2d SSPzD initiated its attack by conducting a pincer movement: the northern-most column moved south through the town of Mortain while the southern column came northward through Foret de Mortain and around Hill 314. Second Bn, 120th Inf Regt met the German advance with fierce resistance. As part of the forces guarding the southern flank, the 3d platoon, A Company, 823d TD Bn became a harbinger of the fate of other 823d units. Unprotected by American infantry, the 3d platoon drove off the first dawn attack by German infantry, but the Germans subsequently surrounded the tank destroyer men and drove them from their guns with heavy losses. Eventually, the Germans were able to clear the

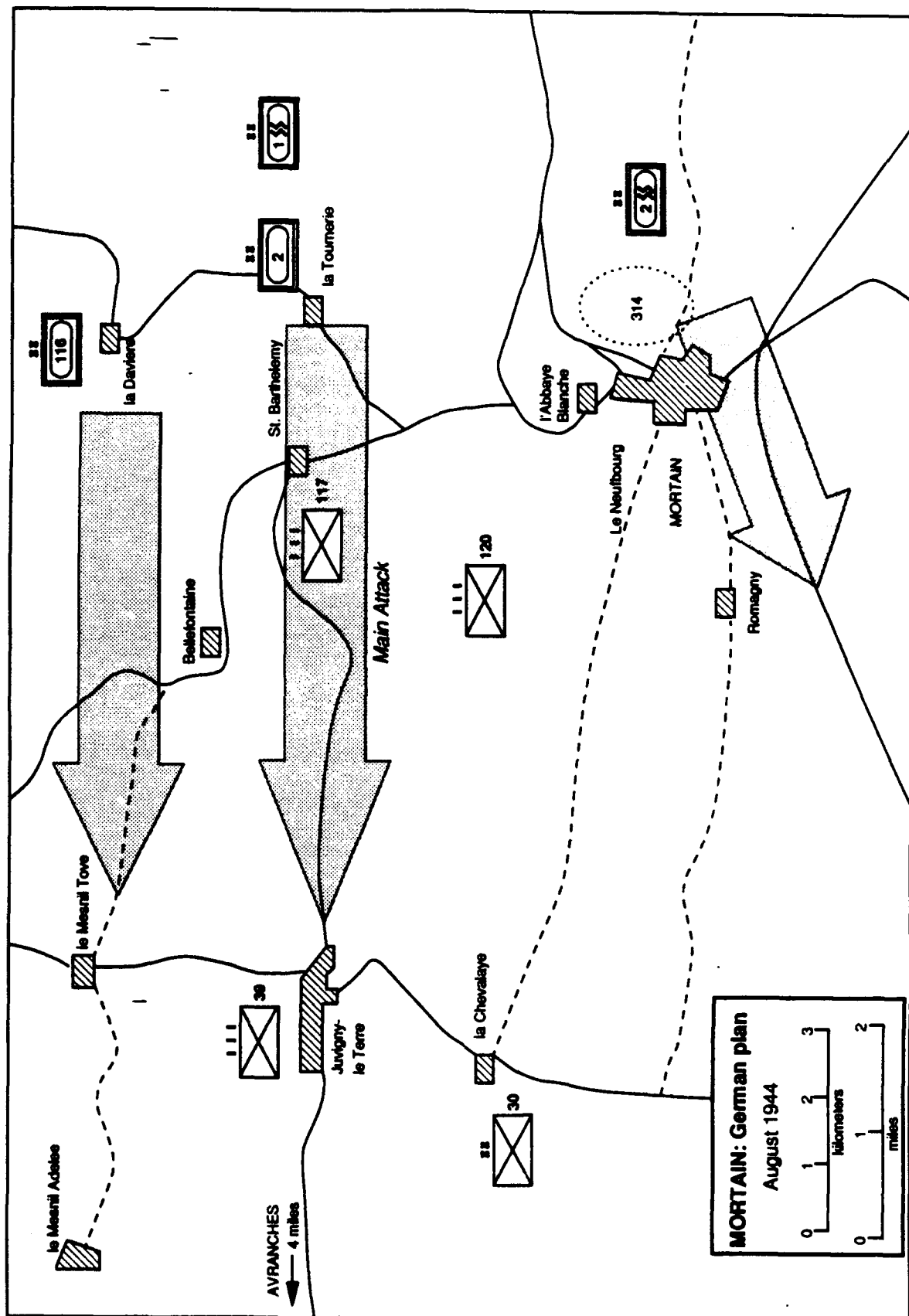


Figure 2a

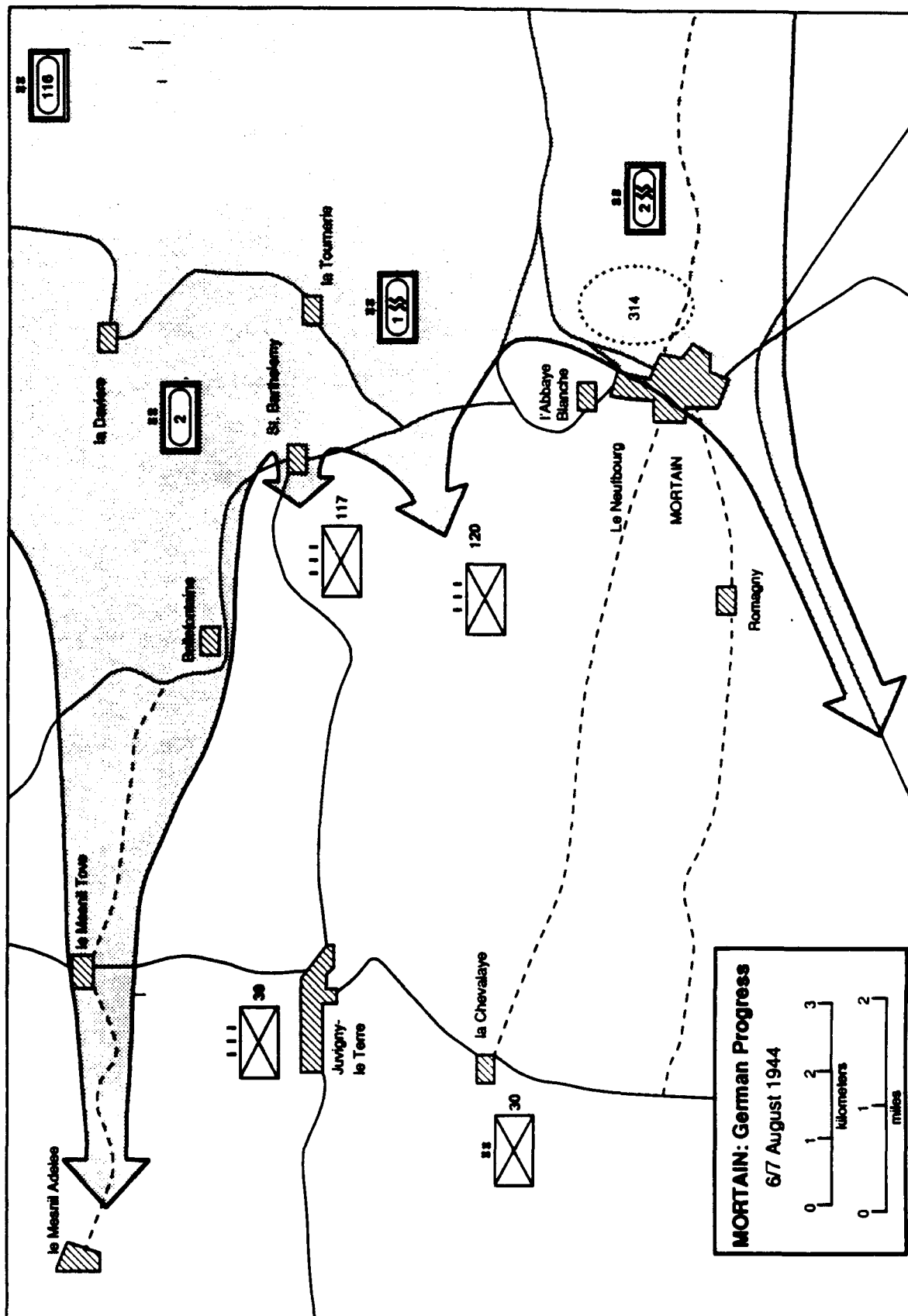


Figure 2b

city of Mortain, but they were unable to push elements of 2/120th off of the tactically critical Hill 314, and they could not eliminate the roadblock to the north of Mortain at Abbaye-Blanche. Elements of 2d SSPzD continued on to the southwest before stopping roughly halfway between Mortain and St. Hilaire.

By about noon of 7 August, the German counterattack designed to retake Avranches bogged down over ten miles away from its objective with heavy losses of men and tanks. As Figure 2b illustrates, the Germans' main attack made little progress while the secondary efforts achieved deep, but ultimately indecisive penetrations - a foreshadowing of the German offensive four months later in the Ardennes. The 30th ID, for its part, had also suffered heavy losses during the morning hours of 7 August but, against heavy odds, had succeeded in halting the German attack. Though St. Barthelmy and Mortain had been overrun, the US still held Hill 314 from where they were able to maintain constant observation of German movements and adjust artillery fire on them, multiplying their losses. In addition, the American defense at Abbaye Blanche defeated the German thrust around the north side of Hill 314 and subsequently damaged German forces attempting to move north to reinforce the main attack at St. Barthelmy.

The weather conditions during the Mortain Counterattack initially favored the German attacking forces. Darkness and heavy fog in the morning hours concealed the German advance until they were nearly on top of the American positions. But as the fog lifted, clear observation favored the defense since fire was more accurate, artillery could be more accurately adjusted, and the overwhelmingly superior air power of the US forces could come into play.

Both US and German records from the Mortain counterattack credit Allied air power with playing an important role in the outcome of the battle. Reports go so far as to say that none of the 300 planes promised by the Luftwaffe as air support for the counterattack managed to get beyond their own airfields. Throughout the battle, in addition to removing the threat of German air support, Allied air support damaged or destroyed numerous German tanks and armored vehicles, about 30 near St. Barthelmy alone.

CHAPTER 2

THE ST. BARTHELMY ENGAGEMENT

The southern column of the 2d PzD supported by a battalion of tanks from the 1st SSPzD and a weak regiment of the 17th SSPzGD attacked the village of St. Barthelmy, located approximately 4km north of Mortain (see Figure 3). The Germans intended that this force should drive through St. Barthelmy and westward through Juvigny, clearing the way for the 1st SSPzD which was to exploit and capture Avranches.

1st Bn, 117th Inf Regt, supported by B Co., 823d TD Bn defended St. Barthelmy. A and C Companies of the 1/117th held positions in the town itself, while B Co., 117th was positioned approximately 800 meters to the northwest. The guns of B Co., 823d, guarded key avenues of approach.

The Germans first struck shortly after midnight on the morning of 7 August, and aimed at a roadblock (Action 1) established about 1km north of St. Barthelmy along the main road leading into the town from the north. Elements of 3d Plt, B Co., 117th Inf Regt, consisting of half a platoon of troops, two heavy machine guns, a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) team, two bazookas, and two 57mm guns (accounts of the exact composition of the roadblock vary) manned the roadblock. The Germans attacked with 2 to 4 tanks plus supporting infantry. US troops engaged one of the tanks with 10 to 15 rounds from one of the 57mm guns before the gun was knocked out. Eventually, the German force proved too great for the defending US troops who withdrew to secondary defensive lines. Though successful, the Germans did not attempt to exploit their success but, instead, remained in the vicinity of the roadblock for several hours (possibly having received word that other divisions in the attack had postponed operations for a few hours pending the arrival of the delayed 1st SSPzD).

The Germans' next move came from the south at about 0315. A small roadblock located approximately 2km to the south of St. Barthelmy along the road connecting St. Barthelmy and Mortain fell quickly. By 0545, the Germans fanned out and attacked the town from the south and east. Because of the heavy fog, the Germans had the advantage in the attack. US defenders could only fire at the

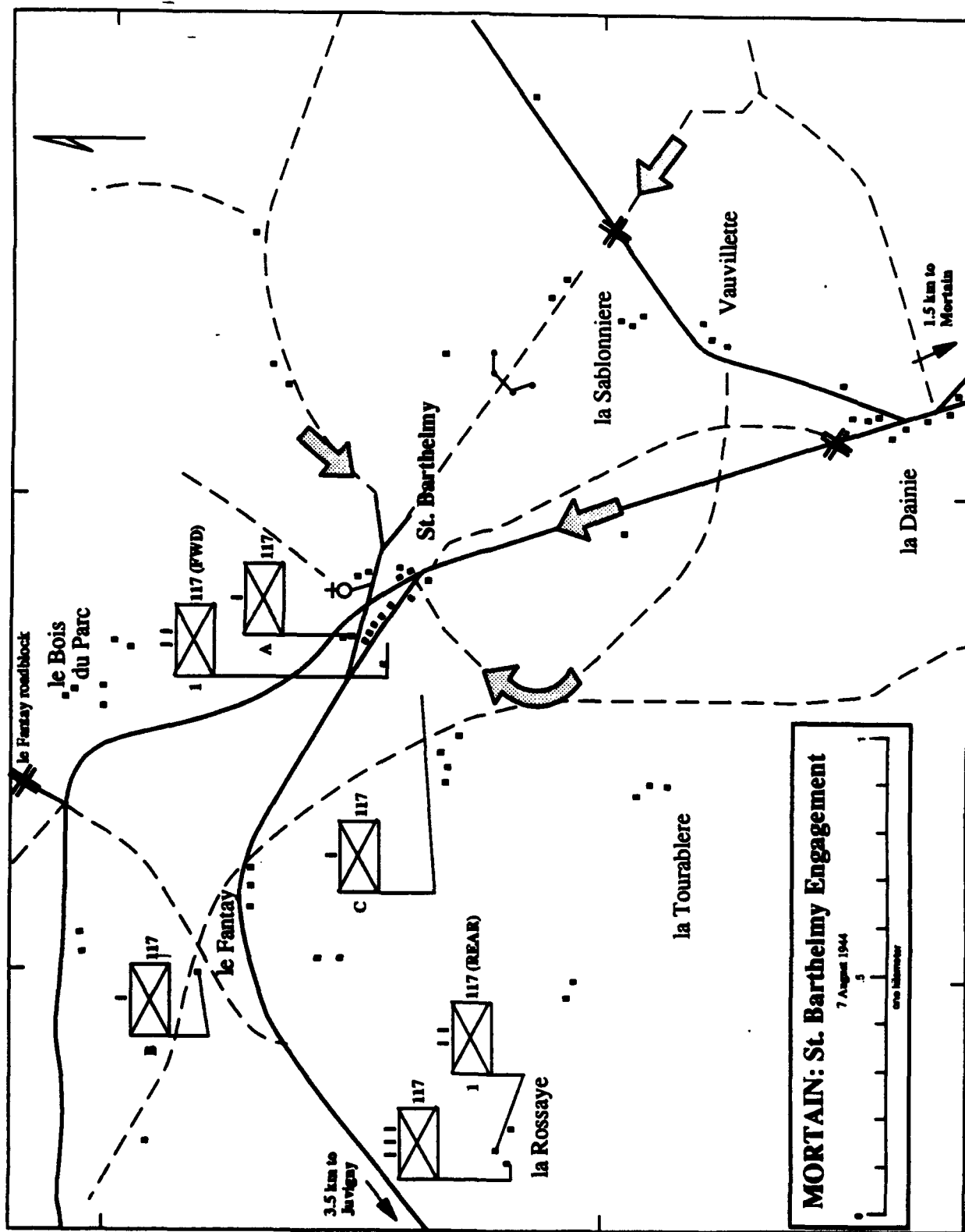


Figure 3

muzzle flashes of the German tanks. Third platoon, B Co., 823d, led by Lt. George Greene, was the most advanced Tank Destroyer unit, located in the town (Actions 2 through 7). The platoon moved into position at 0200 hrs, only a few hours before the Germans struck. During the engagement, the Germans overran the platoon, damaging or destroying all of the platoon's guns. However, the platoon destroyed at least six German tanks before being overrun and, more importantly, cost time.

At 0930 hrs², the fighting was still fierce with heavy losses mounting on both sides. 1Lt Neel, Plt Leader of 1st Plt, B Co., 823d TD Bn, responded to the need to reinforce anti-tank defense by ordering one of his 3" guns into a supporting position (Actions 9 and 10). This gun, located just outside of town (see Figure 4), succeeded in knocking out one German Mk V tank at a range of 15-20 meters, close enough for Neel to hear the German tank commander giving fire commands to his gunner. After the first shot, the very heavy small arms fire and hand grenades forced the gun crew to abandon the gun after removing its firing pin. Neel and the crew withdrew cross-country to 1st Plt's position along the Juvigny road to obtain another gun, which Neel brought into position overwatching the Juvigny road about 1km west of St. Barthelmy.

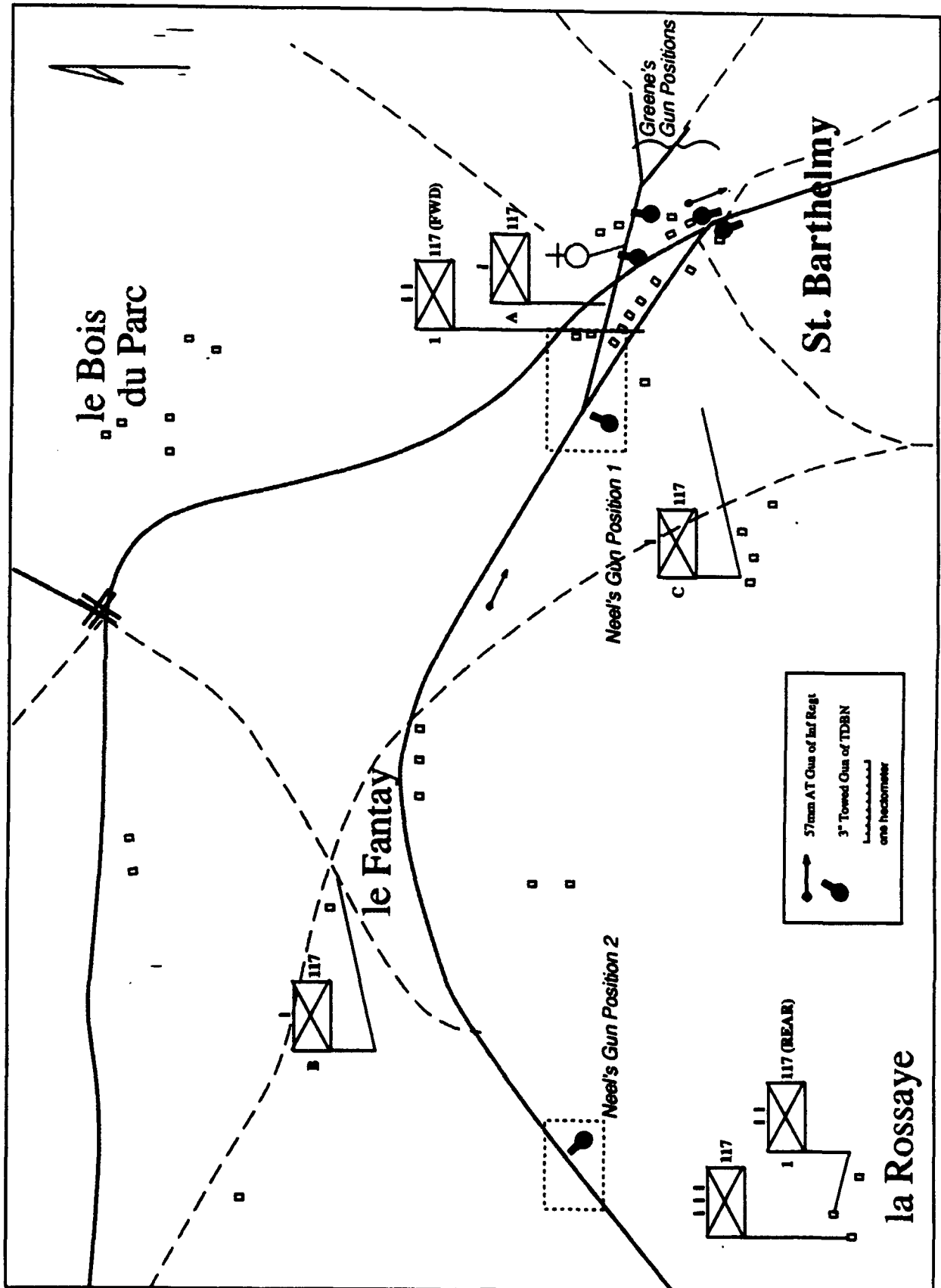
This second 3" gun, occupying a covered position along the St. Barthelmy-Juvigny Road, quickly accounted for one German tank (possibly a Mark VI, but probably a Mark V) as the Germans proceeded west. Shortly after this, an overwatching German tank fired an HE round at Neel's gun, forcing him and his

² Light data for the Mortain area on 6-7 August 1944 is as follows (Source: US Naval Observatory for 48° 40'N 00°55'W)

EENT (End Evening Nautical Twilight)	6 Aug	2057 UT (Universal Time)
BMNT (Beginning Morning Nautical Twilight)	7 Aug	0323 UT
Moonrise	6 Aug	2103 UT
Moonset	7 Aug	0655 UT

As far as can be determined, US forces in France used UT to simplify coordination with air force units in England, even though France is in a different time zone. However, allied forces used double daylight savings which advanced local times by two hours. Local times were as follows:

EENT	6 Aug	2257
BMNT	7 Aug	0523
Moonrise	6 Aug	2303
Moonset	7 Aug	0855



crew to withdraw a few yards to join friendly infantry in a position behind another hedgerow, leaving their gun behind.

The losses of both men and material were very heavy on both sides as a result of the fighting in St. Barthelmy. On the US side, 1st Bn, 117th Inf Regt lost approximately 350 troops during the morning hours. B Co., 823d TDBN lost all seven of its 3" guns involved in the action. As for the Germans, the unexpected stiff resistance at St. Barthelmy effectively crippled their attack. Reports place damage as high as 30 of the 50 German tanks damaged or destroyed in the attack at St. Barthelmy. Expecting to drive westward through Juvigny and on to Avranches, the Germans ground to a halt approximately 3km east of the town of Juvigny.

ACTIONS FROM THE ST. BARTHELMY ENGAGEMENT

From the engagement at St. Barthelmy during the first phase of the German counterattack (0001 - 1200 hrs, 7 Aug 44), historical records contain sufficient information to isolate, in detail, ten distinct actions. Each of these actions involved a US weapon or weapons system defending against German armor. Each action occurred within a distinct time period, and within a distinct geographical location.

Table 1 summarizes these actions. The first of these ten actions from St. Barthelmy involved two 57mm anti-tank guns, 2 bazookas, 2 heavy machine guns, a BAR team, and half a platoon of infantry positioned together forming a roadblock just north of St. Barthelmy. The roadblock was challenged shortly after midnight on 7 Aug by 2 to 4 German tanks with accompanying infantry. The second through seventh actions involved the four 3-inch guns of 3d Plt, B Co, 823d TD Bn defending St Barthelmy. The eighth action was the ambush of three German tanks by a small bazooka team from the 120th Infantry Regiment's Antitank Company. The last two actions involved 3-inch TD guns from 1st Plt, B Co, 823d TD Bn employed in the defense against German tanks advancing westward out of St. Barthelmy.

TABLE 1. ST. BARTHELMY ACTIONS

NUMBER	TITLE
1	The Roadblock at Le Fantay
2	Greene's first gun, 1st kill
3	Greene's first gun, 2nd kill
4	Greene's second gun, 1st kill
5	Greene's second gun, 2nd kill
6	Greene's third gun, 1st kill
7	Greene's third gun, 2nd kill
8	Sgt. Hardy's Patrol
9	Neel's first gun
10	Neel's second gun

ACTION 1

NAME: The Roadblock at Le Fantay

LOCATION: Approximately 700 meters north of St. Barthelmy along the primary north/south road.

After arriving in the early afternoon of 6 Aug, B Co., 1st Battalion, 117th Inf Regt, established a roadblock approximately 700 meters north of St. Barthelmy along the main road entering the town from the north. The roadblock included two 57mm anti-tank guns, 2 heavy machine guns, 1 BAR team, 2 bazookas, and half of 3rd Platoon (other sources give slight variations of the roadblock complement). The chronology of events leading up to the German assault on the roadblock was as follows:

- 6 Aug, 1645 hrs: 11 or 12 German infantry approach the roadblock, are fired upon, and withdraw.
- 2030 hrs: 3 German tracked vehicles approach, are fired upon, and withdraw. Soldiers at the roadblock hear tanks in the distance.
- 2200 hrs: Tanks move up the trail within gun range, but US troops do not fire for fear of exposing their positions.
- 2215 hrs: The platoon leader requests artillery to hit the tanks, but none began hitting the area until 0015 hours.

Shortly after midnight, 2 to 4 German tanks, accompanied by infantry, approached the roadblock again. US troops did open fire this time. Reports specify 15 rounds from 57mm guns being fired (10 AP and 5 HE, the latter probably being directed at the accompanying German infantry), but do not report any tank kills (which is not surprising considering the ineffectiveness of the 57mm gun against the frontal armor of heavy German tanks such as the Mark V). The German assault quickly knocked out one of the 57mm guns. Judging that the German infantry had succeeded in advancing too close to the roadblock, the roadblock commander, a Lt. Bookter, ordered a withdrawal. After abandoning the roadblock, US artillery adjusted fire on the position.

The Germans did not attempt to exploit their success at this point, but instead remained in the vicinity of the roadblock for several hours before proceeding with the attack. Possible explanations for the halt are: (1) the artillery barrage forced the halt, (2) the German advance halted until reinforcements from 1st SSPzD arrived, or (3) the unit attacking the roadblock had not received word that the division's attack was delayed due to the late arrival of 1st SSPzD, and attacked at the previously scheduled time (midnight). After attacking, they may have received orders to halt in position until the rest of the division was ready.

ACTION 1: THE ROADBLOCK AT LE FANTAY, 7 AUGUST 1944

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	---	Weapons were pointed northeast covering anticipated avenue of German approach	Folder #81
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	---	1/2 platoon (approx 35 men) of 3d Plt, B Co, 117 Inf Regt	Folder #81
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	1 company from 2. PzGren Regt, 2. PzD	---	Folder #102
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	---	a. None b. None c. Two c. Two	Folder #81
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	2 to 4 Mk V Panther tanks	---	Folder #81
6. US Tanks Present	---	None	Folder #81
7. Infantry Casualties	?	2 KIA, 2 WIA	File 81
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	Unknown number of hits; no vehicle casualties reported	---	Folder #81
9. Artillery	German mortar fore accompanied tank/infantry attack	Requested fire at 2215 hours; US arty on target at 0015 hrs (after battle)	Folder #81

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
10. Obstacles	US roadblock	None	Folder #81
11. Meteorological Data	Clear, moonlit night	Clear, moonlit night	Interview
12. Time of Day	Midnight	Midnight	Folder #81
13. Light and Visibility	Night	Night	Folder #81
14. Terrain	Road junction bounded by hedgerows on one side and orchard on the other	Road junction bounded by hedgerows on one side and orchard on the other	GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	300m	300m	GSGS 4347
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	?	10 57mm AP 5 57mm HE	Folder #81
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Infantry attack supported by tanks	---	Folder #81
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	---	Emplaced 12 hours before; roadblock not supported by other positions	Folder #81
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	---	German recon vehicles and tank noises encountered all afternoon and evening	Folder #81
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	German mortar barrage supported attack; no casualties reported	None	Folder #81
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	2-4 (unknown and variable)	---	Folder #81

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	Mk V Panther tank carried 79-82 main gun rounds (75mm), and 4100-4200 7.92mm MG rounds	Estimated that the 10-15 rounds fired were all that were on-hand.	German Tank and Antitank German Tanks of World War II

ACTIONS 2-7

NAME: Greene's Towed TD Platoon in St. Barthelmy

LOCATION: In the village of St. Barthelmy, France

Most of the information in this narrative was obtained in an interview with George Greene on 25 Jan 1990.

Primary responsibility for the defense of St. Barthelmy, laying astride the main axis of advance to the west along the St. Barthelmy-Juvigny road, belonged to the 1st Battalion, 117th Infantry Regiment. B Company of the 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion supported the 117th. The mission of 3d Platoon of B Co, commanded by Lt. George Greene, was to establish positions inside St. Barthelmy itself, protecting the main highway which runs north from Mortain and bends west at St. Barthelmy, and thence to Juvigny and Avranches.

Third Plt arrived in Mortain sometime before noon on 6 August. Lt. Greene drove north through L'Abbaye-Blanche to reconnoiter the route his platoon would use to move to St. Barthelmy and to evaluate positions for his guns in the town. The road north from L'Abbaye-Blanche was under observation from German positions on Hill 314 northeast of St. Barthelmy³ (not to be confused with Hill 314 east of Mortain), and Greene and the men in his jeep were under mortar fire from the time they left L'Abbaye-Blanche. To avoid this danger, they detoured off the main highway at Grande la Dainie onto a sunken trail that paralleled the main road about 100 yards to the east. Seeing that this route shielded vehicles entering St. Barthelmy from German observation, Greene decided that this would be the route his guns would use to enter St. Barthelmy. The infantrymen of the 117th, who had moved in earlier that afternoon, pointed out to Greene the positions that had been occupied by the M-10 self-propelled tank destroyers supporting the 1st ID. Greene didn't think the positions were located as well as they could have been -- some of them were in gardens or cabbage patches with very soft earth that would prohibit the guns from being moved quickly -- but he was pressed for time and had to get his guns set up before nightfall, so he

³ Interview with Lawson Neal, 1 Dec 1990

acquiesced, temporarily as he thought, and ordered his guns to move into those positions. —

Third Plt began moving into St. Barthelmy between 2130 hrs and 2200 hrs, an hour or so before sunset (several reports mention the long daylight period in the northern European summer). Using the sunken trail leading into St. Barthelmy from the south shielded Greene's half-tracks from German observation, although the Germans continued to fire blindly at vehicle noises. Greene believes that using the sunken trail also helped to muffle the noise of his vehicles moving into St. Barthelmy and that this concealed movement caused the presence of his guns in St. Barthelmy to come as a surprise to the Germans when they attacked a few hours later.

The 3d Plt emplaced its 3-inch TD guns between 2300 hrs and 0200 hrs, aided by the bright, moonlit night. However, they were hampered by the fact that the TD unit they were replacing had been a self-propelled unit which was attached to the 1st Inf Div, and therefore there were no prepared positions suitable for the towed guns. The platoon's crews had to content themselves with digging the tires into the ground to reduce the guns' silhouettes. Since the 30th ID was only supposed to be pausing briefly before resuming their advance, they were not concerned by this lack of defensive preparation.

Third Plt had four 3-inch guns,⁴ each of which had only five to seven men in its crew rather than the usual ten, due to losses in recent fighting. Two guns (#1 and #2) were placed at the south end of the village (see Figure 5), covering the highway from Mortain to Juvigny. Gun #2's crew could not see a stretch of the main road, the section closest to the gun, because of an obstructing hedgerow. There was a field of fire farther down the road to the south, however, where it came up over the lip of the hill.⁵ The other two guns

⁴ The 823d TD Bn AAR mentions that the #4 gun of 2d Plt arrived in St. Barthelmy as a reinforcement about 0430, and was placed on the west side of the road to Mortain, about 120m in front of guns #1 and #2. This information is unverified. If true, this gun would necessarily have been destroyed or captured early in the battle, perhaps between 0500 and 0600. The 57mm gun belonging to the 117th's regimental Antitank Company was also positioned in this area sometime around midnight of 6/7 August (see Action 8).

⁵ Telephone Interview with George Greene, 15 Feb 1990

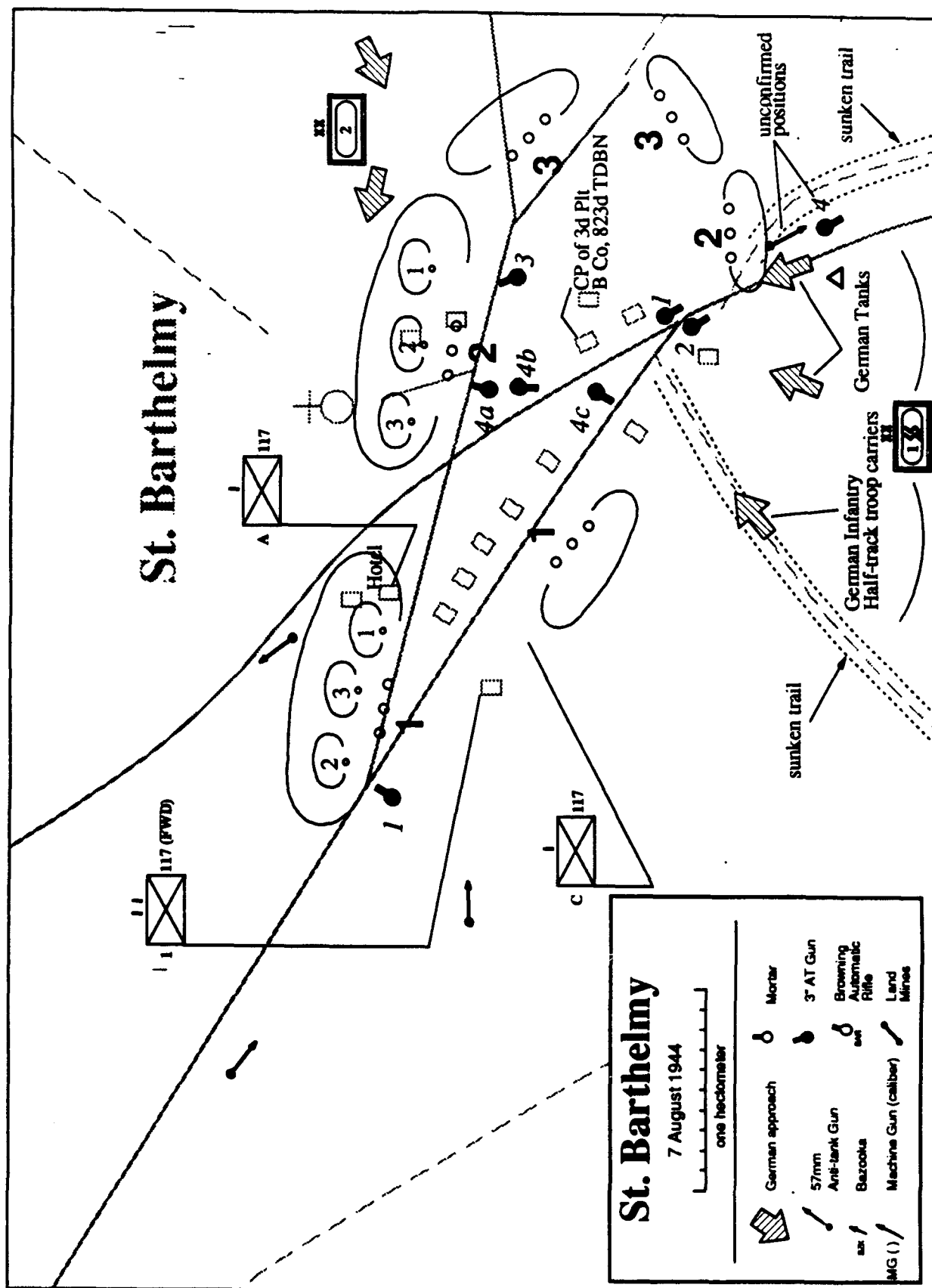


Figure 5

(#3 and #4) were stationed in the northeast section of town, covering likely approaches from that direction. Departing 1st ID soldiers had told 3d Plt that the only significant German forces, some cavalry units, were to the northeast. All four guns were near positions of infantry units from A and C Companies, 117th Inf Regt, but these positions were uncoordinated and lacked mutual support. The platoon's security squad, commanded by Sgt. Higgins, afforded the guns some scanty protection. With only 2-3 men at each gun, the security squad was nonetheless an effective force for its size, having unofficially replaced five of its M-1 carbines with Browning Automatic Rifles (BARs). Greene established his command post in a house about equidistant between the four guns, but because of the flow of the battle, he ultimately would focus most of his attention on the action at guns 1 and 2.

The morning of 7 August arrived with a dense fog, which the Germans expected would last all day and shield their attack from Allied air power. Greene's 1 and 2 guns would normally have had a visibility of only about 50m down the road they covered, limited by a steep drop-off as the terrain sloped down towards L'Abbaye-Blanche, but the thick fog that morning cut the visibility to only 15-20 yards. The section of the main road that #2 gun had been sited to cover was completely obscured, and this prevented #2 gun from acquiring a target during the first part of the German attack.

German artillery fire, falling in and around St. Barthelmy all night, only harassed the Americans. It caused no casualties, apparently intended only to disrupt the sleep of the Americans. In this the Germans failed, however, for the 30th ID and the 823d TD Bn had been in combat for several weeks and were accustomed to such nightly disturbances. The firing stopped at about 0200 hrs on 7 August, and, for awhile, everything was quiet. Then, around 0500 hrs, a heavy artillery barrage began in earnest, with most of the rounds hitting in the northern part of St. Barthelmy. Recognizing the pattern of a barrage preceding a dawn attack, the Americans were fully awake now. This barrage continued for over an hour. The infantry supporting the TD guns had dug some slit trenches the previous night and day and used these for cover, as did the gun crews. Some soldiers took cover in old German fighting holes. The bombardment caused no known casualties among the infantry or TD crews.

When the barrage lifted about 0615, Greene's men returned to their guns and waited. Soon the crews of 1 and 2 guns could hear, through the thick fog, German tanks moving up the road from the south. Greene could also hear voices shouting in German and "jabbering like monkeys," but he was unable to call in artillery fire on the advancing Germans because the poor visibility prevented adjustment of the rounds. These forces were the lead elements of the 1st SS-Panzer Division, who expected 2d Panzer Division to have already cleared St. Barthelmy. This force included panzergrenadiers and Mk V "Panther" tanks of the 1st SS-Panzer Regiment "Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler." The lead German tank, as it approached the edge of the town where C Co had positioned some infantry, began firing its hull-mounted machinegun, and its flashes were visible through the fog to the TD guns even though the tank itself was not. Sgt. Martin, platoon sergeant and commander of #1 gun, ordered his gunner, Cpl. Christianson, to aim for the gun flashes and fire. The 3-inch AP shell struck either the turret ring or the machinegun's ball mount, two of the only vulnerable places on the front of a Panther tank, from a range of less than 50m. The tank slewed sideways and slid to a halt, on fire and blocking the road (Action 2).

Apparently the presence of Greene's guns in St. Barthelmy took the Germans by surprise, since they had seen the 1st ID and its supporting TDs pull out the previous day but had not spotted Greene arriving, thanks to his use of the sunken trail. The Germans spent the next half-hour or so recovering the tank or pushing it off the road, screened by the fog. Greene could hear Germans shouting commands in the fog all during this period. He could also hear a commotion farther down the road, probably caused by the destruction of three German tanks by Sgt. Hardy's patrol (see Action 8). Sgt. Martin ordered #1 gun to fire two HE rounds blindly into the fog, hoping to disrupt the German operations.

Having regrouped and cleared the road, the Germans mounted their second attack at 0700 hrs. Again led by a tank, this advance was more cautious, with the tank advancing slowly using "crawl and stop" movements. Sgt. Martin at #1 gun again fired at the gun flashes from this tank, scored a hit, and set the tank on fire with one AP round [Action 3]. This tank had approached about 20m closer than the first one before it was knocked out. Gun #2 was unable to fire at either tank because a hedgerow along the west side of the road blocked its line

of fire to some sections of the road at this close distance. For the time being, the German advance at the south end of St. Barthelmy stalled, with the Germans staying out of sight in the fog, but pouring a large volume of unobserved small arms fire at the American positions.

Meanwhile, German forces were hitting St. Barthelmy from other directions. These were elements of 2d Panzer Division's left attack column, consisting of motorized infantry from the 2d Panzergrenadier Regiment supported by tanks, mostly Mk IVs, from the 3d Panzer Regiment and jagdpanzers (self-propelled tank destroyers) of the 38th Panzerjaeger Battalion. Around 0800 hrs, #3 gun on the northeast edge of the village traversed and fired at a German tank which had approached down the trail from the northeast but which was swinging to the north towards the town church. The AP round fired by #3 gun struck the tank obliquely (a "semi-front" shot), probably penetrating the hull [Action 6]. The tank stopped, and the crew manning the gun did not observe any tank crew members bailing out. By this time the fog was rising and falling like a curtain, according to Greene, so #3 gun was able to make its kill at 50m.

At about the same time, #2 gun scored its first kill - a German tank moving across the field about 100m to the southeast, presenting another semi-front shot [Action 4]. The gun's AP shell struck the sponson above the track on the right side, stopping the tank dead. For insurance, the crew of #2 fired a second AP round into the tank.

Fighting in St. Barthelmy was increasingly intense,⁶ but for a time no German tanks presented themselves. Infantry small arms fire began to take its toll among the already depleted gun crews, not because of improved accuracy but because sheer volume guaranteed an occasional hit. The fog finally began to burn off about 1000 hrs, and #3 gun spotted another tank following the tracks of the first one towards the church. This tank met the same fate as its predecessor as #3 gun fired an AP round into its flank at a range of 100m, and a second round a few moments later for good measure [Action 7]. Visibility now was such,

⁶ And in fact, the American command thought that the village had already been captured. Lt. Neel, arriving at the western edge of the village about this time, could not enter the town because of the Germans already emerging and heading west towards Juvigny. See Actions 9 and 10.

however, that the cloud of dust kicked up by the gun's firing, and its 18-foot long muzzle flash, began to draw heavy German small arms fire. This prompted the nearby infantry of 2d Plt, A Co, 117 Inf Regt to demand that #3 gun move to another location so as not to draw attention to them -- a demand which Lt. Greene believed his men ignored.

By 0945 hrs or 1000 hrs, attacks by German infantry using automatic small arms and concussion grenades had eliminated most of the infantry support for the TD guns.

About this time, #1 gun, exposed to German observation as the fog lifted, was hit and destroyed by a German HE tank round. The explosion wounded three or four crewmen, and the survivors took them to the hotel in the northwest part of town that served as A Co CP and aid station.

At about 1030, Greene decided that #4 gun, which had not fired all morning because of its bad fields of fire, should be moved to the south to replace #1 gun and also to fire at German infantry-carrying half-tracks moving up the sunken trail leading into town from the southwest. Gun #4 moved first to cover the road that ran past Greene's CP, then moved again to a position behind a hedgerow along the main highway about 50m northwest of #2 gun. Once in this position, #4's crew discovered that, even after cutting a hole in the hedgerow, the gun could not depress far enough to fire at the German half-tracks moving up the trail. The Germans had already driven the infantry of 1st Plt, C Co, from its positions near the gun, so #4 gun was without infantry support. SS-panzergrenadiers (identified as such by Greene because of their camouflaged smocks) unloaded from the half-tracks on the trail and advanced on the gun, firing their submachineguns and throwing grenades. The commander of #4 gun, realizing that his situation was untenable, removed the firing pin from the gun, and he and his crew abandoned the position. Their fate is unknown.

About the same time, between 1030 and 1100 hrs, #2 gun was also being pressed by German infantry coming from the sunken trails and the road. The German small arms fire had wounded many accompanying infantrymen and men of the security squad, and #2 gun was also unable to hit the half-tracks on the sunken trail because of a hedgerow on the east side of the trail. Another German tank

approaching up the highway was fired on and hit by one of #2's AP rounds [Action 5]. The tank kept rolling, though, past #2 gun and on into the town, where it finally stopped and began to burn in the street right outside Greene's CP. An HE round from another tank wrecked #2 gun, injuring three or four crewmen, all of whom fled the position.

By now, with all of his guns knocked out (the exact manner of #3 gun's destruction or capture is unknown), Greene had begun to think about saving what was left of his platoon and pulling out of St. Barthelmy. An infantry sergeant from the 117th Inf Regt ran into Greene's CP, saying his unit's machinegun had malfunctioned while they were locked in a desperate struggle to keep the Germans from overrunning their position. Greene told the sergeant that a half-track with a machinegun was parked in front of a house a few meters away, and the two men pulled the gun from its ring mount on the vehicle. As they were carrying the weapon up to the infantry position, however, a German Panther tank about 75m away fired an HE round into the hedgerow next to the two men. A fragment struck the sergeant in the groin and ripped him almost in half, and he bled to death almost immediately. A fragment hit Greene just below his elbow. Seeing that he could offer no help to the sergeant, Greene began spraying the surrounding hedgerows with fire from the machinegun to suppress any German infantry, while he began to make his way back towards his CP. After two or three minutes he ran out of ammunition and threw the machinegun away. Then, as he rounded a hedgerow he ran into a German soldier armed with a Schmeisser submachinegun and wearing the feldgrau tunic of a Wehrmacht infantryman. He had no choice but to surrender. As Greene, now a POW, was being led to the enemy's collection point at A Co's former CP, the Germans were mopping up the remaining, scattered resistance in St. Barthelmy and pushing their remaining panzers down the road towards Juvigny. The time was about 1100 hrs.

The resistance offered by the men of the 117th Infantry Regiment and Lt. Greene's four 3-inch guns had cost the Germans at least six tanks, an unknown number of infantry and other vehicles, and six precious hours that were to have a telling effect on the German drive toward Avranches. Expecting to motor through St. Barthelmy with only minor resistance, the Germans had been forced to

deploy and contest the town for hours.⁷ As a result, by the time the first tanks of 1st ~~SS~~-Panzer Division had exited the western end of St. Barthelmy, Allied fighter-bombers filled the now-clear skies and began to ruthlessly bomb and rocket any German vehicle moving down the Juvigny road. The main thrust of the German offensive sputtered to a stop just 3 km west of St. Barthelmy.

⁷ In fact, German accounts of the battle of St. Barthelmy indicate the German conclusion that the US had dug-in 90mm AT guns in the town, based on their observations of the accuracy and effect of the US AT fire.

ACTION 2: GREENE'S #1 GUN, 1ST KILL

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	----	Along side of road leading south out of St. Barthelmy. No cover or prepared position	Greene Folder #81
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	----	2-3 men from security squad with M-1s and 1 or 2 BARs; Plt of C/117 Inf nearby	Greene Folder #81
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	2. PzG Regt (2. PzD)	----	Friedens- und Kriegserlebnisse, Die Leibstandarte, A Time for Trumpets
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	----	a. Two 3-inch TD guns b. None c. One possible d. Unknown	Greene Folder #81
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	One Mk V "Panther" from I Bn, 1. SS-PzRegt (1. SS-PzD)	----	Greene Die Leibstandarte
6. US Tanks Present	----	None	Greene Folder #16 Folder #81 Files #58-#62

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
7. Infantry Casualties	?	Unknown but heavy, perhaps 75%	Greene Folder #16 Folder #58-#62
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One Mk V "Panther", hit in the front, either in the turret ring or the bow MG port. Tank stopped and burned, blocking road. Range=50m	----	Greene Folder # 16
9. Artillery	German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	None; unable to call down US artillery because of dense fog.	Greene Folder # 16 Folder #86
10. Obstacles	Hedgerows confined most vehicular movement to roads	None; hedgerows were a potential, but not actual, block to line of fire	Greene GSGS 4347
11. Meteorological Data	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Greene Folder #90
12. Time of Day	0615-0630 hrs	0615-0630 hrs	Greene
13. Light and Visibility	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Greene Folder #90
14. Terrain	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered apple orchards	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered apple orchards	Greene GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	Greene
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	1 AP	Greene

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Slow frontal approach, firing bow MG	----	Greene
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	----	Very hasty	Greene Folder #16
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	----	No official warning; alerted by German preparatory artillery barrage	Greene
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	No Allied air or artillery involved	No German air support involved; German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	Greene
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	----	Greene
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	79-82 rounds for 75mm Kwk 42 main gun; 4100-4200 rounds for 7.62mm MG	Approx. 5 AP rounds, 1 HE round at gun; about 60 more rounds in ammo carrier 20-30 ft from gun	Greene German Tanks of <u>World War II</u>

ACTION 3: GREENE'S #1 GUN, 2ND KILL

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	----	Along side of road leading south out of St. Barthelmy. No cover or prepared position	Greene Folder #81
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	----	2-3 men from security squad with M-1s and 1 or 2 BARs; Plt of C/117 Inf nearby	Greene Folder #81
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	2. PzG Regt (2. PzD)	----	<u>Friedens- und Kriegererlebnisse, Die Leibstandarte, A Time for Trumpets</u>
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	----	a. Two 3-inch TD guns b. None c. One possible d. Unknown	Greene Folder #81
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	One, probably Mk V "Panther" from I Bn, 1. SS-PzRegt (1. SS-PzD)	----	Greene <u>Die Leibstandarte</u>
6. US Tanks Present	----	None	Greene Folder #16 Folder #81 Files #58-#62

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
7. Infantry Casualties	?	Unknown but heavy, perhaps 75%	Greene Folder #16 Folder #58-#62
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One German tank, probably Mk V "Panther", hit in the front and set afire. Range=30m	----	Greene Folder # 16
9. Artillery	German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	None; unable to call down US artillery because of dense fog.	Greene Folder # 16 Folder #86
10. Obstacles	None	None	Greene SGS 4347
11. Meteorological Data	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Greene Folder #90
12. Time of Day	0700-0715 hrs	0700-0715 hrs	Greene
13. Light and Visibility	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Greene Folder #90
14. Terrain	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered apple orchards	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered apple orchards	Greene SGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	Greene
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	1 AP	Greene
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Creeping frontal approach, firing bow MG	----	Greene
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	----	Very hasty	Greene Folder #16

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	----	No official warning; alerted by German preparatory artillery barrage	Greene
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	No Allied air or artillery involved	No German air support involved; German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	Greene
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	----	Greene
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	79-82 rounds for 75mm KwK 42 main gun; 4100-4200 rounds for 7.62mm MG	Approx. 5 AP rounds, 1 HE round at gun; about 60 more rounds in ammo carrier 20-30 ft from gun	Greene <u>German Tanks of World War II</u>

ACTION 4: GREENE'S #2 GUN, 1ST KILL

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	----	Along side of road leading south out of St. Barthelmy. No cover or prepared position	Greene Folder #81
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	----	2-3 men from security squad with M-1s and 1 or 2 BARs; Plt of C/117 Inf nearby	Greene Folder #81
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	2. PzG Regt (2. PzD)	----	Friedens- und Kriegserlebnisse, Die Leibstandarte, A Time for Trumpets
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	----	a. Two 3-inch TD guns b. None c. One possible d. Unknown	Greene Folder #81
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	One, probably Mk V "Panther" from I Bn, 1. SS-PzRegt (1. SS-PzD)	----	Greene Die Leibstandarte

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
6. US Tanks Present	----	None	Greene Folder #16 Folder #81 Files #58-#62
7. Infantry Casualties	?	Unknown but heavy, perhaps 75%	Greene Folder #16 Folder #58-#62
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One German tank, probably Mk V "Panther", hit in sponson above starboard track. Tank stopped	----	Greene Folder # 16
9. Artillery	German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	None; unable to call down US artillery because of dense fog.	Greene Folder # 16 Folder #86
10. Obstacles	None	None	Greene GSGS 4347
11. Meteorological Data	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Greene Folder #90
12. Time of Day	0800-0815 hrs	0800-0815 hrs	Greene
13. Light and Visibility	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Greene Folder #90
14. Terrain	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered apple orchards	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered apple orchards	Greene GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	Greene
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	2 AP	Greene

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Oblique drive across open field, presenting semi-frontal shot	-----	Greene
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	-----	Very hasty	Greene Folder #16
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	-----	No official warning; alerted by German preparatory artillery barrage	Greene
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	No Allied air or artillery involved	No German air support involved; German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	Greene
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	-----	Greene
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	79-82 rounds for 75mm KwK 42 main gun; 4100-4200 rounds for 7.62mm MG	Approx. 5 AP rounds, 1 HE round at gun; about 60 more rounds in ammo carrier 20-30 ft from gun	Greene German Tanks of World War II

ACTION 5: GREENE'S #2 GUN, 2ND KILL

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	----	Along side of road leading south out of St. Barthelmy. No cover or prepared position	Greene Folder #81
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	----	2-3 men from security squad with M-1s and 1 or 2 BARs; Plt of C/117 Inf nearby	Greene Folder #81
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	2. PzG Regt (2. PzD)	----	<u>Friedens- und Kriegererlebnisse, Die Leibstandarte, A Time for Trumpets</u>
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	----	a. One 3-inch TD gun b. None c. One possible d. Unknown	Greene Folder #81
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	One, probably Mk V "Panther" from I Bn, 1. SS-PzRegt (1. SS-PzD)	----	Greene <u>Die Leibstandarte</u>

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
6. US Tanks Present	----	None	Greene Folder #16 Folder #81 Files #58-#62
7. Infantry Casualties	?	Unknown but heavy, perhaps 75%	Greene Folder #16 Folder #58-#62
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One German tank, probably Mk V "Panther", hit in front. Tank continued to roll into town, where it stopped and began to burn	----	Greene Folder # 16
9. Artillery	German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	None; unable to call down US artillery because of dense fog.	Greene Folder # 16 Folder #86
10. Obstacles	None	None	Greene GSGS 4347
11. Meteorological Data	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Greene Folder #90
12. Time of Day	1030-1100 hrs	1030-1100 hrs	Greene
13. Light and Visibility	Clearing fog	Clearing fog	Greene Folder #90
14. Terrain	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered apple orchards	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered apple orchards	Greene GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	Greene

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	1 AP	Greene
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Frontal assault up main road at fairly high speed	----	Greene
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	----	Very hasty	Greene Folder #16
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	----	No official warning; alerted by German preparatory artillery barrage	Greene
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	No Allied air or artillery involved	No German air support involved; German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	Greene
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	----	Greene
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	79-82 rounds for 75mm KwK 42 main gun; 4100-4200 rounds for 7.62mm MG	Approx. 5 AP rounds, 1 HE round at gun; about 60 more rounds in ammo carrier 20-30 ft from gun	Greene <u>German Tanks of World War II</u>

ACTION 6: GREENE'S #3 GUN, 1ST KILL

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	----	Along side of road behind hedgerow at NE end of St. Barthelmy	Greene Folder #81
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	----	2-3 men from security squad with M-1s and at least 1 BAR; 2d Plt, A/117 Inf nearby	Greene Folder #81
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	2. PzG Regt (2. PzD)	----	<u>Friedens- und Kriegererlebnisse, Die Leibstandarte, A Time for Trumpets</u>
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	----	a. One 3-inch TD gun b. None c. None d. Unknown	Greene Folder #81
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	One, probably Mk IV from 3. PzRegt (2. PzD)	----	Greene <u>Die Leibstandarte</u>
6. US Tanks Present	----	None	Greene Folder #16 Folder #81 Files #58-#62
7. Infantry Casualties	None	None	Greene

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One German tank, probably Mk IV, suffered hull penetration from semi-frontal shot. Tank stopped. Range=50m	----	Greene Folder # 16
9. Artillery	German preparatory barrage was ineffective	None; unable to call down US artillery because of dense fog.	Greene Folder # 16 Folder #86
10. Obstacles	None	None	Greene GSGS 4347
11. Meteorological Data	Warm day; foggy in morning, clear later	Warm day; foggy in morning, clear later	Greene Folder #90
12. Time of Day	0800 hrs	0800 hrs	Greene
13. Light and Visibility	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Greene Folder #90
14. Terrain	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered buildings and trees	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered buildings and trees	Greene GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	Greene
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	1 AP	Greene
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Oblique drive across open field, presenting semi-frontal shot	----	Greene
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	----	Very hasty	Greene Folder #16

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	----	No official warning; alerted by German preparatory artillery barrage	Greene
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	No Allied air or artillery involved	No German air support involved; German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	Greene
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	----	Greene
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	80 rounds for 75mm KwK 24 main gun; 2700 rounds for 7.62mm MG	Approx. 5 AP rounds, 1 HE round at gun, about 60 more rounds in ammo carrier 20-30 ft from gun	Greene <u>German Tanks of World War II</u>

ACTION 7: GREENE'S #3 GUN, 2ND KILL

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	----	Along side of road behind hedgerow at NE end of St. Barthelmy	Greene Folder #81
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	----	2-3 men from security squad with M-1s and at least 1 BAR; 2d Plt, A/117 Inf nearby	Greene Folder #81
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	2. PzG Regt (2. PzD)	----	<u>Friedens- und Kriegserlebnisse, Die Leibstandarte, A Time for Trumpets</u>
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	----	a. One 3-inch TD gun b. None c. None d. Unknown	Greene Folder #81
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	One, probably Mk IV from 3. PzRegt (2. PzD)	----	Greene <u>Die Leibstandarte</u>
6. US Tanks Present	----	None	Greene Folder #16 Folder #81 Files #58-#62
7. Infantry Casualties	None	None	Greene

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One German tank, probably Mk IV, struck in flank by two AP rounds. Range=100m	----	Greene Folder # 16
9. Artillery	German preparatory barrage was ineffective	None; unable to call down US artillery because of dense fog.	Greene Folder # 16 Folder #86
10. Obstacles	None	None	Greene GSGS 4347
11. Meteorological Data	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Warm day; foggy in the morning, clear later	Greene Folder #90
12. Time of Day	1000 hrs	1000 hrs	Greene
13. Light and Visibility	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Thick fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Greene Folder #90
14. Terrain	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered buildings and trees	Hilly hedgerow country with scattered buildings and trees	Greene GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	10-100m depending on fog conditions at the moment	Greene
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	2 AP	Greene
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Drive across open field, presenting flank shot	----	Greene
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	----	Very hasty	Greene Folder #16

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	----	No official warning; alerted by German preparatory artillery barrage	Greene
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	No Allied air or artillery involved	No German air support involved; German preparatory artillery barrage was ineffective	Greene
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	----	Greene
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	80 rounds for 75mm KwK 24 main gun; 2700 rounds for 7.62mm MG	Approx. 5 AP rounds, 1 HE round at gun; about 60 more rounds in ammo carrier 20-30 ft from gun	Greene <u>German Tanks of World War II</u>

ACTION 8

Name: Sgt. Hardy's Patrol

Location: About 500m south of St. Barthelmy

When the 117th Infantry Regiment took up positions in and around St. Barthelmy on 6 August 1944, the regiment sent small defensive roadblock teams to cover the major roads and trails leading into the town from the north and south. One of these positions was composed of a 57mm anti-tank gun and its 10-man crew, from the regimental Antitank Company. It established a position on the southern fringe of St. Barthelmy to cover both the main road leading to Abbaye-Blanche and Mortain, and sunken trail just to the east that paralleled the main highway. They did not establish the position until late on the sixth or very early in the morning of the seventh, because the gun crew had no orders beyond those telling them to proceed to St. Barthelmy and relieve the 1st Infantry Division. Although the men prepared some hasty defensive positions as a matter of course, a sense of complacency dominated their thinking because they had been told by the exiting 1st ID men that "there wasn't a German within a hundred miles of there who wanted to fight."⁸

Within a few hours of midnight the squad received orders to move to a roadblock position one or two hundred meters south of the village, near the junction of the main road and the sunken trail. They finished emplacing the gun around first light (c. 0600 hrs); apparently it did not have a very good view of the main highway but was closer to the sunken trail. As they were moving to the position in their truck and setting up their gun, they could hear the German pre-attack artillery barrage hitting St. Barthelmy. After emplacing the gun, one of the squad members, Sgt. Hardy, and three privates, G. Dean Noble, Arthur Jentsch, and Alfred Ericsson, set out to scout southwards down the sunken trail.

As the four men, armed with small arms and a bazooka and carrying a dozen bazooka rounds between them, moved cautiously through the fog, the lead tanks and infantry of the 1st SS-Panzer Division were driving in the opposite direction on

⁸ Telephone Interview with G. Dean Noble, 6 February 1990

the main road just to the west, heading towards the south end of St. Barthelmy and the 57mm ~~AT~~ gun position. Apparently Hardy's patrol knew nothing of the German advance; it is possible that the noise of the artillery barrage masked the sounds of moving tanks and the shouts of the German infantry commanders.

After walking about 300 meters down the trail, Hardy's patrol halted to get their bearings and "to see what was going to happen."⁹ A few minutes later, they heard tank noises off to their right, to the west. Sgt. Hardy crawled up onto the shrub-covered embankment to see if he could see the source. He saw a field on the other side of the hedgerow, about 70 meters wide, and another parallel hedgerow on the other side of the field. On the other side of that hedgerow, three German tanks sat on the main road pointing north towards St. Barthelmy. The crews were standing together outside the tanks, talking noisily.

As nearly as can be determined, these tanks were part of the 1st SS-PzD's assault force which was halted on the Mortain-St. Barthelmy road by the action of the #1 gun of Lt. George Greene's 3d Platoon, B Co, 823d TD Bn, which destroyed the lead German Mk V Panther tank and blocked the road for about 40 minutes. It is likely that, while waiting for that blazing tank to be pushed from the road, the crews of these three tanks got out to discuss the situation. The hedgerows prevented them from detouring cross-country.

Sgt. Hardy watched the Germans for about five minutes, barely able to see them through the murky fog. He and his men could hear the tank engines idling as their crews chatted loudly, sounding to the Americans as if they were drunk. Finally, Sgt. Hardy decided that since their job was to shoot at Germans, they might never have a better chance. Pvt. Ericcson, a Norwegian who had fled the German invasion of his country in 1940 and who "had no love for Germans," climbed to the top of the hedgerow with his bazooka.¹⁰ He fired his first round into the middle of the group of men, who quickly scattered. Apparently none or few manned their tanks since they did not return fire at all. Sgt. Hardy then

⁹ Telephone Interview with G. Dean Noble, 6 February 1990

¹⁰ Ibid.

ordered Pvt. Ericsson to shoot at the tanks, which were probably Mk V Panthers. Ericsson hit two of the tanks in the engine compartment, which stopped the motors and set the vehicles on fire. The third tank was probably also hit, although just where and how badly is uncertain. Ericsson fired a total of 4 or 5 rounds, all of which hit. Smoke from the burning tanks quickly thickened the dense fog. During this whole episode, neither the tanks nor any German infantry which may have been present returned the Americans' fire.

Sgt. Hardy, deciding that they had done enough damage for one morning, led the patrol back up the trail to the 57mm gun position. When they reached the place, however, the gun, crew, and truck were gone. Unsure of the enemy's location or the overall situation, the men struck out westward, toward the division's rear area, in hopes of rejoining the rest of their company. About 500 yards away, in a large field, they found their truck with the 57mm gun still in tow. It had bogged down in a mud hole on the trail, so the rest of the squad had apparently abandoned it, after putting a thermite grenade on the engine and removing the gun's firing pin to prevent their use by the enemy. The exact events at the gun position that led to the retreat may never be known. Later, an Allied fighter plane strafing the area set the truck on fire.

Sgt. Hardy's patrol did not find the rest of the Antitank Company for two days. The actions of Sgt. Hardy's patrol, destroying three German tanks in an area the Germans thought was secure, contributed to the friction which delayed the German attack and slowed the overall rate of the German advance.

ACTION 8: SGT. HARDY'S PATROL, 7 AUGUST 1944

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	---	Behind a hedgerow about 70m to the east, facing attackers' flank	Interview
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	---	4 men with small arms	Interview
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	None seen	---	Interview
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	---	a. None b. None c. None d. One	Interview
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	Three Mk V Panthers	---	Interview <u>Die Leibstandarte</u>
6. US Tanks Present	---	None	Interview
7. Infantry Casualties	None	None	Interview
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	Two Panthers hit in engine section and set on fire; one Panther hit, result unknown	---	Interview
9. Artillery	None	None	Interview
10. Obstacles	Hedgerows	Hedgerows	Interview
11. Meteorological Data	Thick fog	Thick fog	Interview

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
12. Time of Day	c. 0600 hrs	c. 0600 hrs	Interview
13. Light and Visibility	Dawn; poor visibility	Dawn; poor visibility	Interview
14. Terrain	Rolling ground compartmentalized by hedgerows	Rolling ground compartmentalized by hedgerows	Interview GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	---	70m	Interview
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	5 bazooka rounds	Interview
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	None; standing still	---	Interview
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	---	None; behind hedgerow	Interview
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	---	None	Interview
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	None	None	Interview
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	---	Interview
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	Panther carried 79-82 main gun rounds, and c. 4100 7.92mm MG rounds	12 bazooka rounds carried	Interview <u>German Tanks of World War II</u> <u>German Tanks and Anti-Tank</u>

ACTION 9

NAME: Neel's 1st Gun

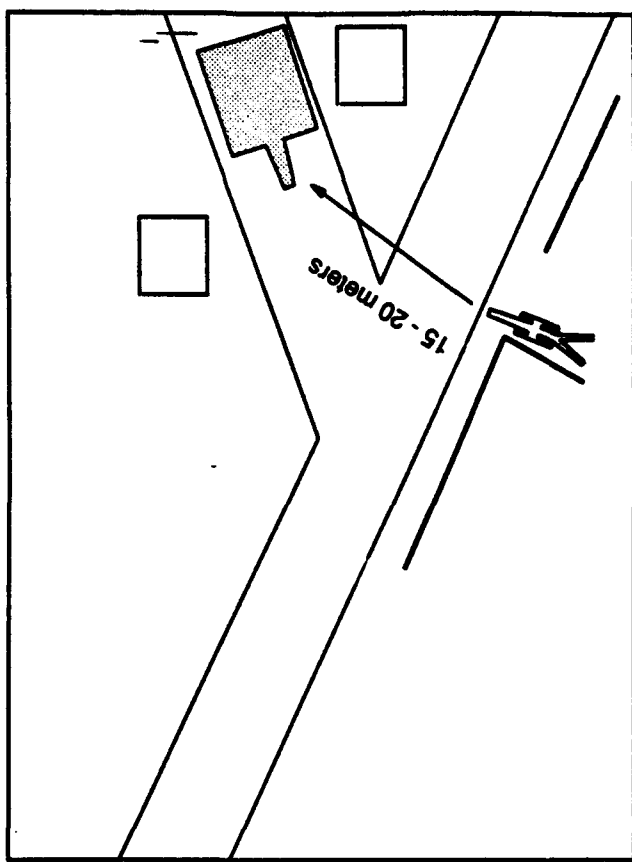
LOCATION: Just west of the town of St. Barthelmy

By 0930, 7 August, an estimated force of 50 German tanks and supporting infantry was attacking the town of St. Barthelmy. Losses among A and C Companies of 1/117th Inf Regt, holding positions in the town, were heavy. The 3" Tank Destroyer guns of 2d and 3rd Platoons, B Co., 823d TD Bn, positioned in the town, were believed to be either disabled or destroyed by this time. In an effort to provide reinforcements to the beleaguered forces within St. Barthelmy, Col. Frankland, CO of 1/117th, ordered 1LT Lawson Neel, Platoon Leader of 1st Plt., B Co., 823d TD Bn, to reinforce the battalion with his TD's.

1LT Neel's platoon was located about 2km west of town. Neel and a driver, using a jeep, reconnoitered to the west edge of St. Barthelmy and found a suitable gun site. He then returned to the 1st Plt location and brought forward a 3" gun, towed by its half-track prime mover. Neel sited the gun (see Figure 6) at a 'Y' intersection where he could fire on two roads emerging from St. Barthelmy. Because of a low wall on the side of the road where the gun was positioned, the half-track carrying the gun's ammunition had to be left across the street. He positioned the gun in a gate through the wall which ran along the west edge of the road. While preparing the gun to fire, the crew discovered that a gatepost was blocking one of the gun's trails from opening fully, causing Neel to be concerned about the gun's stability if traversed to the right. Meanwhile, one of the gun's crewmen had time to hand-carry only two rounds of AP ammunition from the half-track before the first German tank arrived. He and two other crewmen ran back across the street to the half-track to fetch more rounds, but the German advance and small arms fire prevented them from rejoining the gun crew and forced them to seek cover with some US infantrymen in a nearby house.

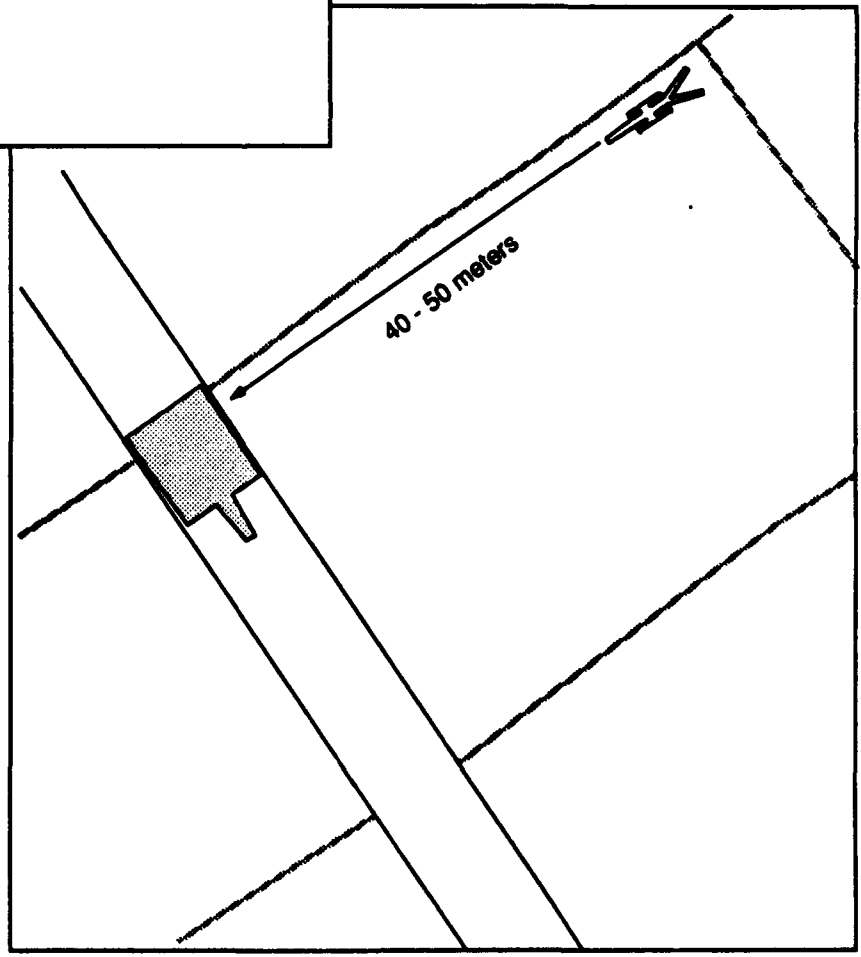
About 0940, only ten minutes after Neel placed the gun in position, a German Mk V tank, supported by numerous infantry, emerged from behind a house along the northern road. Neel's gun was already pointed almost directly at the tank, and was able to fire before the Panther could traverse its turret. The shot was made at a range of 15-20 meters, close enough for Neel to hear the German tank

Neel's Gun Position 1



40 - 50 meters

Neel's Gun Position 2



Diagrams not to scale

Figure 6

commander shouting orders to his gunner inside the tank. The AP round hit the tank in the sponson, just above the track. The precise result was unknown, but the crew abandoned the tank, effectively taking it out of action.

Having thus exposed his gun's position, Neel and his crew came almost immediately under heavy small arms fire from the German panzergrenadiers accompanying the tank, with bullets hitting the gunshield "like a stream of water from a hose." The German infantry were close enough to attempt rolling grenades under the gunshield. Neel ordered the crew to abandon the gun, and, after removing the firing pin to disable the piece, they withdrew cross-country to retrieve another gun and crew from the 1st Plt position 2km west down the Juvigny road. Neel was slightly wounded by shrapnel during the withdrawal.

ACTION 9: NEEL'S FIRST GUN, 7 AUGUST 1944

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	---	West edge of St. Barthelmy covering approach from east at 'Y' in road; in a gate in a fence	Interview Folder #16 Folder #73
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	---	Gun crew (10 men); no accompanying infantry	Interview Folder #86
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	? from one battalion of 1. SS-PzG Regt "LAH"	---	Interview Folder #16 Folder #73
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	---	a. One b. None c. None d. None	Interview
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	One Mk V Panther	---	Interview Folder #16 Folder #73 Folder #81
6. US Tanks Present	---	None	Interview
7. Infantry Casualties	?	2+ WIA	Interview Folder #73 Folder #81
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One Mk V disabled by semi-front shot which struck sponson; crew abandoned the vehicle	---	Interview Folder #81

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
9. Artillery	None	None	Interview
10. Obstacles	Buildings in town	Gun trails would not full open because of gatepost, limiting field of fire	Interview
11. Meteorological Data	Bright, clear, warm	Bright, clear, warm	Interview Folder #80
12. Time of Day	0940-0945	0940-0945	Interview
13. Light and Visibility	Bright, clear	Bright, clear	Interview Folder #80
14. Terrain	Gently sloping, broken by hedgerows; buildings along paved road	Gently sloping, broken by hedgerows; buildings along paved roads	Interview GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	---	15-20m	Interview
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	1 round AP	Interview
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Frontal/oblique approach	- -	Interview
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	---	Extremely hasty, only about 10 minutes	Interview
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	---	Neel knew Germans were in the town somewhere	Interview
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	None	None	Interview
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	None	Interview

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	Mk V Panther carried 79- 82 main gun rounds (75mm) and 4100-4200 7.92mm MG rounds	2 rounds AP	Interview

ACTION 10

NAME: Neel's 2d Gun

LOCATION: Approximately 790 meters west of St. Barthelmy along Juvigny road.

Immediately following the destruction of 1LT Neel's 1st gun (1st Plt, B Co., 823d TD Bn) just west of the town of St. Barthelmy, Neel returned to 1st Plt HQ and brought a second gun into a concealed position (see Figure 6) beside the west side of a hedgerow approximately 800 meters west of St. Barthelmy along the Juvigny road. The hedgerow was perpendicular to the road, so the gun was concealed from the advancing Germans' observation. Neel prepared the gun position at about 1100 hours.

Sometime around 1200 hrs, a German tank (reported to be a Mark VI but probably a Mark V) advanced west along the road, presenting a flank shot to the 3" gun. The gun crew fired on the tank at a range of 40-50 meters, striking it in the hull with an AP round. The German tank crew abandoned their vehicle, probably expecting to be hit again. Neel then fired an HE round, causing the crew to flee into some trees a fair distance away on the other side of the road. The crew left the tank's engine running, and Neel considered trying to capture the tank. Allied air attacks on the area around the stricken tank (which came dangerously close to the TD gun's position) changed his mind. [The engine in this tank was to run for several hours before running out of gas. A bazooka team from 2d Plt, B Co, 117th Infantry destroyed the tank on the night of 7 August as they worked their way back eastward toward St. Barthelmy.] Then a second German tank, apparently overwatching the first, fired an HE round at Neel's gun behind the hedgerow, its position revealed by muzzle blast. The German estimation of the gun's position was close, and the explosion showered the gun and crew with hot fragments, possibly wounding some crew members. The crew withdrew to the next hedgerow to the west, where they unexpectedly encountered a group of GIs trying to form a defense line along a trail perpendicular to the Juvigny road. This unit was, in all probability, the roadblock crew of 3d Plt, B Co, 117th Inf (see Action 1). Although they could see their gun from their new position, Neel judged it too dangerous to try to man the gun again since the advancing Germans

apparently knew its location. Neel remained with the infantry contingent for most of that day, and the next day's US counter-attack to retake St. Barthelmy allowed the 823d TD Bn to recover the gun.

ACTION 10: NEEL'S SECOND GUN, 7 AUGUST 1944

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	---	3-inch gun in covered position along hedgerow perpendicular to and facing Juvigny road	Interview Folder #16 Folder #72
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	---	Gun crew (10 men); 3d Plt, Co B, 117 Inf nearby but not in supporting position	Interview
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	None	---	Interview
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	---	a. One b. None c. None d. None	Interview Folder #16 Folder #72
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	2 Mk V Panther tanks	---	Interview Folder #16 Folder #81
6. US Tanks Present	---	None	Interview
7. Infantry Casualties	None	2+ WIA	Interview
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One Mk V struck in flank by 1 AP round; crew abandoned vehicle, leaving engine running	---	Interview
9. Artillery	None	None	Interview

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
10. Obstacles	None	None	Interview
11. Meteorological Data	Bright, clear, warm	Bright, clear, warm	Interview
12. Time of Day	1200 hrs	1200 hrs	Interview
13. Light and Visibility	Bright, clear. Good visibility	Bright, clear. Good visibility	Interview
14. Terrain	Hedgerows	Hedgerows	Interview GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	200m or less	40-50m	Interview
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	1 round HE	1 round AP 1 round HE	Interview
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Approached along Juvigny road	---	Interview
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	---	One hour in which to emplace gun along hedgerow	Interview
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	---	Could hear tanks' approach, and see gun barrel	Interview
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	None	Allie planes began strafing and rocketing area just after action	Interview
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	One overwatching, one advancing	---	Interview

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	Mk V Panther tank carried 79-82 main gun rounds (75mm); and 4100- 4200 7.92mm MG rounds	60 rounds in half-track; Usual mix would be 40 AP, 20 HE	Interviews <u>German Tanks in</u> <u>World War II</u> <u>German Tank and</u> <u>Antitank</u>

CHAPTER 3

THE ENGAGEMENT AT ABBAYE BLANCHE

ACTIONS 11-14

NAME: Abbaye-Blanche

LOCATION: 1.4 km North of Mortain, France

In order to block the possible approach routes into Mortain on 6 August 1944, the 120th Infantry Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division established a series of roadblocks on or covering the roads leading into Mortain from the east. These roads entered Mortain from the north and south ends of town because they were forced to sweep north or south of the dominating Hill 314 immediately east of the town (see Figure 3). First Platoon of F Co, 120th Inf, established a roadblock at the village of Abbaye-Blanche, named for the large white abbey just across the Cance River. Abbaye-Blanche sits astride the main north-south highway from Mortain to St. Barthelmy, where it bends west and leads to Juvigny and, ultimately, to Avranches, the German objective in "Operation Liege." There is also a large railway station in the village. Abbaye-Blanche rests on the steep west bank of the Cance River, across from Hill 314 on the east side, and has a commanding view of roads to the east. A parallel north-south highway is located about 350m east of the village; the two roads merge at Grande la Dainie, about 1.5 km to the north. The road running through Abbaye-Blanche will be called "Highway 2" in this narrative, so named because of the quality rating assigned to it on the February 1944 GSGS 4347 map¹¹; the parallel road to the east will be referred to as "Highway 3."

Although the US 1st Inf Div had captured Mortain from the German 2d Panzer Division on 3 August, mopping-up operations were still in progress against isolated pockets of resistance in the area three days later, when the 30th Inf Div moved in to relieve the 1st Inf Div. To afford the best possible protection

¹¹ Quality 1: 8+ m wide, metalled or paved
Quality 2: 6-8m wide, metalled or paved
Quality 3: 3-6m wide, metalled or paved
Quality 4: Track or secondary road

for the northern approach into Mortain, the roadblock at Abbaye-Blanche was composed of both anti-tank and tank destroyer guns, and supporting infantry. Captain Reynold Erickson, commander of F Co, 120th Inf, sent his 1st Platoon under Lt. Tom Andrew to the village at about 1445 on 6 August¹² (see Figure 7). A bazooka team and a BAR team (some sources say it was a .50cal machinegun team instead) formed a roadblock along the trail at Villeneuve, just to the west, laying mines across the trail and occupying the houses around 58071219. A 57mm AT gun from 2d Plt, led by Lt. Sid Eichen, of the 120th's Regimental Anti-Tank Company, deployed at the road junction at 58221193 (Point A) to cover the trail, paralleling Highway 2, that ran along the river from the northeast, one of the most likely routes of a German counterattack. Eight infantrymen and a .30cal machinegun covered this gun. Another 57mm AT gun, the only other one left in the depleted platoon, covered the southern entrances into the village from a position at 58141174 (Point B), and a squad of riflemen and two .30cal machineguns protected this gun. The infantrymen also placed mines across both bridges which crossed the Cance River from the abbey. At the northernmost of these two bridges, a bazooka team and a BAR team provided additional protection. At the south end of the road bridge over the railroad, at 58161200, is a cave in which many of the village's residents hid during the battle, or used to hide their valuables. Near the entrance to this cave, riflemen and bazooka teams, as well as a .50cal machinegun team, dug in to block any traffic coming from the east and down the railroad track.¹³

About 1700 hrs on 6 August, as the infantry prepared their positions, Lt. Tom Springfield, platoon leader of 1st Plt, A Co, 823d TD Bn, arrived to scout positions for his towed 3-inch tank destroyer guns, a welcome addition to the roadblock's forces¹⁴. Judging that the greatest threat came from a possible German thrust from the north or east, either of which would almost have to use

¹² Positional information is from the 30th Infantry Division Combat Interviews, GL-347/16; "Employment of Four Tank Destroyer Battalions in the ETO;" and a personal interview with Lt. Tom Springfield, 21 Jan 1990.

¹³ The 30th ID Combat Interviews, GL-347/16, say that a mortar section from F Co was also included in the roadblock's complement, but Lt. Springfield denies this, saying that at no time during the five-day battle was the roadblock able to call in artillery support of any kind.

¹⁴ According to Springfield, the Infantry platoon had about 20-25 men and he had 52.

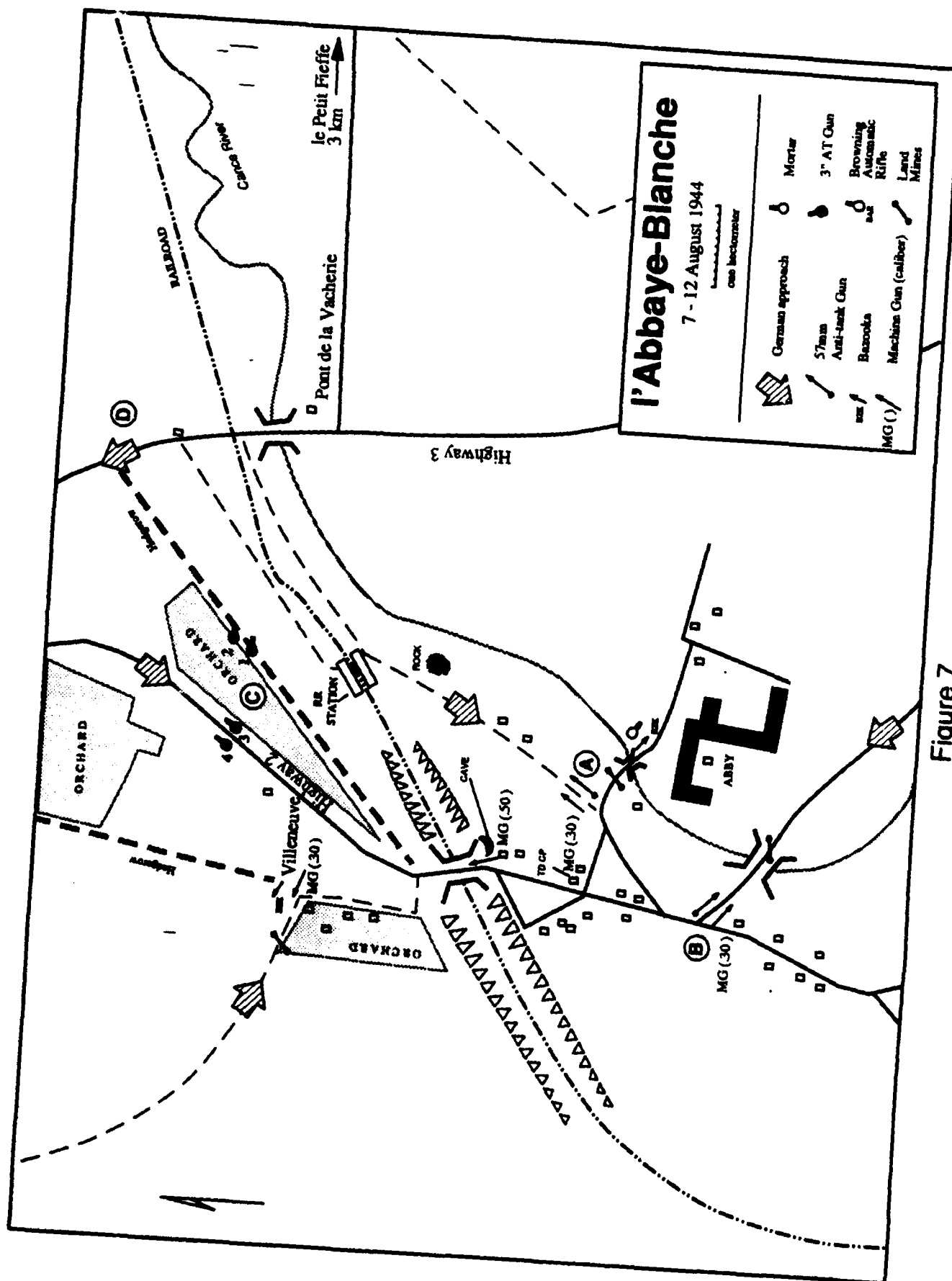


Figure 7

either Highway 2 or 3, Springfield decided to concentrate his firepower at the north end of Abbaye-Blanche covering both roads. His men and guns arrived later that evening. As directed, Springfield initially occupied the positions of the previous TD unit, but he judged the positions to be covering the same routes as the Infantry's AT guns, so he moved his guns about 200m to the north (Point C). The crews barely finished emplacing before dark (about 2330 hours). His #1 and #2 guns were placed behind a hedgerow, facing generally east, in the lightly wooded area at 58341230, where, due to their higher elevation, they had a commanding view of a one-kilometer stretch of Highway 3, from Pont de la Vacherie north. The #3 and #4 guns were placed on opposite sides of Highway 2, facing north-northeast, in the shallow (1 to 1.5 feet deep) ditches on the side of the road. They were protected by two .30cal machineguns apiece. The crewmen dug the wheels of all the 3-inch guns into the ground in order to lower their silhouettes.

During the day, Lt. Springfield reported to the Regimental Commander, Hammond Birk, to explain his disposition. Because he was senior to Lt. Andrew, Birk put Springfield in command of the roadblock. Lt. Andrew acted as co-commander. Both lieutenants cooperated well. Splitting responsibilities, the Infantry took responsibility for the southern half of the roadblock while Springfield took the northern half. The two also formed a "strike squad", 5 men with a BAR and rifles, to act as a mobile reserve.

While the crews of 1st Plt, A Co, were digging in, a regiment of the 2d SS-Panzer Division "Das Reich," the 4th SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment "Der Fuehrer," was moving into its assembly area at le Petit Fieffe, just over 3 kms to the east. As the lead elements of "Der Fuehrer" reached the hamlet, however, they found that parts of the 1st SS-PzD "Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler," which was to have vacated the area hours before, were still there, and this created great confusion and a massive traffic jam. A British Typhoon fighter-bomber, shot down by German anti-aircraft units a few hours before, had crashed onto the lead Panther tank of the 1st SS-PzD column as it drove through a narrow defile, possibly at Vente, a kilometer to the north. Hours of backing and filling were required to get the blocked column turned around and onto an alternate route, delaying the attack of both 1st SS-PzD towards St. Barthelmy, and the northern

task force of 2d SS-PzD towards Mortain and Roche Grise (Hill 285). While the rest of 2d SS-PzD launched its attack against Mortain from the southeast at 0100 hrs on 7 August, entering the city at 0200 hrs, "Der Fuehrer" didn't get underway until 0430.¹⁵ By that time, Captain Erickson of F Co had lost telephone communication with his roadblocks, including Abbaye-Blanche, because of German artillery fire or because of the fire raging in Mortain from the previous night's bombing.¹⁶ Apparently the southeast column of "Das Reich" met only light resistance, because the men at Abbaye-Blanche heard no signs of fighting and, without communication with Capt. Erickson, had no idea of the impending German attack upon their position.

7 August 1944

The first contact between the roadblock and the Germans, led by 9th Kompanie, III Battalion, 4th SS-PzGR "DF" with four assault guns and followed closely by II Bn and the 16th (Pioneer) Kp, came at around 0500 hrs in the dense fog along the river bank. The lead German recon element, told to expect only light resistance, approached down the trail leading southwest from the railroad station along the river's edge. This force was composed of a motorcycle with sidecar, a favorite German recon vehicle, followed by a four-wheeled armored car (probably an Sd Kfz 221 or 222), a Kuebelwagen (or military Volkswagen), and an officer's car ("limousine").¹⁷ The US .30cal machinegun covering the AT position fired on and destroyed the motorcycle and shot up the Kuebelwagen, while the 57mm gun, manned by a squad directed by an NCO, Sgt. Rhyne, destroyed the armored car with one round and the staff car with another [Action 11]. The Americans then machinegunned the surviving German crew members, killing most of them. As far as is known, the surprised Germans were never able to return fire.

¹⁵ Weidinger, Otto Kameraden bis zum Ende

¹⁶ An SS-Sgt. Webersberger, in a narrative recounted in Die Sturmflut und das Ende, mentions that the Germans had bombed Mortain the night before the attack, causing the hasty evacuation of the town. American soldiers and French civilians had been celebrating the town's liberation when the bombing began.

¹⁷ 30th ID Cbt Int GL-347/16 says there was also a half-track loaded with German infantry, followed by another half-track loaded with ammunition.

The carnage caused by this ambush quite effectively blocked the narrow trail, and the Germans never again tried to advance down this lane.

Meanwhile, on the hillside above this action at about 0500 hrs, the fog was intermittent and patchy, giving Springfield's #1 and #2 guns a visibility of at least 500-600m to the east, beyond Highway 3. The Germans were moving forces north on this highway, with the intention of either striking into St. Barthelmy from the south, or turning south at Gde. la Dainie to attack Abbaye-Blanche and Mortain from the north. The 3-inch TD guns on the hill had an unobstructed line of sight to the enemy traffic on Highway 3, and the Germans were obligingly presenting flank shots to the American gunners. As the German vehicles strained and slowed to climb the steep road from the river to Gde. la Dainie, the American tank destroyers opened up, in just a few minutes destroying three half-tracks, one ammunition truck (identified as such by the size of its explosion when hit), and one "small" tank, probably a Mk IV [Action 12]. These shots were made at a range of about 320m, at location 58551250 (Point D).

As was often German doctrine, command troops were following close behind these ill-fated lead elements. Caught totally by surprise by the accurate American fire and "lavish expenditure of ammunition" coming from Abbaye-Blanche, the 9th Kp staff, the III Bn headquarters, and the regimental staff of "Der Fuehrer" itself all scrambled for the nearest cover - most likely the lone house (probably a dairy) at the foot of the bridge at 58661237, known as Pont de la Vacherie, or "bridge of the dairy." German accounts mention that all three command groups were trapped in the single building for almost eight hours by the intense American fire pouring from Abbaye-Blanche and Hill 314.¹⁸

Shortly after the "turkey shoot" on Highway 3, at about 0600 hrs, two German vehicles accompanied by infantry probed southward down Highway 2 along the stretch covered by Springfield's #3 and #4 guns. The tank destroyers fired on the lead vehicle, a half-track mounting a 75mm gun (making it either an Sd Kfz 250/8 with 75mm KwK 32/L74, or an Sd Kfz 251/22 with 75mm PaK 40), and the following half-track, probably an ammunition resupply vehicle for the first, at

¹⁸ Weidinger, Otto Division Das Reich

a range of 30m, after they rounded the bend in the road and emerged from behind an orchard. -The lightly armored German vehicles, suffering hits from 3-inch armor piercing shells designed to stop tanks, were totally destroyed. Supporting US infantry with .30cal machineguns opened fire on the surprised German infantry, who were now in among the mines which the Americans had hastily planted along the roadside in that area. Few German survivors were left to retreat from this probe after 15 minutes of fierce skirmishing [Action 13].

The 2d SS-PzD was stunned by the solid resistance its northern force had met. Lt. Springfield reports that there was a lull in the fighting from 0615, when the fighting at the north end of the roadblock died down, until about 1000 hrs that morning. Things were not so quiet for "Der Fuehrer" Regiment, however. Even though they were not being directly attacked, Springfield's #1 and #2 guns continued to snipe at any German vehicles attempting to move along Highway 3, causing an unknown number of vehicle and personnel casualties. Furthermore, Allied air support had appeared over Mortain as the fog lifted, and around 0900 hrs, III Bn of "Der Fuehrer" lost two of its four StuG III assault guns to aerial rocket attacks.

Around 1000 hrs, Lt. Stewart, 2d Plt, F Co, arrived at the south end of the Abbaye-Blanche roadblock with two squads, all that was left of his platoon-sized roadblock force which had been overrun by the Germans further south. They had been forced to leave most of their heavy weapons behind, but Lt. Andrew was still glad to add their numbers to his force. He placed Lt. Stewart in charge of the south end of the roadblock, which now faced enemy-occupied Mortain. Lt. Stewart himself reportedly knocked out one German tank and one half-track with bazooka fire.

By noon on 7 August, the unit spearheading the German attack against Abbaye-Blanche, 9th Kp, III Bn/"DF," reported that it had suffered the loss of nine vehicles, six of which were armored half-track personnel carriers, as well as many personnel casualties.¹⁹ The American defenders had not yet lost a single man.

¹⁹ Weidinger, Division Das Reich

At 1400 hrs, the Germans called a truce in order to pick up their dead and wounded from the battlefield. Using large Red Cross flags, the Germans spent an hour retrieving their fallen, under the watchful eyes of the American gunners. During this quiet period, the three German command staffs pinned in the dairy were able to pull back to safer and more dispersed positions.²⁰

Combat around Abbaye-Blanche was more sporadic in the afternoon of the 7th, with a single tragic exception. Around 1600 hours British Typhoon fighter-bombers, coming in from the north, mistakenly attacked several American positions around Abbaye-Blanche and Mortain, despite the fact that the Americans displayed aerial recognition panels and used colored smoke to mark friendly positions. Several rockets burst around #3 and #4 guns, exposed in the roadside ditches. This attack killed one of Springfield's men. It also wounded two other 823d TD Bn men south of the roadblock, and damaged one of the battalion's supply vehicles.

Intermittent combat continued throughout the afternoon and evening. German vehicles inexplicably continued to try to move north along Highway 3 at intervals, providing a "shooting gallery" for #1 and #2 guns. Around 2330 hours, just after dark, the Germans called for another medical truce, again taking about an hour to collect their dead and wounded, the numbers of which were steadily mounting. At some point during the day, the crew of #1 gun had pinpointed the location of a German machinegun nest on the other side of the Cance River and knocked it out with HE fire. Only during the night were the Germans able to inflict any casualties on the roadblock crew. They had tried to fire on the roadblock all day, apparently with flat-trajectory guns, but since Springfield's position was placed on a ridge, the German shells kept overshooting to the west. Some nebelwerfer salvos, however, did strike the ridge itself that night, wounding 2-4 men. Lt. Andrew said later that the rounds exploded about 400 yds. away, close enough for him to "feel the shrapnel." Andrew also remarked that, even though the German artillery was zeroed in on the roadblock (which occupied former German positions), his men would take cover during the barrages, emerging to man their positions afterward. He said his troops never worried about leaving

²⁰ Weidinger, Division Das Reich; Interview with Springfield

their positions during the barrages, having learned that the German infantry had little faith in their artillery and therefore did not follow it closely.

The total score for the Abbaye-Blanche roadblock on 7 August is difficult to compile. Different sources have conflicting or incomplete figures for total German vehicles knocked out, and some kills claimed by the roadblock should probably be attributed to other causes. For example, the two StuG III assault guns destroyed by the Typhoons are claimed by one American source to have been knocked out by AT guns from the roadblock; however, the Germans themselves attribute the losses to Typhoons. An educated and reasonable estimate of the roadblock's kills for the first day would be: 2 Mk V tanks, 5 Mk IV tanks, 1 half-track assault gun, 1 bus-type cargo vehicle, 1 2.5-ton truck, 3 fully-tracked personnel carriers full of troops, 2 motorcycles, 1 .25-ton truck, 1 staff car/limousine, 1 Kuebelwagen, 1 machinegun nest, and an estimated 150-200 panzergrenadiers killed or wounded and another 10 captured.

8 August 1944

The 2d SS-PzD renewed its attacks on the roadblock at dawn on 8 August. About 0500 hrs, a panzergrenadier patrol from the north and northwest worked its way into the orchard northwest of #3 and #4 guns, concealed by the fog and foliage. The American infantry engaged this patrol with the .30cal machineguns and bazookas covering the roadblock, killing five Germans in the brief firefight. The remaining Germans withdrew into the orchard. About the same time, a German squad with MG42s, the excellent German light machinegun, attacked the trail outpost at Villeneuve (58971219), but were also driven off. Shortly thereafter, the Germans began assaulting #3 and #4 guns' position. The Americans were able to smash the first wave of attackers, destroying two (possibly three) Mk IV tanks and four half-track personnel carriers [Action 13]. With their vehicles gone, the German infantry continued to attack the position on foot, using a machine gun and a flamethrower in addition to their small arms (indicating that this may have been an SS-Pioneer company). With Springfield in the lead, the "strike squad" repulsed this attack, ending the flamethrower operator's life in a fiery death. The squad captured 15 Germans.

This action lasted about two hours, by which time the fog had lifted, and Allied planes again began furiously attacking "Der Fuehrer's" positions. This halted most of the German attacks, since any moving vehicle or group of men was immediately attacked by the deadly aircraft. But the Germans persisted in sending vehicles up the road towards St. Barthelmy and kept the shooting gallery in operation. As Springfield recalled later, "For two days we fired all day!" Around noon, Springfield received five green recruits as replacements, the only official reinforcements sent to the roadblock during the five days of battle, although over the next few days other men from different companies straggled into the roadblock. The garrison eventually contained men from Cos. D, E, H, K, and G, as well as F Co; and had a peak strength of about 150, "but by far the greater number of these were battle exhaustion cases and had little part in the actual defense." German artillery continued to harass the roadblock all day on the 8th, but this only wounded a couple of American soldiers.

Around 1530, a group of Germans attacked the south end of the roadblock at the abbey bridges in Lt. Stewart's area, driving up in half-tracks and dismounting. They used flamethrowers and concussion grenades, wounding four men of Lt. Eichen's AT platoon, but American small arms fire wiped out the attackers. Under cover of the attack, a brave German officer or NCO tried to remove the double belt of mines from the bridge so his vehicles could cross it and enter the village, but the BAR Team shot him down in the attempt, and the bazooka team destroyed his half-track. Lt. Andrew later remarked that "he should have known that a mine field is always covered by fire."

The fighting dwindled after this, and the Germans made no more attacks on the 8th. At some point during the day, the roadblock suffered another air attack, this time from a fighter plane that strafed the area with its machineguns. Lt. Springfield has said he thought this was a German Focke-Wulf 190, but German and Allied records alike show that all air support for the German offensive was intercepted over the airfields far to the rear, and that only Allied planes flew over Mortain. This incident, in which no American casualties were reported, was probably another case of mistaken identity. Just after dusk, the Germans again declared a truce to evacuate their wounded.

On the night of 8-9 August, the situation around Mortain began to shift from the defensive as American units to the north and south of Abbaye-Blanche, recovering from the initial shock of the German attack and heavily reinforced, regained the initiative and attacked to recover the lost ground and relieve the battered battalion of the 120th Inf surrounded on Hill 314, across the river from Abbaye-Blanche. At about 2115 on 8 August, the US 2d Bn, 119th Inf attacked eastward and recaptured Gde. 1a Dainie, astride the Mortain-St. Barthelmy road and about 1 km north of the Abbaye-Blanche roadblock. Gde. 1a Dainie was hit almost immediately by a German counterattack composed of tanks, armored cars, and motorcycles from the northwest, but after an hour of heavy fighting the Americans still held the crossroads, securing a large section of the roadblock's perimeter against further German assaults.

9 August 1944

Life for the Abbaye-Blanche roadblock garrison was considerably quieter on 9 August, even though the 2d SS-PzD did capture and hold Hill 276 to the southwest for a while, threatening the roadblock's supply lines which had been under German observation and fire since early on 7 August, but kept open by F Co, 117 Inf. The roadblock is credited with destroying three German vehicles of unknown type moving on Highway 3 on 9 August. German artillery fire damaged the gunsights of #1 and #2 guns, so the Springfield's men took the sights from #3 and #4 guns to replace them. Guns #3 and #4 were then boresighted on the road emerging from behind the orchard, and the crews maintained their vigil.

10-12 August 1944

On 10 August, the Germans began a last-ditch effort to dislodge the Abbaye-Blanche roadblock, using infantry to attack. No specific information is available about the direction, timing, or size of the attacks, but they were all repulsed with the loss of only 9 men of the 823d TD Bn and terrible losses to the Germans. At about 0100 hrs on the 10th, a German half-track, lost and loaded with wounded, blundered past the apparently sleeping sentries at the south end of the railroad bridge by the cave. Lt. Springfield, asleep in his command post about 100m south of the bridge, woke at the sound of the unfamiliar vehicle

approaching and went downstairs to see what was happening. His sentries stopped the ambulance marked with red crosses right outside his command post building, and from a window in the command post, Springfield informed the crew and wounded passengers that they were now prisoners of war.

The roadblock is credited with destroying "several half-tracks and nine other vehicles" on the 10th. By that night, the German XLVII Panzer Korps had begun its withdrawal from the Mortain area. The Germans were barely able to hold off an attack by the US 3d Armored Division on Hill 307, northeast of Mortain. 1st SS-PzD and 2d SS-PzD completed their withdrawal from the Mortain-St. Barthelmy area by 1100 hrs on 11 August, and Lt. Andrew's roadblock at Abbaye-Blanche was finally relieved the next day, 12 August 1944.

Official accounts give varying numbers of German vehicles destroyed at Abbaye-Blanche during the five days of the Battle of Mortain. A reasonable estimate would be at least 24 vehicles, including 3 Mk VI ("Tiger") tanks, 8 Mk IV tanks, 9 half-track armored personnel carriers or assault guns, 3 cargo trucks or cargo vehicles, 3 full-tracked personnel carriers, 2 motorcycles, 1 staff car, 1 armored car, one command car (Kuebelwagen), and at least 10 other vehicles, as well as 150-200 German infantry killed and 17 captured, and one machinegun nest destroyed. Lt. Andrew, in an interview soon after the battle, guessed that the roadblock knocked out at least 60 vehicles, many caused by the 3-inch TD guns under Lt. Springfield. He also said that 12 German armored vehicles had been destroyed on Highway 3, apparently by bazooka teams or 57mm guns, but that they had been hauled away at night by the Germans. These were in addition to the TD gun's kills. The 120th Inf Regt history mentions that one of the roads near the roadblock, probably Highway 3, had at least 24 destroyed German vehicles on it alone, all lined up bumper-to-bumper as if destroyed while parked that way. Official losses of the roadblock garrison were 3 killed and 20 wounded.

Col. Hammond Birks, commander of the 120th Inf Regt, regarded the stand of the Abbaye-Blanche roadblock as one of the most important factors in the regiment's successful repulse of the German counteroffensive, saying that "if the roadblock had not held, the whole position of the 120th would have been nullified and the resulting gap would have permitted the enemy to smash through the 30th

Division's line." He said the scores of enemy vehicles, destroyed by the roadblock, that littered the roads around Abbaye-Blanche "was the best sight I had seen in the war."

ACTION 11: ATTACK ALONG THE RIVER'S EDGE, 7 AUG 1944

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	---	Alongside trail paralleling river	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	---	8 infantry with a .30cal machinegun	Interview Folder #81
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	9th Kp, III Bn/4. SS-PzG Regt "Der Fuehrer" recon elements drove down trail into village	---	Folder #104
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	---	a. None b. None c. One d. None	Interview Folder #81
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	None	---	Folder #81
6. US Tanks Present	---	None	Interview Folder #81
7. Infantry Casualties	?	None	Interview Folder #81

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One motorcycle w/sidecar destroyed; one Kuebel-wagen destroyed; one staff car/limousine destroyed; one armored car (Sd Kfz 221 or 222) destroyed	---	Folder #81 German Tank and Antitank German Tanks of World War II
9. Artillery	Sporadic, inaccurate	None	Interview Folder #81
10. Obstacles	None	None	Interview GSGS 4347
11. Meteorological Data	Fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Interview Folder #90
12. Time of Day	c. 0500 hrs	c. 0500 hrs	Interview
13. Light and Visibility	Fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Fog until about 1000 hrs, then clear	Folder #90
14. Terrain	Bare, gently sloping to the north; riverbank; scattered buildings	Bare, gently sloping to the north; riverbank; scattered buildings	Interview GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	100-150m	100-150m	Interview GSGS 4347
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	2 rounds 57mm AP; Several hundred (?) .30cal machine gun rnds	Interview
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Frontal approach in road column	---	Interview

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	---	Hasty; gun placed about 8 hours previously.	Interview Folder #81
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	---	None	Interview
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	None	None	Interview
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	---	Interview Folder #81
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	180-200 20mm rnds in armored car; 1100-1500 7.92mm MG rnds in armored car; various amounts of small arms ammo in other vehicles	90 rounds carried in half track: 60 AP, 30 HE; 20-30 unloaded at gun. Several hundred .30 cal rounds	Interview German Tanks of World War II German Tank and Antitank

ACTION 12: MORNING TURKEY SHOOT, 7 AUGUST 1944

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	---	Behind hedgerow on hillside overlooking a main road	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	---	None	Interview Folder #81
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	None	---	Interview Folder #81
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	---	a. Two b. None c. None d. None	Interview Folder #81
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	One "small" tank, possibly a Mk IV	---	Interview Folder #81 <u>German Tank and Antitank</u> <u>German Tanks of World War II</u>
6. US Tanks Present	---	None	Interview Folder #81
7. Infantry Casualties	Unknown; possibly up to 36 in the half-tracks	None	Folder #81 Interview

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	Three half-tracks (probably Sd Kfz 251), one ammo truck, and one Mk IV tank - all flank shots, all destroyed	---	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
9. Artillery	Intermittent German artillery	Intermittent US artillery, observed from Hill 317	Interview Folder #81
10. Obstacles	None	None	Interview GSGS 4347
11. Meteorological Data	Light fog	Light fog	Interview Folder #90
12. Time of Day	0530	0530	Interview
13. Light and Visibility	Light fog; visibility 500-600m	Light fog; visibility 500-600m	Interview Folder #81
14. Terrain	Road on a steep hillside climbing up from river valley	On top of hill/ridge with moderately steep slope, overlooking road	Interview Folder #81 GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	---	320m	Interview GSGS 4347
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	1 round AP per vehicle = 5 rounds AP	Interview
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Driving in column along road, presenting flank shot to US guns	---	Interview Folder #81
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	---	Hasty; wheels of guns dug in to lower silhouette	Interview

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	---	First indication of enemy attack was ambush of German column at river's edge 30 min before	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	None	None	Interview
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	---	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	---	90 rounds in half-track: 60 AP, 30 HE. 20-30 rounds unloaded at guns	Interview

ACTION 13: FIRST ATTACK ON THE NORTH END, 7 AUGUST 1944

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	---	In shallow ditches along roadside, facing up road to the north. Covered by two .30cal MGs each. Mines along road in front of guns in kill zone	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	---	Approx. 20-30 riflemen and two .30cal MGs. Possibly 1-2 bazooka teams	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	Unknown; est. 40-80 men (1-2 platoons) of II or III Bn/4. SS-PzG Regt "Der Fuehrer"	---	Interview Division Das Reich Folder #81 Folder #123
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	None	a. Two b. None c. None d. Possibly one or two	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	One half-track with 75mm gun (either Sd Kfz 250/8 or Sd Kfz 251/22)	---	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
6. US Tanks Present	---	None	Interview
7. Infantry Casualties	Unknown, probably heavy	None	Interview

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	One half-track with assault gun hit semi-front by AP round and destroyed; one ammo carrier half-track hit semi-front by AP round and destroyed	None	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
9. Artillery	Intermittent, no effect	None	Interview
10. Obstacles	None	None	Interview
11. Meteorological Data	Fog	Fog	Interview Folder #90
12. Time of Day	0600 hrs	0600 hrs	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
13. Light and Visibility	Fog; visibility 30m	Fog; visibility 30m	Interview Folder #123
14. Terrain	Hedgerows, orchard	Hedgerows, orchard	Interview GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	30m	30m	Interview
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	None	2 rounds AP	Interview
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Drove down road, accompanied by infantry on foot	---	Interview
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	---	Hasty; wheels dug into ground to lower guns' silhouettes	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	---	Fighting to the south during the previous hour	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	None	None	Interview
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	None	---	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	?	90 rounds carried in half-track: 60 AP, 30 HE; 20-30 rounds unloaded at each gun	Interview

ACTION 14: SECOND ATTACK ON THE NORTH END, 7 AUGUST 1944

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
1. Disposition of Defense Weapons and Location Relative to Attack	---	In shallow ditches along roadside, facing up road to the north. Covered by two .30cal MGs each. Mines along road in front of guns in kill zone	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
2. Strength of Defending Infantry	---	Approx. 20-30 riflemen and two .30cal MGs. Possibly 1-2 bazooka teams	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
3. Size and Activity of Infantry Accompanying Attack	Approx. 40 men (platoon strength), with MG and flamethrower, possibly an SS-Pioneer platoon	---	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
4. No. and Type of Anti-tank Weapons in Visual Contact with Enemy a. 3" TD Guns (towed) b. 3" TD Guns (SP) c. 57mm AT Guns d. Bazookas	---	a. Two b. None c. None d. Possibly one or two	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
5. No. of Enemy Tanks and SP Guns (including those in fire support)	2, possibly 3, Mk IV tanks. 4 half-tracks with MGs (Sd Kfz 251) supporting	---	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123 <u>German Tanks of World War II</u>
6. US Tanks Present	---	None	Interview
7. Infantry Casualties	Unknown, probably heavy	None	Interview

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
8. Number and Type of Vehicle Casualties and/or hits (enemy)	2, possibly 3, Mk IV tanks destroyed. 4 Sd Kfz 251/1 half-tracks destroyed, by AP or bazooka fire	None	Folder #81 Folder #123
9. Artillery	Intermittent, no effect	None	Interview
10. Obstacles	None	None	Interview
11. Meteorological Data	light fog	light fog	Interview Folder #90
12. Time of Day	0600 hrs	0600 hrs	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123
13. Light and Visibility	Light fog	Light fog	Interview Folder #123
14. Terrain	Hedgerows, orchard	Hedgerows, orchard	Interview GSGS 4347
15. Max. Engagement Range of Weapons	150-200m?	150-200m?	GSGS 4347
16. No. of Rounds Fired by Type	?	?	
17. Type of Attack Maneuver Used by Enemy	Tanks advanced down road, covered by infantry with MG and flamethrower in orchard, and by MGs on half-tracks	---	Folder #81 Folder #123
18. Quality of Defensive Position Preparations	---	Hasty; wheels dug into ground to lower guns' silhouettes	Interview Folder #81 Folder #123

DATA OBJECTIVES	ATTACKER	DEFENDER	REMARKS
19. Extent of Warning of Attack, and Intelligence on Its Size and Composition	---	None	Interview
20. Air and Artillery Support and Effects	None	None	Interview
21. No. of Overwatching vs. Maneuvering Enemy Tanks	?	---	
22. Size of On-Hand Ammo Supply and Round Types	Mk IV tank carried 80 main gun rounds (75mm), and 2700 MG rounds	90 rounds carried in half-track: 60 AP, 30 HE; 20-30 rounds unloaded at each gun	Interview <u>German Tanks of World War II</u> <u>German Tank and Antitank</u>

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APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C

ORAL INTERVIEWS

ORAL INTERVIEWS

Under contract number MDA903-88-D-1000, Delivery Order Number 40, SAIC conducted oral interviews with World War II veterans who participated in the actions researched in this study. The following veterans were interviewed:

L. Lawson Neel	1st Lt., 1st Platoon, B Company, 823d TDBN	St. Barthelmy
Thomas Springfield	1st Lt., 3rd Platoon, A Company, 823d TDBN	Abbaye Blanche
George Greene	1st Lt., 3rd Platoon, B Company, 823d TDBN	St. Barthelmy
G. Dean Noble	Pvt., 117th Inf Regt, 30th ID Anti-tank Co.	St. Barthelmy

Follow-up telephone interviews with Thomas Springfield and George Greene were necessary to answer additional questions about their respective actions.

The interviews were transcribed from tape and have been edited to remove personal comments and conversation not relevant to this study.

INTERVIEW WITH L. LAWSON NEEL

This interview took place at the home of Lawson Neel in Thomasville, Georgia on December 1, 1989.

Participants:

M = Mike Baily SAIC
J = Jay Karamales SAIC
N = Lawson Neel World War II veteran

(Beginning of relevant conversation)

J: So it was about 10 minutes before the first tank came up?

N: If it was that long; it couldn't have been any longer because we were barely in position.

M: How long had you been married?

N: 13 years.

J: So the tank that you fired at and hit, then that was the only tank you saw from that position because of your restricted field of fire?

N: Yes. Now I want to tell you about that other tank, the second tank that we got, whose motor kept running.

J: That was over here? (Action #2)

N: Yes. By that time, the air cover was very heavy and they were firing the rockets. It was heavy fire at that tank because two or three times I thought, I'm gonna get in that tank and see if I can run it, but I couldn't have gone anywhere.

J: Because with all those airplanes shooting at it...

N: Yeah. Then I decided, no. They (the airplanes) couldn't see - it was a German tank.

M: I thought that was the first tank.

N: No.

M: Tank 1, you hit it, it stopped, the crew got out, and its dead.

N: No, that was the second tank.

M: So, the first one, it didn't burn on you?

N: I don't know what happened to it.

M: It stopped and you were gone.

N: Well, it was on fire. We stayed there an appreciable length of time. When I say that, I don't know whether it was sixty seconds or five minutes.

M: Was that tank to the right, now?...One round of AP.

J: This was it, the tank up here?

N: The second tank was the one that was the one we put more than one round in.

J: Oh, OK. The one that was over here.

M: The first tank, one round, tank dead, you're gone?

N: Exactly.

J: All right. That probably didn't take more than a couple of minutes did it?

N: I don't think so. We stayed long enough for...I really have no idea how much time transpired.

J: I am not surprised. I imagine it seems like forever.

N: Yeah. I do recall that thing that one boy he said, "This ain't running away, Lieutenant, is it?" I said, "No sir. Let's get the firing pin and get out of here." So we did take the firing pin out and leave.

J: OK.

N: I don't know what happened to the firing pin either. I do remember walking down that road explaining what I was doing. I said I was going to get another gun and take it forward.

M: Yeah, we wanted to ask about that.

J: Yeah, we'll be getting back to that one because that's one that really intrigued us.

N: Have you talked to Springfield, seen him?

M: I just talked to him to kind of establish contact. The way we are doing the project, we really wanted to focus in on details. We're focusing here on Barthelmy if we continue to Phase II, we'll go into Abbaye Blanche and him I did talk to him and he sounded hale and hearty.

N: Oh, that's good. I haven't had any contact with him. Captain Wiltz, who was our company commander, he came by to see me.

J: Yes, I have his name in the record.

N: We talked for a while. I never have been to a reunion and don't want to go. —

M: I talked to both Wiltz and Chrissingen of 'A' Company.

N: He's a heck of a great guy.

M: I talked to both him and I also talked to Lohse, the S-3, and I'd love to track down the S-2, but he's dead; Seitz. One of the things you all kept during the war was a little sheet called a tank claim form. He said they kept them all during the war. They had all the details in them and they're gone.

N: I went back to the Roer River and pulled back with the 624th. then I was sent back on R&R. And that's the first and the last time I was with the company commander. But Lohse was then transferred to Group, so he took ... that kind of information ... while I was gone, and so

J: Do you know if there was any US artillery fire coming down supporting you guys at the time of the fighting?

N: I don't know. But we did have good air support.

J: All the records I looked at, the American records and the interviews with the German officers after the war, they got them to sit down and write about this, they all said that the Allied air support. The Germans said that it was the airplanes that stopped the attack.

N: Yes.

J: They said the rocket planes, every time they tried to move, they just got pounded on.

N: That's exactly why I never did get in that second tank. I did want to go and recover that tank.

J: Would have been a nice souvenir. Did you have any of your crew wounded or killed at this first position?

N: I didn't have anybody killed.

J: OK.

N: I took a grenade fragment. It was very minor. Some of the others may have. I don't recall.

J: OK, now, after this gun got knocked out, you and your crew or just you by yourself took off across country?

N: All of us. Except the half-track driver and one other man, who was across the street.

J: Oh, OK, the one in the building.

N: Yeah, there would have been nine of us who went back.

J: OK. Now, where did you have to go to get the second gun? Did you have to go all the way back?

N: All the way back. They were still in position. I didn't have my jeep with me so I had no communication.

J: Right. OK, so now we're going to move up to the position of your second gun here.

M: What time did you get back to platoon? You moved into the first one about 9:30 ...

N: 11:00, maybe. Again, I don't know. (apologetic)

M: I've been in your moccasins. You don't know what time of day it is - the sun's up.

J: Now, did your crew man the second gun also? Did you have the same gun crew?

N: No.

J: No?

N: We got a new crew. A new squad altogether.

J: About how long did it take you to go from platoon up to the new position?

N: Just a very short time. We didn't waste any time either. Now there was a road there and you could back off the road, it wasn't much of a road but it was a trail. So we were able to put that gun at the back edge of the field, and it was up against the hedgerow so we were protected by the hedgerow.

M: Like right here?

N: Yes, on this side of that, if that's the hedgerow.

J: This is the terrain line, those are hedgerows.

M: So you were pointed which way?

N: Pointed toward the road. That was the only thing we were going to cover was that road.

M: The other hedgerows didn't interfere with you?

N: Yes, we couldn't see a thing but the road. They weren't going to come

anywhere except down the road.

J: Right, only on the road.

M: Now, I've got to understand your field of fire. Here's the road. Here's the hedgerow. Don't you have a hedgerow between you and the road?

N: No.

J: No, I think he says they're right here at this corner here. Like, right about like that.

M: That's a terrain line.

N: We would have been well in front of that hedgerow, but alongside of that hedgerow, however...

M: So you were on this side of the hedgerow, pointed this way. Oh, that makes sense.

J: Oh, I see.

M: You had a good shot at that section of road.

J: Good flank shot at any tanks coming down the road.

N: Yes, we didn't want a frontal shot. And there was another tank of theirs somewhere; and I never did locate it ... It fired right on top of us with high explosive as soon as we revealed our position.

M: It was somewhere over here?

N: Yes.

J: OK, yes that's what the records said. We just want it clear as to everyone's position. So that'll take care of that question. Now, did you have more ammo at this gun? You had your carrier right there?

N: Yes. I don't think we had the carrier there. We just had what was in the half-track.

M: You unloaded the whole thing?

N: We had plenty of time there. I would say we were there two or three hours maybe, an hour before that other tank came, at least that long. We had a little time to breathe and do a little reconnaissance of the area.

J: One of the accounts that we found in the Archives says that when you originally went to set up this gun, there was a 57mm gun there that took off before the Germans got there.

N: Now, I never did see this but I did find out, it's a funny thing, the boy

lived here in Thomasville and his name was Pista and he said you and I were in the same hedgerow or same ditch, it was a little, some type of...it was kind of like a ditch I would say; there was something there because we knew that back of it, they were in there with the 57 and they were pointing it down the road, I think they must have been aiming it down the road, but I never did see them, never did know they were there.

J: Oh, that's interesting.

M: You didn't know they were there?

N: I didn't have any idea.

M: The write-up says the positions were coordinated.

N: (Laughs.)

M: OK, they weren't.

N: They weren't. It was several years after the war before I knew that he was there. I think he's dead now.

J: At this position [Position 2], what the records say is that one German tank came down the road and you fired at it and knocked it out. That was the one that the engine kept turning over and you thought about getting. Then they say that two more tanks came and one of them sort of stood back and did overwatch while the other one hunted for your gun.

N: No. The tank that we knocked out came out very slowly, and there was an overwatching tank at that same time and he came out of there very slowly because I remember it seemed like seven forevers that that gun barrel came into view long before the tank very slowly, we didn't know anything about the other tank before it got a good shot.

J: He just came down the road.

N: Came down the road.

M: Another flank shot. Do you remember whether it was hull or turret?

N: I would think it was below the turret in the corner of that tank because those men bailed out of there and we got another anti-tank round off immediately. They were in the ditch around it.

J: There were German infantry with them?

N: No. The crew of the tank.

M: So 2 rounds, one AP one HE.

N: And almost ... I think we got off a round of high explosives, the second round, before the overwatching tank. They probably couldn't see us, but

they located us, in fact, that would make sense they located us when we fired the second round and they fired a round right into our position there. And so, we left the gun right there but we moved the men back and by that time there was some infantry there [along the hedge at the other side of the field] we were able to get that gun back but we didn't try to man it.

J: Oh, because I know who that infantry was. They were from, at least according to the records, they were probably from B Company because the men who had manned this roadblock got attacked at midnight. They had got their roadblock overrun, they pulled back to their platoon headquarters.

N: That's where it would have been. Now, I didn't find any headquarters at all but there were men there and we, with the gun crew that I had, we manned on the other side of that hedgerow. In other words, we were one hedgerow from the gun and there were a fair number of us there and by that time, we were about as worried about the plane as we were about ground troops.

J: Oh, I imagine so.

N: Because it was a fairly open field just behind that position and I walked way out onto the field and waved my helmet at them trying to get them to quit firing on us.

J: There were a number of mentions of them doing that.

N: But we were still getting them and I had no idea whether it was our fire or their fire. We were under a good deal of fire at that time. That's the most vivid thing I remember. There was kind of a little ditch incline there and this boy was trying to crawl under a root. It was about that big [makes semi-circle with thumb and forefinger] and I laughed at him I said, "Ain't this a hell of a way to make a living?" It's those kind of things that stick in your mind.

J: So you had infantry behind you?

N: We shared with some American soldiers but I don't know who the heck they were.

J: I remember reading that the guys in the roadblock, when they got run off their roadblock, their company commander sent them back to retake it and their platoon leader went down there and looked and there's all these German tanks sitting on the road but they didn't go any further than the roadblock, they just sat there and he said we can't take it back. So he went back to the company commander and said there's no way we can take that back. So he said "OK, go back and form a line" and he formed a line right along that hedgerow.

N: That's where we were.

M: Did we think the thing was that far back?

J: Yes, the records say specifically that was where it was.

N: They were on our side of that gun that they had there, at least one hedgerow or one field behind it.

M: Yes, and there is a big field.

J: Yes, that's a pretty good size field.

M: That's a trail, yes, it'd be a pretty good size field.

J: You didn't see any German infantry when you were there.

N: Not at first, but later that night.

J: OK.

N: I think at least two Germans, German infantry, were killed in that field right in front of us.

M: What was the range to that second tank?

N: Couldn't have been more than 50m. That was the best shot we could get.

J: Do you know if it was a Panther or a Tiger?

N: Big Panther.

M: You knew the first one was Panther.

N: Well I didn't know what it was. We called them all Tigers or Panthers. I didn't really know what they were. I still wouldn't know.

M: We should have brought pictures. The records say Panther.

J: The record, I looked the actual what Germans had and they had mostly Panthers.

N: It was an awesome tank. That second one, that was another, that gun barrel kept coming and coming and coming and you couldn't see anything but gun barrel. Finally, after seven forever, it got out far enough that the body of the tank was exposed; that's when we fired. The adrenalin was running.

J: So you say you fired one AP round and one HE round?

N: Yes.

M: One at the tank, one at the crew?

N: Yes.

M: And then you were hit?

N: Our gun was not hurt. This was a round of HE and it splattered all over our position.

J: What affect did that have on your crew?

N: I don't know that anybody was wounded at that time.

J: But no one was killed.

N: No one was killed but we left the gun and moved back one hedgerow. We were able to see the gun. We were concerned, both from the tank standpoint and from more infantry coming (that we needed to move). I felt a lot safer where we were, pulled back.

M: But that blocked the road?

N: Yes, that blocked the road completely.

J: We read one account that mentioned before you knocked out this tank, or actually while the tank was hunting for you, that either it or the overwatching tank knocked out two other US vehicles that were trying to go down that road towards Juvigny.

N: Could have. I didn't see any.

J: Yeah, you had a restricted view, OK.

N: But, now, my driver and I, he dropped me at that point they did shoot at that jeep but it went over his head. They did shoot at that one vehicle but they didn't hit him but that's all I know. I don't recall any other vehicle on the road my other two guns were at the original position, still back.

M: They never moved during the whole day?

N: No, they stayed right there. We didn't know really what was happening on either side of us. We knew that A Company and Springfield were cut off. That's all we knew. And I didn't know that all that road was left and they had gone a lot further down until I had gotten the history of the 30th Division, that they had gotten back by where our C Company was. I didn't know, but they were way behind us. We were kidding them (C Company) because they didn't see any action.

J: So after you moved back from this gun and there were infantry back here, what did you do?

N: We stayed there. We tried to make a line there. We stayed there as long as there seemed to be any threat. I guess it would have been most of the day.

J: Do you happen to remember how many 3" guns were left in your company after this battle?

N: No. Not mine. There would have been eight guns, the infantry lost all theirs and I lost the one and I would guess that Springfield, I don't know whether he, I don't know what happened to his guns.

M: I don't think he lost any. He had a field day. He set up a roadblock and he went on at Abbaye Blanche for about three days. Apparently he had a good field of fire.

N: He had a good field of fire, I remember that, and he was on the hill and he could watch that main route.

M: He was shooting everything in sight and he went on for a couple days.

N: We didn't have any field of fire at all.

M: So they lost all of 3d Platoon and one 2d Platoon gun. Where was the rest of 2d Platoon?

J: The 2d Platoon was back here also according to what we have.

M: Except for the one gun.

J: Except for the one gun they put up there [in St. Barthelmy].

M: So this gun, you ultimately recovered?

N: Yes.

M: What, the next day?

N: Yes.

M: Oh, OK. Now, your action kind of ends; this is the Day 1 action. It pretty much started on the 8th begins its US ...counterattack.

N: Right, that was all of our action on the 7th.

J: Because the next day, the regiment of the 4th Infantry Division came up and started a counterattack to retake Barthelmy.

N: Yes. I know it was very soon after that because we made a big move to try to close up the Falaise Gap one night.

M: Yes.

N: We were making big jumps and I know I got totally lost. We were off our maps.

J: That's what they said, they said that they had to keep getting maps. As

soon as they got on the map, they'd outrun it. They had to get another one. They even had guys carrying around rolls and rolls of maps in their jeeps.

N: We had, we used a Michelin road map of France.

M: That makes sense.

N: It was the only map we could find.

J: That's all my questions.

M: Let me ask you and I know you weren't there. From talking to a survivor or anything, can you shed any light on what happened to 3d Platoon? I know you weren't there.

N: As I gather, they were completely overrun. What infantry was with them, what infantry were they with at that time?

M: 117th A and B Company.

N: A and B.

M: Excuse me, A and C.

J: We know from the records that A and C Companies didn't come out too well. A Company's strength after the battle was 1 officer and 12 enlisted men. C Company was 1 officer and 33 enlisted men.

N: What did they do? Have a lot of prisoners or killed or what?

J: A lot of missing and they reported those first and I imagine what happened was a lot of them were prisoners but they found out later.

N: The only thing I know is that thing I told you about: that some of our men, as prisoners, could see us.

M: This action is kind of unrelated to you, I don't even know if he has it on the map. See the Alpha Company had one platoon that was south of Mortain. That was overrun. A lot of those guys were lost but some guys were showing up five days later and I suspect, and our records don't show this, that a lot of these guys ended up because it was so fluid on the German side, getting away. We know a lot of people got out of there. The initial figures were really high. Your company, the data reported 103 missing on that first day but subsequently, quite a few of them showed up.

N: Most of that [the reports] came at night or before daylight and they didn't know what the hell was going on.

M: Your first gun position, do you have any idea how many German infantry there actually were. I realize you were taking in coming.

N: No, not any idea. All I remember is the bullets bouncing off the gun shield.—

M: Did you say they were rolling grenades under the gunshield?

N: Yeah.

M: To throw a hand grenade, you have to be within 50 yards...50 yards is a heck of a throw.

N: Yeah, I know. It was close. As I say, I very distinctly remember hearing that German, in that first tank, hearing that commander give his fire command. I think my command was "Damn it, shoot!"

M: Where did I get this story? I think it's just floating around. General Cavazos it's more like this though, "Frank, tank, shoot!"

N: That's about right.

J: One question that I've been wondering, I've not been able to find any authoritative source on this, about what was the maximum effective range of your 3" gun? About how far could you expect to shoot and do anything?

N: Later on, we did use it, I'm trying to remember the name of the town we had beautiful fields of fire. In fact, I aimed and fired one myself, and he was at least 3-400 yards away.

M: According to the division history(tape ends)

M: ...then we'll start asking questions to fill in the blanks. These are the dispositions that we had.

N: We started off to the left.

M: This is before you moved; this shows your move. Let me know. We've got 1st Battalion, 117th down to squad locations (explaining positions).

J: We found a set of interviews in the Archives that someone had done a few months after the battle. He had made a sketch of the town and gun positions. So, these four brown anti-tank gun positions here are supposed to be from 3d Platoon.

N: They were completely lost.

J: There was a gun from 2d Platoon they said was attached. He had it pointed here.

M: We're not sure when that thing moved up. We have two reports. One that it moved in about three in the morning and got hit by artillery and then another that says it joined about four thirty. Which is correct, we're not clear. And then the attack started about 5 o'clock.

N: Where did it start from? Have you got that?

J: Every one of these red arrows are directions that the Germans came from.

M: The roadblock attack was first, about midnight, but nothing developed from that. They [the Germans] stalled. Next thing that happened were these roadblocks [Gde. la Dainie and la Sablonniese].

J: They both got overrun around 5/5:15. So, the Germans came from all different directions this way and we know that by about 9 or 9:30 in the morning, the Germans had pretty much taken the town. That's when the records mention that your guns were brought up. These two positions, that is where we had guessed that your guns were, based on what the records say, because they are very vague on exactly where they were. Based on what we read, we put tentative positions here and here and we sort of picked out what questions to ask to try to narrow it down.

N: Do you want to start with the questions because I can tell you this because I have a very vivid memory of what happened. What happened, I got a call to go up there. Now, let me be sure of which "Y" in the road because there are two of them.

M: There are two of them?

N: Yes. The position that I took, I went up, my driver and I, to scout out, and we took small arms fire, it was a real rough situation. So I picked the only position where I could get off the road, as far up as I could, which was a gate right beside a little house about 10 or 15 feet further up. That was my position there.

J: That would be the house right there.

M: All the reports had you at the west end of town.

N: That's where I am.

J: This is the west side of town.

M: No, no this is east.

N: Then it would be this one wouldn't it?

M: Yes.

N: Frankly, I never saw any more than that part the "Y". That's as far as I could get. Now, there was a house on this side of the road. I didn't get off on the Juvigny road and that would be this road here. And I would guess then this position. I don't recall that at all.

J: That's a terrain line, not a hedgerow. This is a photocopy of a color map.

N: Then we would have pulled off just this side of the "Y" right there and we could get off the road right there. The reason I remember so vivid, there was post in the way of spreading the trail.

J: That is definitely something we have a question about.

M: The post didn't make any sense.

J: We didn't understand how it affected your field of fire.

N: Well, we couldn't get the trail spread open all the way. And, I was cursing up a blue streak there. "We got to get this thing set up."

M: This is a "Y".

N: This is one road. This is the other road and this is the "Y". We came in right about here. We saw this tank as soon as he came out. We saw his gun first. I even heard his fire command. We heard each other's fire command.

M: Is that right? So you're about here?

N: Yes.

M: Pointed this way or this way?

N: I was pointed this way; pointed to cover that whole thing [road junction].

M: And the point on the trails was, OK, here's a sketch. This is normal trail spread. What couldn't you do?

N: We couldn't get it all the way open, because the gate post was too close to the gun.

M: Which means you couldn't traverse and fire.

N: Yes, we had plenty of room to traverse. The gun was in position between its gun trails. What I was afraid of is that the trails would come together on the recoil. We had to get it enough that way so there wouldn't be any recoil.

M: OK, so you're about here.

N: He's coming down there. You could see him. We may have been even been...No, we didn't see the road. We couldn't see that road at all [immediate right]. We couldn't see that tank at all until he came from behind that building. And, as soon as he came out, he saw us, we could see the gun commander, tank commander riding up in the turret, and we could see each other.

M: You were at close range.

J: You were at very close range.

N: Yes. I must have been not more than 15 to 20 yards at most.

M: OK, that didn't come out at all.

J: No, they didn't mention that.

M: So, you saw him when he came into the intersection?

N: As soon as he came, and you see we had been waiting there, we saw his gun and he was moving very slowly and he came out and we could see his gun barrel. So, we knew he was on the way. Consequently, we were aimed right at the town that's why we got him first because he had to traverse and we didn't have to do anything except fire the gun.

M: OK, so you hit him, this being the German - a Panther, right?

N: Yes. Big tank with a muzzle about this big. [spreads arms, laughs]

M: So you hit him about where?

N: He was all the way out because we could easily see each other and hear each other.

M: Did you hit the turret?

N: No, I think we hit above the track. I couldn't tell you exactly where we hit.

M: OK. See, one thing we're trying to get, and the Brit who started but didn't realize this, but we had virtually nothing that would go through the front of that tank. The 3" wouldn't do, the 57 wouldn't do it, the 75 wouldn't either.

N: Yes, we had a side shot. No question about that. He had to traverse over to us and that's why we got him.

J: What happened to the tank? Did it knock it out/immobilize it?

N: I think that's at the same time and he is where I'm not sure that small arms fire was all around us, coming off the shield like it was a hose, and after we fired that one shot, we stayed there about 20 seconds. In other words, they had grenades that were coming underneath the shield, and so I pulled the firing pin and said, "Let's get out of here."

M: The official history said you were hit by a gun.

N: Not that gun.

M: So infantry drove you away?

N: Infantry, yes. Somebody across the way told me later that they didn't see how we managed to stay there because they were in this building on the other side. Our half track had been to back us in here and then go across the street on the other side. He was on that side of the street. We were here. He was over there and our ammunition was over there.

J: OK, now, before we get ahead of ourselves...

N: One man carried three rounds and that was about all one man could carry and he came across that street.

M: Let me give you the story that we got from the records but I think it's all wrong. You fired and knocked out the tank and then a Private Cecil Derr killed the tank commander with a carbine, supposedly from 300 yards. Does that make any sense?

N: No.

M: Another tank came after and you had trouble firing because of the post. Apparently, the post gave you emplacement problems...

J: This is what we read from the official history of your outfit. By 0930 on 7 August, the town of St. Barthelmy was under siege by an estimated force of 50 German tanks and supporting infantry. Losses among A and C Companies of the 1st Battalion, 117th Infantry are holding positions in the town were running high. The 3" tank destroyer guns of 2d and 3d Platoons, B Company, 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion, which were positioned in the town, were either disabled or destroyed by this time.

N: They were overrun.

J: Right. In an effort to provide reinforcements to the inundated... forces within St. Barthelmy, the records say Col Frankland, the CO of the 117th, ordered you as platoon leader of 1st Platoon, B Company, to bring two guns forward. Lt. Neel's platoon, 1st Platoon, was located initially about one kilometer west of town. The attempt to bring the first 3" gun forward into St. Barthelmy was met with resistance forcing the crew to take up a position just west of town.

N: Yes, but we got in without seeing anything and we took that position and fired one shot at that one tank, and then there was so much small arms fire, and I couldn't figure where the hell it was coming from, it was all around. The man who brought our ammunition went back across to the half-track, which was on the other side of this street. We lost him at that time. He got out of the half-track and went into a building in which some of the infantry was, and he didn't find his way back to us until two days later.

M: So you lost a track and a gun, and got out on foot?

N: Yes.

J: Some time between 9:30 and 10:00, shortly after moving in position, Lt Neel's gun killed a Mark V Panther tank. The gun crew, this is all according to the official history, also accounted for the tank's commander and some of the supporting infantry with small arms fire. According to the records, there was some infantry with you.

N: Nothing but the gun crew.

M: As another tank approached the 3" gun, the crew ran out of ammunition.

N: We didn't run out of ammunition. We ran first! I remember this well because one of my boys said "Lt, this ain't running away is it?" I said, "Hell no! We got to get out of here!" And then, I walked back because my jeep driver did not come up with me on that one. I had to walk back three kilometers to where we were and drop the next gun and I remember that very clearly because there was some officer, I don't know who or what rank, maybe a colonel, maybe a major said "Lt., what are you doing?" because I was walking back by myself and I said, "I'm going to get another gun." Right then I went and got that second gun and that's where we blocked the road with the tank. We got into there. Now, there were infantry along in this, I found out I knew one of the boys that was in there but we got off the road back this far against this hedgerow and when that thing came down, we got him and there was an overwatching tank here.

M: This is how the battalion history goes. This Pvt. Cecil O. Derr killed the tank commander with his carbine?

N: That I don't know. I can't confirm.

M: Was he one of your guys?

N: Derr was one of the men, uh-huh.

M: So you fired one round of HE to get rid of the supporting infantry, and one round of AP at the tank. You fired one round, one tank?

N: Yes.

M: And became ... Didn't happen. Or, no, that might have happened later. They might have hit the gun with a shell, but after you were long since gone.

N: We were getting a lot of air support. This tank they were sitting around. The motor kept turning over. The men bailed out and we fired a round of HE, as they were running towards this tree line, and killed two or three men. That tank's motor kept clicking away.

M: So you did fire a subsequent round?

J: The second gun.

N: One round with the first gun.

M: One round, one hit, one tank? And we fired only two rounds, one AP and one HE, ~~at~~ the second tank.

J: That is going to be an important question that we have.

M: Basically when you set up at the crossroads here, you figured out a field of fire going down this road.

N: We were just trying to cover both roads and we didn't want to be exposed to either one.

M: So you really didn't have a good field of fire down either road.

N: No we didn't have a field of fire on either road. We only covered after they came into there. That was the thing all the way through that area; you know, we were trained to get a good field of fire of at least 300 yards until we broke out of that, bocage area, and this was still bocage there [at Mortain] the best field of fire I think we ever had was about 70 yards. If you got in the middle of the road, you were a dead duck. They'd see you as soon as you saw them. So we tried to get off the road.

M: You'll be interested in some anecdote that a guy ... Tank Destroyer Association, ... he helped me get started on these names tracking you guys down. He said that they were in the bocage, what they did, they put towing pintle on the front of a half-track and pushed guns.

N: That would have been better. We never could figure out how to do it and we had a rough time. But it was a booger to get those half-tracks up, unlimber the gun, turn it around, and put it in position, especially in a case like that. Now, later on, we were in that area above Aachen, and there we had beautiful fields of fire. It was just like we'd had in training. This room is about the size of our fields of fire [in France] (laughs).

J: First I want to ask the background questions just about tank destroyers and also the situation here. Some of these questions we just threw in there just on the offchance that someone will be able to answer them. Do you happen to remember the night before this if it was cloudy or if the moon was out or it was hazy?

N: No.

J: What was the usual number of rounds that you carried for your 3" gun?

N: I really don't remember.

J: We have seen some conflicting reports.

M: Have you ever seen the report they did from Fort Knox? This thing says 90 rounds. But both Raney and the other guy I talked to, they said 30 to 60.

N: Probably. They would know. He [Raney] was in the headquarters outfit.

M: By the way, Raney wanted to send his regards. He was a recon platoon leader.---

N: I don't know any time that if we got off one round without return fire, we were pretty lucky. It was usually we shoot you, you shoot us. Later on, when we were self-propelled, it was different. You know how you're always supposed to have an alternate, retreat field of fire? Baloney. You can't do that if you're towed. You're stuck, unless you're firing indirect fire. If you're firing direct fire at somebody, you're in a real difficult position, because as soon as you fire at anybody around there, they know it.

J: Did they have you do that a lot? Fire indirect fire?

N: Very little. Which was just as well. I could probably only have hit something in Berlin.

M: That wasn't typical. In fact, there was one towed battalion in Italy, and that's basically what they did. They were artillery.

N: Well, I can see that. The first firing we did was indirect, but we never did know where the shells impacted. Somewhere. Although we did take our first casualties in the company that way. One of the shells hit a tree right there in our area and exploded and killed one of our boys and wounded another one.

J: Did you normally transport your rounds in a half-track or truck? Was it the same half-track that towed your guns?

N: Yes. Some of them were. Then there were the ammunition trucks.

M: Yes, but was that in platoon or was that in the company?

N: That was an ammunition truck in the platoon.

M: So, now your basic load probably makes sense, no more than 60 in the track.

N: I seriously doubt if we carried even 60 rounds.

M: That sounded a little high to me.

N: Those rounds are heavy and it takes a lot of room when you got a 10-man squad there. You've got 8 men in the back of the half-track.

M: Do you remember how many rounds in a box?

N: No. There was a lot in the truck. I remember that very well because we had one gas attack alarm, and the ammo truck driver stopped, and was trying to find his gas mask but couldn't because of all the ammunition in the truck. He had his ammo out and was crying at the same time. That's why I remember that. Otherwise I don't think anybody else had a gas mask

inside their carrier. They had them outside. But I would say that maybe 2 in a box. How many's in a box? [today]

M: I know the new stuff, like a 105, is 2 rounds per box, but that round [3-inch] was a lot wider than a 105. You might have had three.

N: We could have had three. Three were heavy.

M: Yes. About 60 pounds.

N: So, if a man hadn't carried two rounds across the street while we unlimbered, we wouldn't have had any ammunition at all. That was his job but he had to come across that street with ammunition in his arms and we were already under fire.

M: Did you kind of load the whole half-track at once?

N: No, really I'm not sure exactly what happened. Everybody did what they were told to do.

M: So you had at the gun, what?

N: Maybe three rounds. That's what he could bring in his arms and he couldn't get back across the street.

J: A platoon of tank destroyer guns was four guns?

N: Yes.

J: Do you know if all your platoons were up to full strength before the battle?

N: Yes.

J: They were?

M: Four guns. You had a 4X4 then you had a 6X6 truck for the ammo.

N: That truck was a big 4-ton truck.

J: From the official records, they give us a general time that you moved up here about 9:30 or so?

N: I probably got that call a little earlier so I had time to go up there in a jeep, come back and get the gun, and go and set up. We were there about, it couldn't have been over 10 minutes.

M: By the time you got there, was the weather clear?

N: Yes.

M: It was real foggy in the morning. Do you remember what time it cleared

up?

N: No. But I was not restricted by fog so far as I could see that tank. It was foggy when I was driving up there.

J: We have some reports, from the guns in the town, early in the morning when the Germans attacked. They said they were firing only at muzzle flashes. That's all they could see.

N: That's all they would have seen.

J: Do you remember what time your platoon had moved up to this position back here west of town?

N: It was the day before in the afternoon, midday something like that, and we placed the guns that were there along the Juvigny road.

J: We have a pretty good idea where that was because that is mentioned specifically in the records where the platoon actually was. It's off this map.

N: One of the interesting things is that these men who were taken prisoner, told me later that they could see our platoon position from the hill [northeast of St. Barthelmy].

J: I'll bet I know where that hill is. See that hill is off to this direction or this direction. There is a large hill up here. That means the Germans must have used the hill for observation but none of our records mention that.

M: Were you told this during the war or shortly after?

N: It must have been during the war. He must have gotten away some time though I don't know exactly when. But he did come back. I do remember that.

J: You said the size of your gun crew here was eight or ten men?

N: Ten.

J: Ten men.

N: That was with the truck driver. too. That was the whole squad.

J: You say that you all really had three rounds that you could use that were within reach.

N: I don't recall any more than that. And I know only that one time did we get any from the half-track.

J: How did you go when you left the gun?

N: I went cross country across here. Then I got back onto the road after this curve.

M: You had to walk all the way back to your original position?

N: Yes.

M: That must have taken some time.

J: We guessed. We didn't know. We figured you did on foot. We didn't know how long it would take.

N: Who employed you?

M: The Concepts Analysis Agency of the Army, that's Operations Research, hired Science Applications to gather very detailed data; this is in cooperation with a British firm [actually DOAE]. If you really need it, I'll call you back with that.

N: No, it isn't necessary.

M: It's a British government organization that does the same system as CAA and they're trying to compare the effects of battle situations on particular effectiveness of the units against small arms and now anti-armor which requires some very detailed data. I just stumbled onto this project. If you ask anybody who does any work with history, they'll tell you this stuff isn't available; it's just not there. So instead of giving SAIC a bunch of money, they're giving us some money to see if there is anything there. If there is, we'll spend some more money but we don't want to spend it all at once. Basically what we've been trying to find out is this detailed stuff. Some of it like how many rounds at the gun, we need somebody like you to tell us. It's not in any records. Even if you had had a diary, you wouldn't have written that down.

N: Yeah, we were very specifically told not to keep a diary. How did you come to choose this particular battle?

M: Two reasons. We had the detail because of combat interviews. The theater headquarters under SLA Marshall, they tried to collect this stuff soon after the battle. For example the interviews for this occurred immediately after, like 3 or 4 days. Then he did a follow-on a couple of months later, some more people from the division commander down to the squad leaders and privates.

N: So there is a lot data already available.

M: There is data. We are captive to our sources.

J: This is the kind of thing that we have found. These are the combat interviews. We photocopied these from the Archives and all of this is on Mortain. I'll show you where we got a big source for our information was a sketch that was in here. They sketched Barthelmy for us.

N: He did a good job of it.

M: He placed you almost perfectly.

J: That was the roadblock. He has you there and he put you also right over here by the trail. Just like you said. Did you realize you were that close to the 117th Regimental Command Post?

N: No, had no idea.

J: So, this is where we got most of our detailed information.

N: It's amazing how little you know about it [a battle] when you're in it.

M: For example, the October one. I would love to get into that but there's no records. There's the After Action Report that's thin. We don't have any interviews on them so we're kind of captive to our sources. The most detailed stuff we got, because of how much stuff was going on, is on the Bulge. In fact, another project that he is working on, the Concepts Analysis Agency has already gathered data on the Battle of the Bulge so they wanted us to do something different so we're doing Mortain. Our number one choice was part of the Bulge action at a place called Dom Butgenbach where by accident down at the Infantry School were the monographs right after the war and we have very detailed accounts of that action. But CAA thinks it has enough on the Bulge, so they wanted us to do Mortain.

N: The confusion and the number of things that go wrong boggle the mind, don't they? Nothing really seems to go right or how its supposed to.

M: Yes. Frictions of war.

J: In that context, in doing the background research for this, I happened to look at a couple of books that were written about Ultras and the decoding that we did on the German transmissions. They all say that the Allied Command knew exactly where the German attack was going to be, knew exactly when it was going to be and decided to let them go ahead and do it because it was a way of drawing them into the Falaise pocket. They don't really say how far down that information filtered. I don't know if the 30th Division Commander knew.

M: He didn't. I feel safe to say that; the Ultra was closely guarded. I suspect it didn't go below Bradley. Very, very closely guarded and Bradley, well, he put a division in place. Did you realize you were backed up by a combat command of an armor division and 4th Infantry Division?

J: There were actually two armor divisions and one infantry.

M: Your division commander was told after the attack was scheduled to start to expect attack in 12 hours.

N: Yes, I remember in the 30th History he said a strong onion breath [could have finished off the division].

J: Yep, that's exactly right.

M: Have you read the official history?

N: No.

M: The impact you get on that was that the corps commander, Collins, is getting all excited and your division commander says, "We're handling this fire," and I think his onion breath comment came afterwards when he realized, "Gee, this really was a close run thing." During the time he was pretty calm and thought he had the situation under control.

N: I had guessed that the German attack came because of that gap between where Mortain and Avranches is. That gave them an opportunity to cut Patton off but that worked against them in that the Falaise Gap began to swing in on them. But they got out of it. We were down the road one time sharing during that retreat period, when they were retreating so fast, we ran right smack into a German road column, retreating.

J: They were pulling out?

N: They were out. They were on the road and so were we, on the same darn road, and nobody shot at each other

J: Really?

M: That's amazing.

N: A lot of things like that happened. Back before St. Lo or right after St. Lo I think it was. It was pretty confused. They were coming back on the road and the lieutenant said he shook hands with the German squad commander. They thought they were friendly. But then nobody knew exactly where anybody was. That was right after they had pulled back and my order was to go. They gave me the map coordinates and it went slam off the map that I was using and then 100 yards was a big advance. He had me off on another map and I checked with them three times and finally went back to company headquarters and said, "Are you sure that's where I'm supposed to go?" They said it sure was. The infantry was moving but they were going cross country. We were road bound in our jeeps. We got there and I remember walking up and down that street and it was quiet and I could hear a clock ticking in a house. Nobody was in the town at all as far as I know. Must have been two miles ahead of our front line at that time, cause we were moving so fast. That was right after St. Lo. I'll never be able to forget that.

M: The second position, two German tanks, the cat and mouse game, they were looking for you, was that just not true?

N: No. He was coming down the road. He had no idea, neither one of them.

It was standard practice, I would say. One was maneuvering and one was overwatching and they were being very, very cautious.

J: The general impression in the histories is that, they say one tank came down the road, you fired at it and knocked it out. And then two tanks that were further back saw that, knew there was a gun up there but didn't know where so they sent one down. They even said he was maneuvering around in the fields trying to find you and I was thinking with those hedgerows that would be impossible.

N: They would never get off into those fields.

J: That's good. That's what I thought. The ones who were maneuvering looking for your gun while the other was overwatching and then when he got too close, your gun fired at him and the overwatching one saw you and fired. That's what the history says.

N: That's correct, that part of it. He wasn't looking for us. He was looking for anybody.

J: Right. You know we'll have a lot of rewriting to do when we get back.

M: Yeah. The records are wrong.

J: I guess if you're going to study history, you learn to live with it. I mean the guy wasn't there. He didn't know. One of the interesting things, you know, we were talking about the air power and how the US and British air stomped on the Germans. The German air commander in the region promised the ground commander that he would have three hundred German planes in the air over Mortain that day.

N: They didn't have anything.

J: No, because of Ultra we knew about that. That was the one thing that they did act on. Not one German airplane got away from the airfield. They swamped all the German airfields in the area and not one plane made it over there.

M: Well, our air supremacy was so complete with or without Ultra. The skies were just full of Allied aircraft. When you read in the pilot's accounts is you could really tell the front; one side is actually dark, pitch dark; the other side, your side, truck lights, fires. The second gun position, the tank that hit your position, you just don't know where he was, do you?

N: No, we didn't go look for him either. We didn't know he was there. We still don't know. All we knew was that there was an awful lot of German infantry very close.

M: You said that they threw hand grenades.

J: That's close.

N: Yeah, very close.

M: This is a 3d Platoon question: The accounts say that they were moving in at 2 o'clock in the morning on the 7th, they actually moved in with the 117th, was that the company that moved in a little late?

N: I don't understand that. They may have, but we were in a position well in the daylight in the afternoon so I would have felt that they would have gotten in position earlier than that.

M: I'm wondering if they would have gotten in position with you around the company...

N: No.

M: They didn't?

N: No. It was a that long jump that we made and I would assume that they went straight on up to that position.

J: What we got put them well back, kilometers back toward Juvigny and then about the same time that you moved into your position and then they say that two o'clock in the morning, that's when they actually moved the four guns into the town...

N: That seems very strange.

J: It seems strange to us.

M: Yeah, it seems strange to me because you got these guys...

N: Our normal procedure for somebody, to go up I mean a platoon leader go up to locate his gun positions and then go back and get his platoon and bring it up and put it in its positions.

M: And you couldn't do that at night? Couldn't locate the positions?

N: No, you can't locate the positions and you can't very well bring your guns up even.

J: Well, it struck us as odd too.

N: They must have gotten in their positions that afternoon and the attack came at night. I don't know when the 1st Division pulled out, but they, I didn't ever see them.

J: It was morning, early afternoon, on the 6th.

N: Then we moved in on the 7th.

M: The division commander didn't claim responsibility for the sector until

eight at night. One thing I wanted to get and what I'd like to do is borrow this from you, we'll go find a xerox machine is the letter you did for the ETO report. When we talked on the phone you said you still had that.

N: No, I don't have it.

M: Oh, you don't.

N: You mean the one I got after the war was over they sent me the master down from Knox?

M: Yeah.

N: I didn't keep any of it.

M: Oh, OK.

N: Two or three years later, I kept it for about four or five years and then I just chucked the whole thing. I'd written a complete letter and he even let me keep the maps. I put it all together but didn't figure I'd ever see it again.

M: Oh, darn. Heck.

J: No, that's all I have. I wouldn't be surprised if you got a couple of phone calls from us trying to pin down some details in the near future.

N: Let me show you what other, let's see, this is all that I have here.
[END]

INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS SPRINGFIELD

This interview took place at the SAIC office in McLean, Virginia on January 24, 1990.

Participants:

M = Mike Baily SAIC
J = Jay Karamales SAIC
V = Vicki Young SAIC
JB = Joyce Boykin SAIC
R = Tom Raney World War II veteran
S = Tom Springfield World War II veteran

M: This shows the things we still have blanks. We did a pretty good job based on the records but this is only because we had Ruppenthal's interviews. Typically you've got After Action Reports. 823d's are quite good as After Action Reports go. Six digit grids for companies and maybe six digit grids for platoons but that's all, a six digit grid, and that's much better than the infantry battalions do, but after doing the interview and that's one of the reasons we're willing to take the time and get Tom up here, and I'm glad he came, fill all the spaces and obviously the narrative is much better. We know much more about his defense preparation and we knew it was a hasty position, but we had no idea it was only ten minutes. So he basically had time to move the gun and to get two rounds there.

R: How many rounds of ammo did you carry in the half-track.....?

S: Ninety.

R: Ninety?

S: 60 AP, 30, well I'd say vaguely percentages then we had 50 rounds mixed up in for each gun in the ammo trailers, 3/4 gun.

M: This is kind of showing you on a map the actions. This is one we haven't briefed anybody, this was little roadblock 57 fired 10 rounds per tank, no effect, they abandoned, but it's the kind of data that the Brits are looking for. This is Neel's action at St. Barthelmy. This was his second action I haven't told you guys about he basically went back and got another gun found another position up here about midday another two rounds, one tank. This is in effect was the high point of the German attack, that's as far as he got. We're going to be talking to George Greene about this action at St. Barthelmy. If he can pin down the location of this guy, we probably going to try a telephone interview with him, with the infantry guy, because I think we know where he was, which was the big thing. You have to get someone like you here to actually pin yourself down on a map, but we know where this was from the map but I think we can do this over the telephone very cheap. We're asking you basically to fill these two holes. We may try to develop something on Hill 285. We have no overlays, we have no paper records, this is just kind of going in blind. We have

to get somebody up here, and then strictly out of his memory try to re-develop positions, which is hard to do. We've at least got a start with you, you can tell us where we are wrong, but we can help you by reminding you where we think the stuff was and what was with you.

R: Do the Germans take 285?

M: No. No, we held it.

J: There's a hill just to the south of these, Hill 276, that they took briefly. And then American contact drove them off almost as soon as they took it.

M: We're going to kind of focus on the 7th and the 8th. I realize the action went on, but by about the afternoon of the 8th basically the American Army is swinging into counterattack. By the 9th it was mostly counterattack, in fact I think that Abbaye Blanche on the 9th you might have been the only guys had a German attack on that day. It was pretty much, as far as the Germans attacking, pretty much faded out. By the end of the day of the 8th they had given up the attack.

J: The afternoon of the 8th the German tank command gave them orders to dig in and go on the defensive.

S: Well on the 7th they started.

M: Yeah.

S: Well

J: Right.

S: Midnight.

J: Yeah.

M: You have to say the battle goes through about the 13th, but basically by the 9th it's pretty much a US Army in the attack. So it switches from

S: Don't tell my men that.

J: Yeah. You were the exception.

M: You were the exception, you're the exception. For example, at St. Barthelmy, there were major counterattacks going on. There were attacks trying to relieve Hill 314. There were attacks trying to retake ground on Hill 285. You're still stuck there trying to fight guys coming after you. But you were the exception, by the 9th, you're an exception.

S: What Armored Division came in to relieve us?

R: 3rd.

S: 3rd? ____

J: 3rd Armored.

S: They went about 50 yards and got shot up.

R: Did you have any 743d tanks near you?

S: I don't think so.

R: I don't know where the hell they were.

J: In the beginning they were all back to the west of Juvigny.

M: Yes, 3rd, Combat Command B was about

J: 743d Tank Battalion.

M: Oh, 743d.

J: They were south of the Juvigny Road, west of Juvigny couple of kilometers.

R: Did you go through their After Action Reports, I'm not sure they did

J: They weren't involved in the German attack. By the time the Germans had already driven south of Mortain and into St. Barthelmy

M: In terms of this project what they are looking for is anti-armor versus tank versus tank which cause us to focus, trying to focus on, the anti-tank platoons and the 57mm guns. Not doing very well about finding out stuff on those guys. And towed 3-inch guns. Because an M10 versus a tank is pretty much a tank versus tank action. In fact, its one of the problems I think we looked at, one of the reasons you guys had trouble setting up was, the 1st infantry, as best I can determine their habitual tank TD battalion was a 634, which is SP. So you had no 3-inch gun positions to occupy. You had M10 positions which of course are totally different.

R: Yes, yes.

S: Well, they didn't have positions they just

J: Yeah, just wherever they

M: Yes, it was just hasty positions.

S: They didn't have

M: OK, now we are getting back to

S: Who wrote up the after action reports back at battalion, you were back there more than I was?

R: S3 Section. Lohse and it. Operations...
M: Just a second, I'm missing a map here.
R: Find something wrong with it that report, Tom?
S: They aren't correct. How could there be, they didn't get any much of any information from us.
M: Do either of you guys have any idea what ever became of George Zits?
R: Zites? Yes.
M: Do you know where he lives?
R: He lives in Tennessee. I could give you a 1940, 44
M: I tried that.
R: You did, the 44 address out of the history of the battalion?
M: Yes, I think I told you in the battalion history you got those slips those tank claim slips which as you can see are right down, exactly the kind of stuff we need. He had one at the beginning of the book and one at the end. So when he wrote the thing he must have had the whole set. And so I was trying to track down his family maybe they had hung onto the paper. There's president for example, what is Atkinson his battalion S2 down in Oklahoma, at the end of the war had all of these battalion records and nobody wanted them. He's still got them. He's got them in his garage and right now we are trying to get the archives to pick them up. The problem is for the archives, they can't just take these records. They have become, in effect, personal papers. So, the archivist, or our archivist, is trying to create a separate record group called "Alienated Federal Files". The reason they can't just put them back in the archives is, say you had a health claim, you were wounded back here. You were going in now and saying that you had leg problems you got back in WWII. And here is the after action report company records that proves that I was in fact wounded. The archivists have got to be able to say that those records have been under control since 1945 and have not been altered and so forth. And, of course, they can't say that about the records that have been out in somebody's garage for 40 years. But we are still trying to preserve them. If we can't get the things in the archives at least we can get them to Carlisle, and Carlisle is willing to take all these personal papers. We're trying to save these things.
R: Zites was married, but we have no records, no contact with his widow, if she is still alive.
M: Well, I get in battalion history, out of the blue I just called Manchester, TN, information and asked if there is a Zites, there was a Vicki Zites, and I got her on the phone and she said, no kin but a lot of people have

asked me about that guy, but I don't know who he was so I have lost him. OK, I guess we're ready to get down to it.

R: We this sergeant's NCO operations, this sergeant's NCO

S: Do you have the information on the gun we was using?

J: 3-inch guns?

S: Yes.

M: We have

J: I don't know if we have what you have.

S: You got the whole deal, how far up did they elevate, and so forth.

J: No.

S: There it is.

V: Oh, good.

J: As a matter of fact this is the kind of thing that we have been interested in finding and I haven't been able to find any information.

S: This is ammo that we were using.

V: Oh, great.

S: From that we got, what did they call that high powered....hypervelocity.

R: We call it hivath.

S: We got a touch of that, not much.

J: Really?

M: Yes, the theater supply was something like two rounds per gun. You didn't get that well let's see. They were testing it in 76s, not 3-inch guns in August. So you might have saw some in September or October.

R: I saw it first in November. We fired a round of it. He and I were going down the trail space and there was a yuckpot there, which is you know a panther chassis with AP on it. I looked and there it was. So we held our trail space ... ricocheted. Then he fired back at us and we hauled ass.

S: Why did you wait till the gun got around to you? Why didn't you hit him before that? You're not supposed to wait till he's pointing the gun at you.

R: It was real hard to see, it was raining. Foggy, you could just barely see

yourself less hundred yards out there.

J: Coming ~~at~~ you?

M: I wrote ~~This~~ up in my book in August the test ... and you know it was pretty much similar to regular ammo, give you a much better chance at the turret than you had before.

J: Do you want us to hang on to these or do you want copies?

M: Course that also that test they found out that the German armored quality varied.

S: Do you want the propaganda they dropped on us?

J: Anything you got, as a matter of fact.

M: This was dropped at Mortain?

R: No, this was dropped

S: No, it was after that.

M: Oh, OK.

R: Around October; I have a similar one.

S: You'll find out a lot of information from Marshall if you can find him. That's a letter that I got back.

R: Oh, Marsh Garth, yes, he was hired as a two-star. I know him.

S: He talked nice on the phone, I never did meet him.

M: Now Tom, all the background for that tank study at Ft. Knox is gone, it's not at Ft. Knox, it's just gone. But now if Garth may still have that stuff, somebody might have kept it.

R: Yes, he's very much alive as far as I know. I haven't seen him in several years. I think he lives down well, I don't know for sure where he lives. But he was a War College classmate of mine and I have a War College directory at home so it should have his address in it.

M: Garth?

R: Yes, he's a good guy, Marshall Garth.

S: This isn't ours, 604

M: No, the only guy I knew of on the ... was a guy named Debella and I know he died. His son was in the War College when I was on the faculty and his dad died the year he was at the War College. That was the only place I

knew to go and I knew that guy was at. It's really hard to track these guys down because the only place to do it is St. Louis and they are protected by freedom of information act for example, if I had to go through St. Louis I never would have found you. It never would have worked. They will forward mail, but of course if you don't have an address you don't have an address to forward to.

R: So Marshall worked on that Ft. Knox study?

M: Uhum. If he is the one that wrote Tom, he's probably the guy that collected the letters.

S: Who Garth?

M: Yes.

S: Yes. He called me and wrote me and then we call and wrote and that was in 1950 or somewhere back there. I was in Dodge City.

R: Were you?

M: Oh, Tom, that's the picture I asked you about, you couldn't remember. Tom remembers that. It's in the study. I thought it was in Holland because of terrain.

S: I think that either B Company got that tank or,

R: This is probably somewhere

S: One of our platoons A Company.

R: This is probably in Werslin Bardenberg area.

S: We weren't very far, we hadn't been in very long.

R: Just inside

S: And that was the only one that we saw until we got back. We got another one later on.

R: Yes, I bet this was near Bardenberg just inside the Siegfried Line one lone tank.

S: Yes, it was.

R: You got some good stuff there Tom.

J: Yes.

S: Well, somewhere, that was published in one of those

J: I've seen the pictures.

M: Yes, it's in the study. In the four battalion study that they did at Ft. Knox. In fact there's another picture that shows a side shot showing where you penetrated it. Like right in front of the turret on the hull.

R: Yes.

M: But that's in the study.

S: One round went through the front on the machine gun.

M: You can't see that from the picture. When you pointed it out I can kind sort of see it, but it's not obvious from the

J: Yeah, there's a big hole there.

R: You mean here?

J: Right.

R: Yes.

S: Well, that's all the good stuff.

M: Well, I guess we better start marching through our questions.

J: Alright.

M: Oh, one thing, let me, one of the reasons we did Lawson Neel was that was a controlled experiment. We saw we had a lot of data on it, we knew pretty much what had happened. We knew with some precision what holes we needed to fill. You're kind of a new ball game. We've got a map there where we think you were you've already corrected us and telling us we haven't got it right yet, but after that, other than some totals in the after action report, like 3 tanks, 2 half tracks killed day 1, we have no idea, frankly, of the sequence of events, what happened, we have no idea of the narrative of events that happened on day 1, day 2, day 3.

S: Do you want to know the first thing that happened?

M: Go ahead.

S: We knocked off a German motorcycle.

R: What kind of a weapon, Tom? 3-inch gun.

S: 50 caliber.

J: Well, that will do it. This, actually, thing that I gave you, this printout here, the thick one that says "Action chronology Abbaye Blanche". What this is, I took, I went through all the records we could get from the

archives and I went through all of the published books, some of the German books that we translated from units that fought there, and I typed them all into the computer and I had it give me a printout of what happened in chronological order. So this is our best status to what happened when.

M: And this is a complete dump. It's got errors in it.

J: Yes, we know there

M: Even when we know the records are wrong.

J: There are places when things were contradictory and there are places where things don't make sense, but I left them in just because that's what the records say. If you look on page 3 of that printout.

S: Is this some of the German records, too?

J: Some of the German, not records, but some of the published books. We weren't able to find any actual German records.

M: Yes, these are the same of same units that got trapped in the Falaise pocket.

J: We think all

M: They made it out with virtually nothing.

J: Yes, they left all their records at the Falaise Gap so we don't have any, but we have books that guys who were in the units wrote after the war. They wrote their unit histories up. We translated those, and that's where we got some of the German stuff. Like we know down to the company, what company it was that first hit your roadblock.

S: You do?

J: Yes, 9th Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment. They were the ones call "Da Fuhrer Regiment" of 2nd SS Panzer Division.

S: In the records that you, did they try going around Mortain to the south?

J: Yes, they did.

M: They were successful there.

J: They sent one regiment, Da Fuhrer Regiment, against you, and they sent another regiment called Deutschland around the south, and Da Fuhrer, all the German sources say Da Fuhrer regiment was stopped cold by you guys at Abbaye Blanche.

S: That's what Miller was supposed to, you know the positions that we took over, right away we could see that Miller positions were the same as ours except in a little different spot. So we went looking for new positions

and we read the map and saw that these roads were coming in from the, I think ~~the~~ east somewhere or, northeast somewhere. So we went up there and we found out where the roads crossed.

R: If the Germans had gone farther south, they could have gone through because ... and I were 10 kilometers south of Mortain there was nothing between us and Mortain....

J: I brought in the

R: Big gap there, they could have come through there. See.....

J: We brought in the big 1 to 25,000 scale maps like you guys did your overlays on, your units, and if you go and take a look at it you can see that south of Mortain, and there was nobody down there. And, until they moved in 4th Infantry Division and 35th Infantry Division to plug in the gap, there was nobody.

R: Yes, 35th came up through the St. Hilaire.

J: Exactly.

S: That was true all the way across. The German's recon wasn't any better than ours.

J: They messed up this one, I'll tell you, because if they had gone south it would have been a whole different ball game. They were already filtering units back into 30th ID's artillery and they had somebody within a kilometer of the 30th Division command post. And if they had made a real hard push down there it would have been really bad.

S: What size maps were we using over there?

R: 1 to 25.

S: 125s.

R: Excuse me, my set of questionnaires is for George Greene for tomorrow, do have another set?

V: Were they all the same, Jay?

J: No, No. One set was for Greene

V: It's different?

R: That's for George Greene tomorrow, yes.

At the Map -

S: You can see from the map that here's the main road.

- J: Yeah, they sent Da Fuhrer Regiment this way and they sent Deutschland Regiment ~~around~~ this way. This sort of looked like that and they were able to overrun this part on the other side of the hill and get up into Mortain and keep going and they sent a lot of tanks down this way and they got as far as here. But they also sent some guys down these trails. There was a battery of field artillery here that actually were engaging the Germans with their artillery guns at direct fire.
- S: You see Miller would have had a good clean shot on this road and our first positions were somewhere in there firing on the same road.
- M: See he was overrun in the dark by infantry. He beat off one attack and then was totally overrun by infantry. Lost, in fact some of his guys ended up at your roadblock.
- J: Actually that's a true story because in translating some of the German records from guys that were there, they were talking about how they were advancing down the road and they found a little farm house and it had about 30 Americans in it and they busted down the door and they found all the Americans asleep in bed with their boots off. Had them captured before they even knew they woke up. But the attack at St. Barthelmy At least one tank got here in the afternoon, but the main party
- S: Well, I think they were coming in here and shooting out of here.
- J: Mostly, yes. Right. Then 2nd Panzer Division also sent, in between the 9th Division which was up here and the 117th Regiment of the 30th was here, there was really nobody covering this area too much. Those guys were on a hill but they didn't see much because of the dark and the fog. And they were able to send basically a regiment all the way through here by early morning. But by that time they sent the 119th up, they sent some tanks up.....
- S: I didn't know we were even cut off by them.
- J: It was close, it was close. Really was, I mean these guys, if they had sent more strength down this road and turned up this way and linked up with this pincer they would have you guys virtually cut off.
- S: Well they cut the road.
- M: It's hard to see from that map because the terrain lines don't show well but between Juvigny and St. Barthelmy is definitely the high ground.
- J: Yes, this is a ridge line right along this road.
- S: See this is a ridge. All this is the hills and that's why we could set up where we did.
- R: That may be the reason they didn't come from the south. There's no good exit.

J: No there isn't really, I mean you got this road coming up this way, and then it comes this way but there's not really a way to go cross country like that.

R: I was over here you can see.....

J: I was going to say that was

M: Obviously see you could have been vulnerable to these guys but they did not ... to hit you their job is secondary attack, so after they secured the south part of Mortain, and wiped out these roadblocks they completely exploited. They couldn't do the main attack because we would still have the high ground.

S: Well, we had the high ground here.

R:drove up here in a jeep and we got behind the hump here and all of a sudden about 20 C47s came into the damn valley there almost underneath me, dropping supplies.

J: What day was that?

R: I'm not sure, I think it was the 9th.

J: They were dropping it to the guys on the hill?

R: Yes, yes.

M: One other little note that struck me as funny, they tried to resupply that hill, they loaded 3 ft. rounds with medicine and so forth and fired into

R: At 155.

M: Yeah.

R: Yeah, right. I heard about that.

J: They said that the blood plasma didn't come out too well but the bandages and stuff got through alright.

M: OK, we got

S: Now you realize that we are talking about something that happened 44, 45 years ago.

M: Yes, we realize that.

J: We'll take anything we can get.

M: You see what we have and so anything we can get from you is new information. So, go ahead and start marching down our questionnaire. We just made this thing up to make sure we don't miss anything. First thing,

kind of, when did you move into position, kinda how much time? Did you have time to reconnoiter it?

S: We got in there—in the afternoon, didn't we? Pretty sure we did.

R: Yes, yes.

S: And, we knew where Miller was going to set up and we didn't like that. He picked his own and we picked ours. I think our orders were we could take over the positions that were occupied by the previous TD or pick our own. We picked our own.

M: Yes, they wouldn't of, if it was the 634, they wouldn't have had positions for you. They would have had M10 positions.

S: Well, what they called positions. We always dug in our wheels and tried to get aand whatever other protection we could get, but there wasn't any.

J: In the combat interviews they mentioned that the commander of F Company of the 120th sent his men down to start setting up a roadblock at Abbaye Blanche around 2:45 in the afternoon so we just assumed that you guys started about the same time.

M: Do you think you got there that early, about 3:00 in the afternoon?

S: I don't think so.

R: The days were awfully long then of course. It stayed light until about 11:00.

S: It seems like we must of got in there long about 5:00 or sometime in the evening. And, we just barely got set up before it got dark. But we didn't know what we were setting up for. Other than to set up to protect the roads, that's all.

J: So you didn't have a lot of time to scout things out. Did you

M: You didn't have advance party, you moved in with your platoon.

S: Recon supposed to have been ahead of us?

R: I don't know. What recon platoon was working with you guys then?

S: Joe Breeden.

R: Oh, yeah. No, Joe was in the hospital.

S: Not then.

R: Yes he was. I took over his platoon the 29th of June. So you had Path and then Cunningham had

S: I don't know...Cunningham.

R: Cunningham probably, yes.

S: I don't remember the recon picking any positions. I didn't even know who was supposed to be with us.

M: Did you have a couple of hours to scout around and look at gun positions or did you guys start moving them in as soon as you got there? OK.

S: We looked them over and we looked at the map mostly and figured out the roads and then went up and picked a position.

M: OK.

S: I think that the anti-tank boys were there so it must have been the 120th's group, we had two guns left. The infantry had been shot up pretty bad, they must have been in a battle before we got there. They didn't have a full complement of men.

R: Well we had, the division had been in reserve you know like two or three days after that heavy fighting after the 25th of July bombing, and they probably hadn't gotten all their replacements yet cause they lost many, many men between Revere River and ...

M: Yes, I think we got that I think in the Division history. I think the Division was still short something like a thousand or two thousand replacements. You just absorbed about a thousand but the Division was still short people.

J: The one thing we need to do is just go to the map and have you correct the gun positions as much as you can.

M: I tell you what, why don't you keep a paper copy. That will be our record copy. And, I'll try to use colored pen to get them sorted out. Tom, what do you think, should we chart it with just a blank map or change those positions?

J: We have a map with just the roads and the buildings on it.

S: Well, how far, how many, what's the measurements on here?

M: This is a

J: Whatever a hectometer is?

M: Hectometer, that's a hundred meters.

R: Never heard of one.

M: There is such a thing as a hectometer. Yes, that's a hundred meters.

J: Of course, one question I had, this is a guess we made from looking at the map, ~~was~~ this really the Abbey, this huge, big thing that's on the map?

S: There ~~was~~ an Abbey down there, but I never did go down there.

J: OK.

S: We set up gun positions, and I think someone got killed, some lady was travelling around there going back and forth between us and the Germans and I think someone shot her.

M: OK, and again let me highlight what we got. We got your guns here, here, here, and is this one?

J: Yes.

M: OK, that's where we've got your four guns. Now if they are wrong we can start moving them around.

S: Well, trying to figure out, this road is the one that the Germans travelled on most of the time.

J: OK.

M: This one?

S: Yes, and our guns were further up here. And they were in a field off to the side of the road. The Germans never did get that close to us. The closest they ever got was here; and there wasn't a bazooka or machine gun there because it was down here.

J: So it was almost with your guns instead of behind your gun.

S: Well, off to the, I guess the west because this was a field here with a small hedgerow in it and a berm I don't know, when they start hedgerows over there, the way they plowed when they got through, why there was always a berm along the hedgerow.

M: Yes, that's probably the way they grew, the root system built up. So you'd put yourself about there, that far up?

S: No, about right in here. Cause all we were doing we were looking here, to this road right here.

M: So your gun would be pointing to the east? Is that right?

S: Yes.

M: OK. About how far up the road were you?

S: Well, we had one gun about there, and then one up here.

J: ~~Pointing~~ the same way?

S: Yes, and number three gun was up about right here, looking you could go down this road or you could go over here. I don't know what that is.

M: Were you right beside the road here? See I've got you about 10 m up.

S: We were about 40 yards.

M: OK, that's about right then about 40 yards. Now, where was your fourth gun?

S: Right about here.

M: Pointed up?

S: Yeah, now there's some other roads somewhere over in here. That number four gun could also shoot over that way or up here.

M: Tell you what, while we got you up there, this is #1, this other one?

S: Yes, you can call it #1.

M: 1, and this would be #2.

S: I can't tell you today what the numbers were.

M: Well, if we just get through today we can keep them straight for the sake of discussion today.

J: The interviews say that they were, your 3" guns were covered by 30 caliber machine guns.

S: Oh yes, we had all that.

M: Let's see, and then the, must have been from the interview I think that you moved, I think maybe your positions started, your initial positions they said you moved about two hundred meters north to better positions.

S: No, we started down here somewhere and two guns were anti-tank boys. Is this supposed to be a trail?

J: Yes, a trail.

S: It was a pretty good road then.

M: Oh, OK.

S: Because this building here now we had one anti-tank gun right here and we had one back here.

J: 57s?
S: Yes.
M: Do you remember which directions they were?
S: Yeah, this was going up the road.
M: OK, correct that. And the other one was down
S: Yeah see there's a bridge or something
J: Yeah.
J: That would be this bridge, because this is the stream.
S: Is that where ..., I don't think there's any water.
J: There might not have been, but it's just marked as a stream.
S: We put mines across here and that's where our bazooka and one 50 caliber was right here. The Germans tried one day to come up here.
M: So there were mines and bazookas on the other side of the bridge? Which side?
J: Over on which side, the far side?
S: On this side here.
J: Oh, on your side.
M: Where was the other 57?
S: Well, Stuart had put it back here and so then we had a mine field across here.
J: They mentioned there were land mines here.
M: The other was back about where I got the pen now?
S: Where, here? Well that was where the gun was.
M: We've got you placed now about 200M north of the railroad embankment, is that about right, is that what you remember?
S: Well, it wasn't quite that. I think it's right in here, wherever this came out.
M: But definitely you weren't right here just north of the embankment.
S: Oh no, we had one originally put an AT gun up here and then after we found

out that 3rd platoon got knocked out we moved them back to these roads coming out here. We didn't know that this road came out here. So we didn't ~~do~~ anything about it. That's the road we were using to get out of there. It was open except one day. Did you knock that roadblock out for us? Who knocked the roadblock out that they set up?

R: No, not me.

J: Now they mentioned there were two 30 cal's covering the roads. Is that right, do you know?

S: We had 30 calibers and bazookas and I don't know where we got them all, somewhere. We had all kinds of guns coming in there.

J: They said that after the fighting started they were about 75 guys that came up from the south and help set up more defenses down here. There was also, they mentioned that there was a 50 cal that was manned by 823rd TD BN guys being used as infantry that were in these houses covering these roads here.

S: Right here.

J: Is that where it was?

S: I think that Simmons said that that cave was still there.

J: Cave, there was a cave there? There was a cave there.

M: A cave!

J: Well it makes sense because that's a sunken pink for the railroad to go through.

S: They wasn't down on the road it was right up on top here.

J: Oh, really.

S: Right in here.

R: Maybe you ought to send someone there on our battlefield tour.

J: Could I volunteer?

R: Tom and I are going to be there on the 19th of May.

M: My experience, in places like this in France and Belgium and so forth haven't changed much. Like the abbey wasn't bombed and so forth so you guys can probably go back and it will be very familiar to you. The hedgerows haven't grown that much.

S: Wherever the church steeple was, we knocked it off.

J: Were they using it as..?

R: Why'd you do that?

S: Well, after we knocked it off, the artillery quit.

R: They closed it.

J: They say also that along the stream bed here there was a big rock and behind the rock there was a mortar section and it had telephone lines running to it through a cleft in the rock and there was a 30 cal pointing out this way to cover I guess the stream bed and I guess it was kinda flat down here.

S: Well that would have to be something that the infantry set up because we didn't set it up and I don't think they maintained that position. Because when I talked to the 120th commander they didn't have any mortars left. They lost all of them. In their machine gun section, I think there were four men and two guns. We used those all along here. Starting the 7th, wherever we got hit, whether it was a squad or what it was of Germans, we might have moved more guns in there, the machine guns and BARs were about 280.

J: OK.

M: Let me see if we have better, more accurate now.

S: Well, I was hoping that you would have it pretty set up and we could go by whatever. We weren't firing, I think it was about 5-600 yds to the road, that way we were firing on them. And that went up hill, that's what's slowing them down. They had to shift gears and crawl up. That's where we did most of our damage, down this trail right here, I guess, if that's a road.

J: Yeah.

S: A large rock, somewhere right in there is where we knocked out the motorcycle and the command car and I think there was a kind of armored car. Didn't they have a flat one that just had steel on the side?

R: Yeah, they had an 8 wheel armored car.

S: We got a little Volkswagen, first time we'd ever seen a Volkswagen.

R: You knocked it out.

S: When we shot a few rounds through the windshield, they quit.

M: Try to clear it up then. You thought you had about 5-600 meters, I went back to the map for scale. This is about right, you were about what 1,2,3,4 about 400 meters to the road.

S: Okay.

M: Okay. —

S: See, our guns were good for about 1000 yds straight projectile and then from then on we were shooting 3000 yds, whoosh!

J: Right. The motorcycle that you knocked out and the other cars, the Volkswagen

S: It had a side car on it. Do you remember us running around with that motorcycle after the war?

R: I found one too, but I broke the axle on it.

J: When was that that you knocked those out?

S: First morning. Early.

M: We need to start Let's go ahead and get in sequencing. What's the first thing that happened on the 7th? About what time?

S: I didn't look at a watch but it was just

M: It was still dark.

S: Yeah, more or less dark. We could just barely see.

M: So it would be about 5 in the morning, I guess?

S: Yeah, except that you had a little fog too.

M: We knew about the fog. The fog was patchy. Was it foggy where you were? In St. Barthelmy, they didn't see a thing. It was terrible.

S: Well, it'd get foggy and it'd clear, it'd get foggy and then it would clear.

M: OK, so the first action was about 5 in the morning. Let's see, jeep, not jeep, motorcycle, armored car

S: Down that road.

M: Down this trail about here, south of the rock. Do you remember the large rock, a machine gun stationed here supposedly?

S: Yeah, but I thought there were Germans over there.

M: So it was just about in here that you engaged them?

S: Maybe the Germans were over in here. They were probably on this side.

M: Did you engage them with your guns?

S: No, no, the anti the 57 mm was setting down here. They knocked out the armored car and the staff car. The machine guns killed the people.

M: It was a four wheeler on the car?

S: Well, they had four wheels, I don't know if it was four wheel drive.

M: No, no, the Germans had an eight wheeler but they had a number of four wheel smaller armored cars, just four wheels, but they were definitely armored. OK, I think we got that down tight.

S: It wasn't like our M20 or 6 wheel that could go anywhere.

M: You told me that yesterday and I said I haven't talked to any of you guys yet that had anything good to say about the M20.

S: Did you like it?

R: No, Hell, no, the M20 wasn't worth a damn, the M8

M: Okay, Jay, we've finally got a 57 action, a 57 knocks out an armored car.

J: And I bet we could find out the type, too, the actual, the exact type of armored car.

M: Let me talk go back to this. I should have done this before but we need to nail down the positions. The #1 and #2 guns had a field of fire of about 400 meters, you could see at least to this road, could you see beyond it?

S: Well, yeah, but it went down hill. Now, from that road up to where we were, now that's all up hill, and it's rather steep.

M: In other words, the slope from here down to the road.

S: Right.

J: Makes sense.

M: The road would have climbed going up. Okay, so you had a field of fire of at least 400. Would you go farther past the road much? What I'm trying to get out of here, our estimate for max effective range is going to be terrain limited.

S: No, not they could get off that road on the west side and they tried that.

M: But you had a clear field, this is not a hedgerow, you had a clear field of fire?

S: Oh, there was a few trees.

M: Okay, so we got about 400 meters. Now what about the two guns pointed north? They had fairly clear terrain also, they had a pretty decent field of fire?

S: Yeah, other than trees, there was a orchard right off to our left.

M: Okay, but you had, I don't know, what 4 or 5 to 600 M or did you have a full 1000 meters?

S: No, No, I'd say it wasn't much further than here, about 400.

M: About how far?

S: Well, we could see around the curve.

M: Okay, so you could see

S: Well, just barely around the curve cause that's where we got, I think it was, an SP.

M: Okay, this is where the map runs to scale, my symbols got you confused, here's the hectometer, the gun was here 1,2, maybe 300 meters. Sound right.

S: Yeah, we got those guns not very far away. They must have been coming around the second when we got them. That was a foggy situation. That was later in the morning.

M: Let me pin you down, that's where my symbols got us confused. I'm placing your guns about here, here, here, about 40 m off the road and this would be about 40 m off the road, the points being

S: It wasn't right out in the open, because we were more or less on top of the hill with this berm, this little hedgerow, and the guns you will see there, the Germans couldn't actually pick our guns out.

M: These two guns, there was a hedgerow?

S: Well, it went clear on up through there. That was a farm field, I guess.

M: So you were behind the hedgerow, that was your cover? The two guns to the North, they weren't behind it. Were they right off the road? Right beside it?

S: There was a little, what would you call it, we called them ditches..

M: Barrow pits?

S: More or less. (tape ends) Probably an hour.

M: Okay, so about 6:00. Is that right, it's 3?

S: Now, but first we got the half tracks and the cargo truck, one of their big trucks and one little tank up on that other road, what rotation, I don't know, but I figure

M: OK, that's

S: They had also self propelled artillery guns, didn't they. That was what was in the two

R: Yeah, they had a

S: Covered guns, weren't they?

R: Well, they were various SPs. They had a 150 howitzer mounted on like a Mark III chassis, for example, and they used that as artillery and of course they had those typical assault guns, you know, 75mm muzzle break with a variety of things.

S: Yeah, that's what they were, 75s.

R: 75s.

S: So the second thing that happens when they we tried to go on that road north in front of guns 1 and 3, 1 and 2. They must have got in up above and came back down that road looking

M: I'm out of sequence here, this is the first thing that happened that day, the second thing that happened was here that's

S: The third thing is over there.

M: The third thing is over here. So this is about 6:00.

S: It might have been 5:30, cause the other one was between 6 and 7.

M: OK, so about 5:30 , this is 3 half-tracks?

S: I can't remember, that's too far.

M: OK, but action 3 is up about here. Is that the 3 half track thing?

S: Yeah, but now there were some other vehicles in there too besides that. They tried to go ahead that hill and we had our machine guns opened up there too and some 50s and the 30s and they were firing on the men leaving the half tracks and so forth.

M: I know it is a long time. The action 2 here, do you remember it, was it half tracks, was it just trucks, do you remember?

S: Well, there were some half tracks in there, I don't know how many..

M: About. 3 or 4. I'm trying to get an idea. 1 or 2, or 3 or 4 , or 5 or

10 or, I'm trying to get an order of magnitude.

S: I'd say 1 to 3, and then there was a cargo truck and it had ammo on it and there was a tank in there, too, and I can't remember who came next or..

M: We're still in this area? with the tank?

S: Yeah.

M: Do you remember what kind?

S: Probably a Mark IV.

M: OK.

S: We didn't see very many big tanks, you know they're big

M: That's one of the things we haven't been able to tell

J: Yeah, everybody said "Oh it was a Tiger, every tank we saw was a Tiger".

S: They had very few Tigers in there. They had mostly Mark Vs and IVs.

M: From what we have been able to figure out, the attack to the north in St. Barthelmy was pretty much all Mark Vs. We just don't know about yours. You're telling us Mark IVs and okay, that's new information. Because a Mark IV, that could explain a lot, you wouldn't have any trouble knocking out a Mark IV.

S: Why not?

M: All I'm saying is you didn't have any trouble, you could penetrate. The gun definitely had the capability.

S: I think there was probably some Mark Vs on that road.

J: I would imagine.

S: See, we never did go over there to check and then by the next morning, why, they would be gone.

M: So action 2, 2-3 half-tracks, cargo truck, probably a tank, you knock them out. OK, and then half hour later, action 3 is three half-tracks, one which has a 75 on it.

S: Right.

M: OK and you get him from about 30 yds, they're coming down the curve here.. was that actually a good point, this little curve here, this v-dip

S: Yeah, we had, 'bout right in there, we had some mines laid in there too, not very effective against the half track got through

M: OK, so ~~that~~ happens about 6:00.

S: Yeah, I suppose about then. I tell you a lot of things were going on that morning.

M: No, no, not just memory, but it's a confusing day anyway. If this was the next day you'd probably have trouble telling us what happened.

S: Right.

M: Okay, this is 10:30 our time and we've gotten up to 6:00 in the morning on the 7th of August. OK, right now we're kind of at your mercy, as well as you can.

S: Well, all day long they tried that road and all day long we knocked them out.

M: This road you mean?

S: Right. Every once in a while, one would get through on us.

M: OK, well, we're down to how well you remember. Do you kind of remember how the sequence, when it happened?

S: I think that first day, we must have knocked out at least 17 vehicles on that road. I don't know how many Germans we killed because the machine guns were going practically all day long. Wherever they'd see movement the machine guns would come on. That first day I didn't have any trouble with my men, they stayed right there. The second day they wanted to go back.

M: This one ended about 6:15. Again, I really need you to reach back, as far as you remember times, you probably didn't look at a watch, what is the next time something happened.

S: Well, other than the vehicles on that road, we didn't get hit with anything after those two half tracks. I think we took some prisoners out of those.

M: Was it two or three?

S: Just two on that, where #3 and 4 guns

M: So this, this quote, was I guess, wrong. Wait, the car is only 30 yards from the #3 gun. Oh, I'm sorry, this is two half-tracks. OK, this fits. Two half-tracks.

S: Remember our first TD gun on a half track, that's kind of like what the Germans had. In fact it looked like they had dug out of ordnance every old vehicle they had and put it on the road.

M: They're standard items. They're standard armored personnel or half track

with a 75mm Howitzer on it. No in fact they put guns on some of them.

J: Sometimes.

M: But basically, to make artillery mobile, the Germans took any kind of a chassis they had laying around, Czech tanks, French tanks, whatever, and put guns on them.

S: A lot of those vehicles we knocked out on that road, I suppose a third of them were tanks probably Mark IVs and a couple of Mark Vs and the rest of them were all half-tracks and cars and motorcycles and whatever they could get to ride.

M: Do you remember well enough that you think we could break this down by discrete actions or are we just going to have to do a summary? I realize it's been a long, confusing day. For example, do you remember how many

S: First day?

M: Yes.

S: Well, they kind of gave up after the original three and the tank. They just kind of gave up until about 10 o'clock.

M: OK, so you've got a lull from about 6:15, 6:30?

S: After the action on that road and I have to assume that those guys were supposed to knock us out and they didn't do it so that's why the lull until 10 o'clock. Because they didn't try down below again that day, that one day where we got the command car and the motorcycle and the little armored car. They didn't try again but we showed up our defenses.

M: So, then, about 10 o'clock, they start

S: Yes, see, I was busy. I wasn't up there with those guns all day long. I was back setting up my rear after we found out. Seemed like Simmons joined me the first day and he told me that Miller got knocked out so we had to be concerned about what was coming out of Mortain and that's when the, about the second day, I'm sure that Andrews showed up at the other road and we put them on that infantry anti-tank gun.

R: These were the remnants of Miller's platoon?

S: Well, we got about six or eight of Miller's platoon. Some of them the first day and some of them the next day.

M: From what the after action report says the guns were just lost.

S: Yes, they had their weapons and I think one of them had a bazooka. I'm not sure he had any ammunition left but we had some.

J: When did you put them down there?

S: We put ~~these~~ down there the first day.

M: What you're saying is you got some more 57s later?

S: No, after we talked to, that guy's name was Birks.

J: COL Birks?

S: B-I-R-K-S. COL Hammond D. Birks.

J: Right. He was the Commander of the 1st Battalion 120th.

R: He was Regimental Commander.

S: He was? Yes, 120th Regiment.

R: He was a full colonel wasn't he Tom?

S: He was a lieutenant. Unless he became a full colonel afterwards and he is the one that took me on to Andrew with his anti-tank boys. And that's when we set up on that same day but after we got our positions selected then I went back and made contact with him. He was back somewhere behind me.

M: Let me see if I understand. I think I'm figuring out what happened. This thing winds up around 6:15, 6:30. You've got a lull until about ten. At that point, you aren't necessarily up here with your guns. They're doing the shooting. You're worried about coordinating down here.

S: Right.

M: About what time of day was it you saw Birk and talked to him?

S: I talked to Birk the day before.

M: The day before.

S: Then I went back the next day to see if he had anymore people to help.

M: About what time of day did you talk to him?

S: Oh, I don't know. After the action started there and it was over with for awhile. Nothing happened.

M: Sometime between 6 and 10. That kind of explains it. You can't tell us what happened here. You know generally what happened but you weren't there.

S: Well, see, he was a ranking officer in the area and I was next by two months and Andrew, then, he told Andrew whatever he wants up there, you guys go do it. I'm not going up there. We did. They had another guy that

showed up the next day. Remember his name.

J: It wasn't Stuart was it?

S: Stuart. Yes. And he'd been somewhere else and got shot up. Can't remember whether he had any guns left or not.

J: I got the impression from what I read that he didn't. He didn't have any guns.

S: But I let him and Andrews work out the lower and I just worried about the top.

M: OK.

S: That went on the first day and then in the evening, the Germans tried again going up that road.

M: OK, I'm getting confused now. About 10 o'clock they start trying to use the road again basically your guys start firing. And that goes on for an hour or two or they just kept going trying all day with you folks up there.

S: Well they tried all day long. You got to realize too that we were starting to take artillery fire and that the artillery was going over behind us. That was when I was glad I wasn't at the CP at the time. They couldn't hit us. They tried to drop it on us just went on down because we were setting on a ridge. We were right here on this ridge and everything that went over went right on down. I didn't pick the spot because of that but it worked out great. And they had those "??nip whippers??" . They dropped them in there. Of course I was walking up and down the roadblock and just fall down flat, did bounce. They were close.

J: They really did bounce?

S: You bet. So we was just taking that all day long. I guess they'd get and artillery blast and then pretty soon there would be some vehicles trying to go up that road.

M: This is a pretty sharp slope here down to this railroad. That explains why their charge wasn't effective.

S: You can see how it is right there.

J: Yeah.

M: Let me ask you a real wild one because I couldn't answer this in any combat action I had. About how many rounds do you think were fired at you during the day, artillery?

S: I had no reason to keep count.

M: I thought that would be a dry well.

R: I hope you were sending in shell reps for all these.

M: Hey, that's right. You guys were supposed to send in shell reps.

S: Well, I don't really know how we got replenished with ammo. Of course we had someone going back every once in awhile with a . . gun and half-track and they'd bring back some more.

J: There was a trail leading back to regimental CP that the Germans never were quite able to cut.

M: That's when this guy Eichen said he was able to use every evening I think. He would go in the jeep.

J: And sometimes the Germans would have it under fire. They could see people on it they could shoot at because they could see the CP and they could shoot at that too. But they never were actually able to stop anybody from using the trail.

S: Well, I didn't actually. The only time I received direct fire was when I crossed that railroad bridge.

J: You came there to the south end of the bridge?

S: No right on it. You could get fire there.

J: From the south?

S: From the east.

J: Oh really.

S: The road that goes south. Now there never were any Germans very close to that road.

J: Did you guys take any casualties from the German artillery fire?

S: Yes. I don't really remember how many but three or four. It was either artillery or one day we lost two men to those British.

J: Typhoons?

S: That doesn't sound right.

J: Typhoons were the rocket planes.

S: Yes, they had typhoons, rocket planes.

R: Yes, they were the rocket firing guns.

M: Let me try to remember our data points to fill and I realize this may be

tough but back to the first action on the motorcycle and the armored car. Do you remember about how many rounds that gun fired? Could you hear it or anything?

S: Just one.

M: One. OK. One round. One ... One armored car. Fine.

S: Well, it wouldn't have been much need for a machine gun to have fired on it. The guys had bailed out.

M: It's one of the data points we have to fill.

S: OK.

M: Then the next one in action 2 up here where you engaged the tank half-track with your #1 and #2 guns, about how many rounds did they fire?

S: Well, they fired on each one until they stopped.

M: About how many rounds do you remember?

S: No more than two or three.

M: OK two or three.

S: Probably the third one was HE.

M: OK.

S: And then by that time they were bailing out.

M: And then Action 3 was about how many rounds.

S: On those half-tracks?

M: Yes.

S: One each.

M: One each. Filled that data point. AP?

S: Yes.

M: OK.

S: It went right straight through.

M: Did a real job on them at 30 yards. OK, so about 10 o'clock you basically all along this road, about 10 o'clock, intermittent all day, is there anything in your mind that you remember that breaks during the day. Like do you remember something specifically at two o'clock or three o'clock?

S: Well, ~~once~~ in the afternoon, they brought out their Red Cross flag to pick up the wounded and we left.

M: Moving along the road here?

S: Yes. Then in the evening after, I'd say it was pretty dark, we could just barely see them, they brought out and picked up some more wounded and I don't know whether they must have picked up some dead too because at daylight you could see these guys laying there in the field grasses. Next morning they were gone.

M: About what time was that Red Cross thing?

S: About two o'clock.

M: OK, so that would have stopped everything?

S: Well, we didn't think it was fair to fire on the flag. They didn't mind.

M: How long did that little rest period last? About an hour or so?

S: I didn't time it. They hurried. I suppose about an hour. Then they started sending vehicles off the road.

M: What's this about four o'clock?

S: We got about seventeen vehicles that first day on that road.

M: I got a comment, you know, the Germans won the war in books. You know they were smarter than us, they were tactically better and so forth, here these genius tactical Germans, they just gave you a shooting gallery all day. We have about 300 or 400 meters with a 3" gun, just like little ducks you know at a shooting gallery.

S: They couldn't see us. I don't know why they couldn't pick us up because that #1 gun also got a machine gun somewhere on that cross that river that's where they were firing.

M: Somewhere over in here?

S: No. Somewhere right in there. They moved off that road through the trees I think.

M: I can sort of understand artillery not being able to pick you guys up. they would mortar you.

S: Well, I don't think they had that many mortars back then. We didn't get much mortar fire. We got some.

M: High angle .. should have been able to get to you too. Apparently they just kept trying to get to you with low fairly trajectory stuff and

couldn't get to you.

S: We didn't know whether they were shooting artillery or anti-tank guns. I suppose some of them were anti-tank HE and they were trying to hit us but they were going over us or below us.

J: I get the impression they were using mostly artillery against Hill 314.

S: Well, they kind of slacked off on that hill after they started attacking us because the colonel told us, he wanted us to send out a recon party and take ammunition and stuff up to 314 because they were cut off.

J: Really. (tape ends)

J:try to pick out a couple of the details, whatever we can get. On any of the vehicles that were hit by the 3" guns, do happen to remember seeing where the shell hit on any of them? Be it a half-track or a tank or whatever.

S: All we can do is assume the ones that were going up that road were hit on the side, there wasn't any of them hit on the front.

M: What about the one I called Action 3.

J: That makes sense.

S: That was on the front.

M: Front?

S: Yes.

J: I guess if it's a half-track I guess it doesn't matter anyways.

M: The 3" gun got penetrated.

J: There's nothing. I mean it's going to go all the way through a half-track.

S: It took out everything.

J: OK.

M: I guess we could probably assume this one was a frontal approach the way it's laid out that's probably a frontal engagement too.

S: Oh yes, that was straight on.

M: OK.

J: OK. Did you ever get, receive a German attack where they tried to storm your positions, or use infantry to attack?

S: Sure.

M: About 3:00 in the afternoon, the red flag comes up, boy they start moving vehicles again and what anything specific you can remember as you get on into the evening? Did they try to attack you again that first day?

S: Only with small arms fire.

M: OK. Did infantry try to attack you, or just tried to snipe at you. They weren't trying to attack you.

S: We didn't get attacked that first day by any infantry, but the next morning we did.

J: OK, let's go into that.

M: OK, it's late evening, I guess it's getting dark got to be about 10:00.

S: I don't know, but during the day they had vehicles travelling that road, other than the lull period, all day long, and why they kept trying, I don't know.

M: OK. There's one lull around two in the afternoon about an hour or so about three they start again and kept moving vehicles.

S: Someone said go, and they did.

J: That must be the road they mentioned in, I forget who it was, came to look maybe the regimental commander came to look after a battle and they saw something like 24 vehicles knocked out on one road alone just all in the same formation they were driving up the road. He said it was the prettiest sight he ever saw.

M: What is the after action report? What did it give as a total for the day?

J: There are several versions.

S: Did anybody ever get over there at our outfit or did we just pull out?

R: I think we just pulled out.

S: I didn't know. When they said we were relieved.

J: According to the 823rd's After Action Report on the 7th the roadblock or the earliest 823rd 3" guns knocked out a machine gun nest, 3 tanks, 2 cargo trucks, 3 full tracked armored personnel carriers, 1 half-tracked armored personnel carrier, 2 motorcycles, 1 1/4 ton truck, and an estimated 100-150 Germans killed with 10 prisoners captured.

M: If there were tanks, they were probably Mark IVs.

S: Oh, I don't think that first day that we hit any big ones. Because they,

you hit them and that was it. It was like shooting a duck.

M: So your typical tank engagement probably one round. One round knocked it out or do you think

S: If you stopped it with one round you fired another round just to make sure.

M: OK. Two rounds.

S: And then see, if he was one round, both those guns would track any vehicle that went up that road. So how many rounds were fired, I don't know.

M: OK.

S: I should try to remember when Simmons got there. It seems like that was late in the evening when we found out. No he wasn't there.

M: So you didn't find out about the ... roadblock until late in the evening that had been overrun.

S: Don't think so.

M: OK.

J: Did you know that they had taken Mortain?

S: We wouldn't have known whether they took it or not. Nobody knew. I don't think that the 120th infantry was down in Mortain at all.

J: Not very much of them Not very much of them were.

M: Battalion headquarters was overrun down in town.

J: But as far as actual infantry strength goes they didn't have that much in the town anyways.

M: Did you have radio contact with anybody?

S: I think the Company. Cause we asked for some help after we found out that we didn't really have enough guns to take care of the south and we reported that.

M: OK, You had a second lull in the evening, I'll guess 10:00 or so, would it get dark about 10:00?

R: No, it would have been later, been like 11:30, right Tom? This was British summertime.

M: OK, about 11:30 you got another break they bring out the white flag, did anything happen during the evening?

S: No. Other than, you know, artillery.

M: OK. Did you change any positions or make any drastic changes? Now we're getting into the second day I'll have to do new map here, did you change this position at all?

S: When we got those two anti-tank in there.

M: Where did you put the new ones?

S: Well, right where they are. That's all we had. I think we only had six guns. Two anti-tank.

M: These are here at the start the first day?

S: Right, we didn't change any guns.

M: OK.

S: We had thought about taking one of the 3" and putting it down to the south farther, it was up on the road, then we changed our mind after we being announced. That's all that's there being announced. To cut off any Germans then we thought well, where no Germans coming in there because they hadn't used their anti-tank guns. We were ready to pull any one of these guns to the other side if we had to.

M: OK, as we start the second day basically the positions were just the same.

S: Yes.

M: OK.

S: That's when we were hit by some German infantry squads

M: Do we have, I'd like to erase this stuff I've got in red here. You got that marked on a paper map somewhere?

R: Who was your platoon sergeant?

S: Who? Campbell?

R: Is he still around?

J: About what time was your infantry attack?

S: Night still around he thinks I'm crazy. He stayed in the Army, he stayed in

R: Who Campbell?

S: No, not in the Army, he stayed in the

R: Reserves?

S: No. ____

R: National Guard?

S: National Guard.

M: OK. Now we're at your mercy. It's the second day. I guess it wasn't foggy the second day. Was there any fog like there was the first day?

S: Not much.

M: OK, so about 5:00 its daylight. We're at your mercy, what happened?

S: Well, that's when we got hit by some infantry patrols.

M: OK, about where?

S: Now this is the 8th. Isn't it?

M: Yes, this is the second day.

S: OK, they came from the north.

M: They come down the road cross country?

S: Now what, seemed like the sun came the other way, but that's where the infantry guys were dug in. They took care of them. They didn't come down the road, they came cross country and worked into there where the orchard is.

M: The orchard was over here?

S: Well, there was another one the other way.

M: OK. So there's

S: Not on the road, but to the left of the road.

M: So they came down this way about do you remember how many about or did you get a report?

S: I think the first one there was only five men in it.

M: OK.

S: Then our guys were in foxholes with machine guns and bazookas, and they're the one that got those. And back on that other road we were hit from behind. See that little trail going down there?

M: Here.

S: Kinda goes northwest.

M: This one?

S: No, northwest, right there, but up in the field I had pulled out the anti-tank guns and moved it down it was originally put there but I left the machine gun and bazooka squad right there.

M: On the trail?

S: No, off the, come this way, I couldn't get anybody to go out that far.

M: Just point it out here.

S: Here is easier. About right here. The hedgerow was along here.

M: OK. So that was a bazooka and machine gun squad?

S: Yes. Commanded by our people.

M: So we know we had mines on the road.

S: Well I say our people, I don't, I had everybody in there. We got hit that morning by another squad carrying some kind of automatic weapons. Probably a burp gun.

R: What was their heaviest that they carried? 30?

S: Well, they, kind like our 30 caliber.

R: It would be 7.62 MG.

S: Do they have a gun like our BAR?

M: No, the MG 42 though see it was kinda of a, it only weighed about 25 pounds. So it was they used it like a BAR. That was their squad automatic weapon.

S: Well, I happened to be up there right after they hit and I thought those guys would take care of it but then I found out the guy on the machine gun wouldn't get out of the foxhole. But after that first day I carried the BAR with me, and the guys on number 4 gun, the guy had a flame thrower and we knocked him off. They had this machine gun and a flame thrower and we got both of them.

J: When did they attack you with that?

S: Early in the morning about, it must have been about 7:00, it was light.

J: Did they fire the flamethrower at you?

S: You bet.

J: Oh, Geez.

M: Did you have full gun crews or were some of them

S: When I started out

M: You started out with full 10 man gun crews.

S: When I started out I had

M: You know Jay the other report I know about the second day they were a lot of flame thrower reports like the Germans got a sudden issue of flame throwers.

J: They might have gotten an engineer unit up that had them of something.

S: They got them from somewhere, but they hit a tree next to me and that was it. And that guy burned. When we hit him I guess we hit the tank too. But I got the guy out of the foxhole. I was kind of mad.

M: We're shooting 30 calibers.

S: Yes. They had in there, the fact that we had all our 50s in use and we still had some on a half-track so we had parked back behind, I don't know, we put them behind the houses and stuff. We only had two or three mounts for those 50 calibers for ground mounts.

M: If I remember what you said earlier basically the 50s you were using them on vehicles going up and down the roads.

S: Well, use those on the personnel, we didn't try to knock, well maybe we did. Whenever they started firing 3" guns why of course the machine gun joined in hit those ten skinned vehicles and that was to take of the personnel.

M: OK, so you were attacked early in the morning by infantry.

S: And, we squashed them. Then I went back to the 120th battalion CP to see if had any more men, and he had five men that had drifted in so he formed a squad and he gave it to us and we went up and reinforced ...

M: Where was the CP?

S: It was back no, no, no, no, no, it was right down that road.

J: Yes, we have got it up on the map.

M: OK.

S: It was in the house back there in fairly close walking distance not over 200 or 300 yards.

M: Have I got myself confused? I thought that CP was overrun.

S: Well —

M: One of them was.

S: I don't think that he was down in Mortain. He was somewhere because we not only had the 120th but we had the 117th battalion commander, Lt. Col named, I wouldn't remembered all these names if this guy hadn't wrote them when he did. Lockett was his name, Col. Lockett.

J: Oh, OK he was from

S: 2nd battalion, 117th regiment.

J: Yes, yes.

S: He got shot up.

J: Yes, cause he commanded a force, that in the records they sometimes call it "Task Force Lockett." They came down, were sent down to help the 120th.

S: I don't know whether he's still alive or not. One of those guys got killed.

M: Yes, that's right on the second day they sent down, I think they decided they would stick, no, somebody came in to help the 117th kind of replace and counterattack They sent a second battalion the 117th hadn't been engaged so they were sent down to help you guys out.

S: Might have been. He didn't have very many men. You know, when they talk about battalions well you are thinking like 2 or 300 men, there were like 9, 14, 15.

M: OK, anyway you went down to the battalion CP and got five guys and came back.

S: Exactly where it was, there it seemed like it could have been down just below that, second anti-tank south.

M: Down here? So when you got back with five guys, about what time of day is it?

S: Oh, it was getting around the middle of the day. When we put them in position up there and then they set around most of the day. We didn't get any action in there. Then he wanted his men back so he wanted them as a roving squad.

M: So the second day, you weren't firing or didn't you have?

S: The second day?

M: Yes. —

S: We were firing on that road.

M: Did they continue to move vehicles up the road?

S: Oh, yes.

M: OK.

R: Shooting gallery.

M: That's an apt description. 400 meter shooting gallery.

S: In the evenings we would let them come out with their flag and pick up their dead and wounded.

M: About what time did they start moving in the morning, do you remember?

S: Daylight.

M: Daylight? Around 5:00 they started trying to move vehicles again. Do you remember any specific actions during the day, engagements at all?

S: Either the second or third day they tried coming up that road out of Mortain by that #1 anti-tank gun right there where the mines are.

M: Here?

S: Yes, and we had, no, the next one up. Right there. We knocked off a couple of enlisted men and a German SS Lt.

M: They were coming from

S: No, they were coming up that road down in Mortain. Right there. And, they were trying to remove our mine field. They did that with a machine gun I don't know where I was when that action started and I heard some ... and went back there. We questioned that Lt. We had one guy who could speak a little German. I should have been able to. My mother came from Germany when she was 18. She wouldn't talk German around us kids, but she would to her brother when he visited. All he would say is Hail Hitler! Hail Hitler! We practically shot him in two and he was still laying there bleeding, we sent him on back but he died. Those guys would try to kill you as long as they could get their hands on a weapon or any no matter how much you've been charred.

M: But that was an infantry man the second day, now

S: We don't know what was behind him.

M: The second day, did anyone try to attack you with tanks or did they just

play shooting gallery for you?

S: That's all.

M: OK.

S: Well of course we took artillery fire, and whatever else they could have. they didn't hit us with any flames. They got closer with the artillery. The second or third day we lost sight on #3 gun, and also on #2 due to artillery or HE fire, one of them, it's hard to tell.

M: OK, so but you have it didn't take out some impact with the artillery. When it knocked out the sight

S: I don't remember if that was the second or third day.

M: OK.

S: Maybe it's in here somewhere.

M: When you say it took out the sight, like it came through, it didn't

S: A piece of the

M: A piece came through, like, not through the gun shield, but hit the front of the sight and knocked it out, broke it, is that

S: I think one of them was through the front and one was through the side. We couldn't use the sight.

J: Yes, it was in the 823rd's yearly history. They said that on 9 August the roadblock was credited with destroying 3 German vehicles, type unknown, while having the sights and sight mounts of two of its 3" guns damaged by artillery fire.

S: Was that the third day?

J: Yes.

S: They finally got a little closer to the range.

M: Was the artillery pretty steady or intermittent?

S: Well, that first day it was heavy.

M: OK, second day was

S: Then you got used to it so you didn't even notice. The fact is they had one machine gun shooting over that railroad bridge, the first day, why, we went across that thing crouched over cause it had cement railings on it. Got below that..... didn't even come close cause you could hear them popping, you could have just walked across. I suppose I slept

sometime in there, but I don't remember when. I really don't.

M: So, the second day no tank attacks on you, just kinda, more like the first day just continued to engage targets on that road, and they continued to

S: Cause I thought maybe the attacks would blow over. But they never did. And the third day about the same kind of stuff. And, I think it was the third night our guys must of went to sleep up there on that roadblock, because half-track pulling one of the Germans came through. One had tried before and they knocked it out. Didn't know they were wounded until after they had knocked them out. That one got through, got clear down to where my CP was.

R: Oh, is that right?

J: Where was your CP?

S: No, no, no, keep right, there, right there, right in there. See where those two buildings are?

J: Yes.

S: Right there.

M: Oh, OK.

S: That way I

R: So what happened when the half-track came?

M: It came down from this way?

S: I heard it coming down that road. You know, I was asleep, I think. But I was in an upstairs room and

R: So you had a view?

S: I could see into it. And, I don't know where my guard was. He was supposed to be down below. Those guys were worn out. I just hollered "Halt," and they stopped. Then I heard "Ve is woundish", and I had a grenade in my hand. I think I said "hand it over" or something, kept the grenade and then when they did I just put it back in We took it in tow.

R: You came down through this road?

S: Yes.

R: Down here?

S: Yes, I don't know why we were so civilized, we should have dropped him right there. Afraid we would be in that same position maybe.

✓ R: Yes, and quite a few of our guys were.

S: And then from then on it slacked off more or less as an in the artillery. After the third day we packed the guns. We hadn't 119 began anything. I wish I could tell you how many, but the second day we got about the same amount of vehicles and the third day it dropped down. And each afternoon and evening they would come out and pick up their dead. Why they were so dumb, keep running up that road. I suppose they had some, Col. or General back there with a machine gun that said you go that way and not come back.

M: Well, I'm trying to think of my own, remember the main attack was through northern St. Barthelmy so these guys could have been going up in effect support the main attack. It makes some sense the first day, makes less sense the second day because they've already kinda of quit on Barthelmy, and they're trying to get 285 more, the third day I haven't any idea why they are going there. Are they still heading north on the third day? That doesn't make any sense at all.

S: I don't think we shot anybody coming the other way. They come down there and make that turn and go back east.

M: This turn?

S: Yes, that isn't a square turn is it?

M: That's the way the map shows it. Yes, it sure is a square turn.

S: Yes, I guess it is. Then the other angle is down below there. We could see clear down there.

M: Down here?

S: I don't think that's right.

M: There is the crossroads.

S: We could see clear on down here. See, that's pointing out of our range.

M: So you had a field of fire clear off into here.

S: Well, we were way up on a hill. We had the high ground. Isn't that what we're supposed to do is take the high ground?

M: Jay, you might want to write what the grid he showed me were at 60 about 600118. There's a road junction there on the 1 over 25 and that's he could see that far. So that would have yeah been about a click.

S: Then here is another hill. No, there it is. It's hidden over there is behind it, you can see that you could come up here. Look at that all over.

M: What he's telling me is over in here there's a hill so this road off our

map here comes down like this, then the road coming here, he couldn't see up here because of the hill here. You can see it on the 1 over 25. It doesn't show up on our computer maps.

R: Where do you all get your maps like that one 25,000?

M: That was a big find. We didn't know that those things were available and we had the overlays that Rubenthall had done. Of course, we didn't get one of these maps they're useless.

J: We also have one of the actual reports from the division report and the battalion reports they just stuffed the overlays in there and they're still in there. Some of them are getting real brittle and crumbling, but you can still use them.

S: The fact is we did a lot of travelling without any maps. We didn't have any maps. They run out.

R: Yes, yes, after Mortain. Yes.

J: You were moving so fast that you can't keep on your map.

R: Yes, I'll have to get us a map of Mortain, Tom.

S: Huh!

R: I say I'll get us a map of Mortain.

S: Oh.

R: Geographical survey sells them for about \$3.00 a sheet and I think they got maps.

M: You can get I think, you can buy the new ones. This is the original map. You can still get those in the archives.

J: Yes, this is the February '44 version.

R: Which Archives? Out on Suitland Road.

J: No, this would be on, their cartography section is in Alexandria.

R: Oh, yes, I've been there too.

J: Pickett Street.

R: Right.

S: I was hoping you could show all the hills and stuff.

R: Will they sell you maps like that?

S: I think the ones that Garth sent me

J: Those 1:25,000 are \$6.00 a sheet. What you do you just walk in there and you tell them you want a map of and they'll help you find the exact reference and then they have all the big color masters in the back and they have a real big Xerox machine and they just slap it on there and make a copy and you walk out.

R: I wonder if they have 1 over 50's of this area.

J: I'm sure they do.

S: We could see that because we were up high over here.

M: You might want the new map because these things, as soon as you get back the terrain just doesn't jump out at you. You know the old 1 over 50's the terrain just jumps out at you it's really I have a horror with these things, to get a feel for the terrain and then you get the trails and the contour lines mixed up too.

S: You can't, when you look at that, you wonder, well you're setting right out in the open. But you're not. You're setting up on top of the hill, more or less indefinitely and that's why I said if we'd of had the M10 it'd of knocked us out but they could have said we were too high. I don't think they knew what was shooting them. I guess, they acted so dumb about it. Then we picked up a wounded man he must have bailed out of that half-track, went through there cause we picked him up see that little road that goes up towards where we had the machine gun?

M: This one?

S: Yeah, down below there where it's a main road, right there, there's some houses, there was, and there was an old tarp there and this guy rolled up in the tarp but he was just a grenadier or whoever a German infantry man may be picked up there. Walked by there and heard someone groaning, looked around couldn't see anybody and saw it was coming from that tarp and it was German rolled up in there. Must have rained sometime I remember the tarp was wet.

R: Could have been from dew cause I don't remember any rain.

M: Yeah, I think I remember a single report of rain during the whole action.

V: Plus it was foggy. It would have been real damp.

M: Yeah, it's probably there's a lot of moisture

S: Cause the tarp was wet.

J: The Germans mention fog every morning but it always clears off between about 8 and 10 in the morning. It cleared up which is what really hurt them because that let our airplanes get to them.

R: Did you ever run short of ammunition for your, for your main gun.

S: Barrels were starting to jam. The barrels on our machine guns were starting to jam.

R: The 3" ammunition, you never got short out of that?

S: I don't remember ever. We had a lot of rounds.

M: I think the first time I asked you, you thought you carried 60 rounds. It's 90?

R: Tom says 90, he knows better than I.

M: I think Quintus told me the same thing. He said 60.

R: Is that right?

S: Well, our men had a habit of pack rats.

R: Course Quin was towed or self-propelled all the way wasn't he?

M: No, no. Never towed, just like you guys. He started out being towed. He's the one who told me, Neel was talking about how hard it was to get the guns in position all over the bocage and what the 610th did, they put pintles I guess you guys did later put pintle on the front of their half-tracks and started pushing them around.

S: We had them on there. We had them on there at Mortain.

R: Got a picture of in Clayburn or Hood with a pintle, COL Bell standing beside it on front pushing the damn 3" guns.

M: How did you steer?

S: Well, just like you do a trailer.

M: OK. Oh, and also we were asked something about it hadn't come up, what kind of personal weapons do you all carry? Strictly guns and things. Our guess was carbines.

S: Carbines to start out with. You carry a carbine all the time?

R: No, I did for a while then I got an M1. Some of our guys had grease guns.

S: Yeah, I had one and it jammed and so I had an occasion to pick up a BAR and then someone stole it.

M: Kind of heavy isn't it?

S: When you're shooting at the other guy, you don't pay much attention to

that. I was never that far from the jeep most of the time and had the extra clicks. Did your jeep finally go to 50s on your ... map?

R: No. 30s on the map.

J: Do you remember when all this was over what the total number of casualties you took were?

S: In there?

J: Yes, just how many guys you had wounded, killed, whatever?

S: I only had 2 killed.

J: Were those by the typhoons?

S: Seemed like one of them was and then the other one, artillery fire.

R: And that's hard to track because a lot of our casualties were evacuated by the infantry instead of through guns.

M: The air attacks were the first day, the airplane attacks were those on the first yes, we didn't go over them much about when did the, I think we said the typhoons hit you once or twice, twice and the Germans struck once.

S: Well, the Germans, I think, hit the second day, not much, just a brief strafing and they went on toward the CP to attack the CP. We fired at them with our 50. I don't think we hit them. Someone back there

R: Oh, yes.

M: On the first day when the typhoons hit, who did they, do you remember what they actually did?

S: Well, they hit that guns 3 and 4 and they got I think Mike Bagel was on one of those guns and he got killed.

R: Did they fire rockets?

S: Yes. We had our panels up.

R: I'll be damned.

S: We threw smoke. We targeted for the Germans.

J: What color were your panels?

S: Yellow, whatever that color was, I'm colorblind.

R: I thought they were red.

S: I thought they were yellow.

R: I thought they were red.

S: Wasn't it yellow smoke? Well, it wasn't quite yellow was it.

M: Do you remember which direction they made their pass? East to west, north to south?

S: The typhoons?

M: Yes.

S: They came in straight from the north.

M: North to south. Rockets and cannon or just rockets.

S: Rockets and machine guns. When they came down they were firing everything.

M: Let's see, about what time was that? The first time it happened.

S: Seemed like it was in the afternoon.

M: OK, then they did it again later, or just once?

S: One time.

M: OK, one time.

S: Germans passed over and then the typhoons two or three hours later, but they had been doing some work up north and east of us cause we could see them.

M: OK. It mentioned in the report that a, could you see what effect they were having?

S: No, no.

M: Let me put you back on the other map.

S: We just figured there were German tanks and some of our own men.

M: Yes, we got you placed around here, I guess. And, because yes this is the main, most of the German armor activity is going to be right up in here, and like you said north and east. You saw airplanes working there, but you couldn't tell what they were doing.

S: The fact is I know more now what was going on then I did then. You see, while you're in those situations you take care of yourself and your own group, your own men. You don't worry about the next guy.

M: Oh, I understand. You've been writing, Jay, how we doing on filling data points?

J: Pretty good.

M: Vicki? —

V: I've been looking at the map.

S: Well, did we learn anything we didn't know?

V: Yes, actually you've given us a lot of information.

M: Well, we showed you where we started, and everything after that is stuff we didn't know.

S: Somewhere in here I've got it written, or it's on those sheets I gave you, how many rounds we carried.

M: It's not in there. Well now wait, it is the 90 rounds comes at the back.

S: Does it?

M: Yes, that's in the Logistics part of it. There's a general section on

S: We carried approximately 60 AP and 30 or so HE and then we had a mix of 50 each in the ammo truck. You know, I was thinking that was a 3/4-ton, but the more I think about it

M: Yes, here it is. Class 5 and 90 rounds are carried, 65% armor ... 35% high explosives. Was that a battalion basic load, or did you all, was that something Ft. Hood might have taught you?

S: Whatever the basic load was and what we ended up with was a lot different.

R: Yes, how much was carried in battalion trains, I have no idea.

M: I think Neel told us you had a, the platoon had 4 guns and 4 half-tracks, and had an M20, and a then they had another vehicle is it another M20 that had your security section in. There was a trailer involved.

S: I tell you, we didn't get those M20's or M8's until we were in there quite a ways, unless you guys did.

R: We had them. We got them.

S: Did you?

R: Yes, but I didn't think a gun platoon had an M20.

S: All we had was an armored car and they didn't have see the little M20

R: Yes, M20

S: 57, 37.

R: M8 had a 37 on, that's what recon had. I didn't realize that you guys had a M20. —

S: We didn't.

M: I'm going by

S: We finally got M8's when they switched us to M10's.

M: I'm going by this. This little TO&E thing he gave me on, it's and SP but the only difference reportedly is a half-tracking gun. It shows an M20, another M20, and then a 1/4-ton, you see.

S: Well, yes, they had, no, they didn't have that.

M: What did you, what was your

S: They didn't have, we didn't have M20's.

M: What did you have?

S: M8's.

R: No.

S: I mean platoon-level.

R: No, you couldn't have any M8's, Tom.

S: Why? Mine didn't have a gun on it.

R: No, you didn't have any guns on your armored cars so therefore it was an M20, right?

S: What one had the gun on it?

R: M8, and that's what recon platoon had.

S: OK, then we had the M20.

R: Yes.

M: But you did have 2 armored cars?

S: One.

M: One, did you have another vehicle for your security section?

S: What we called a 3/4-ton maybe.

R: We had a 1/4-ton.

S: We had ~~three~~ guys in a recon.

R: What did your security section ride in, the M20?

S: What security section?

R: The company had a, yes that's right, that was a company.

S: We didn't have a so-called security section in the platoon, all we has was our, first of all we had 2 jeeps, and 4 guns, and 4 prime movers, and the 3/4-ton. That's what we had in the platoon. And then when they switched us to the M10's, they gave us 4 M10's and an armored car and a jeep, so we one. Because I didn't like the armored car.

M: OK, Mortain you had 2 jeeps and a 3/4-ton that was your headquarters and stuff. Now Neel told me, the 3/4-ton trailer, that's where they carried part of the basic load.

S: We might of had a trailer, I don't know.

M: And apparently he had a security section, he said they were used as ammo humpers that's

R: Yes, I think the security section is at company level.

S: We didn't have one.

R: Yeah, A Company had one.

S: Well, A Company had it back, but they weren't close to us. The company CP, I don't even know where it was.

R: Cause you know Benny ... used to come to our reunions. He was a security sergeant at C Company.

S: Oh, we called them recon. Is that what they were?

R: No.

S: Well, that's what he used them for. What do I need security for in my C Company?

J: For half-tracks, for half-tracks full of wounded Germans.

S: Yes.

R: Scrounge chow.

S: I'll tell you when they start changing you end up with a lot of stuff that isn't on the TO.

R: Yes. Like the Mercedes sedans which didn't last too long because they always take them away from us.

S: Sure liked to have brought that VW home.

R: Yes.

R: What platoon was Cunningham with, because he was obviously up there somewhere because he got wounded.

S: Well, wasn't he with B Company, or did he

R: No, Path was with B Company, Cunningham

S: Cunningham get wounded when he was recon?

R: Yes.

S: Well, I guess, but he was

R: The first time. The second time he

S: I think that probably he was supporting the second, the second platoon. We didn't have one.

R: Who was platoon leader second battalion? Miller? Custer.

S: Conners.

R: Conners.

S: His sergeant was Levine. He had to work with Gardner maybe it was Gardner.

R: Yes, Gardner was the platoon sergeant.

S: Well, Gardner should be the officer. See Conners went.

R: Did he?

S: Yes, battle fatigue or something. They should have replaced him, I don't know why they didn't. They should have replaced Miller, too. But I, we never were close to Miller except up at Mortain.

R: Simmons says that Miller was laying in the damn foxhole, afraid to get out.

S: That's right.

R: Simmons said I told him to get up, let's go Lt., but he wouldn't so that's how he got his ass out of there.

S: That's what Simmons told us.

R: Yes. —

S: If Miller would have reconnoitered what Simmons said when they got in position and he just disappeared. If they would have checked the gun sight, places, they could have stopped and set up their security marker, which we did

R: Yeah, you did it right.

S: Course, I wasn't as well liked as Miller, till after Mortain. My men thought I was too rough on them.

J: Do you remember any of the code names for the different units, because going through the

S: For the Germans you mean?

J: No, for yours. I know going through the records I keep coming across dispatches back and forth where there will be code names and I don't know what any of them mean.

R: Anzak?

J: I know that Anzak was 823d and I've seen code names like Anzak 2 and so forth, but I just don't know what they all, I don't know what to do with them.

R: Anzak 2 is the S2, Anzak 3 is the S3, Anzak 6

J: Yeah, I had a suspicion that that was the case.

R: That was a telephone, strictly telephone use, not radio.

J: Really?

R: Yes. The Division was Custom, but I can't remember regiments, but they were all started with C's.

J: Actually I have the regiments. Yes that's right.

R: Since we were not division troops we were different.

J: And I don't remember who it was, but somebody used state and town names and I think it might have been for platoons but I'm not sure. They would use names like Topeka and Arkansas and

R: I don't think we did. For a while four of our staff officers were given names of Chevrolet and whatever else. I don't remember when that came and went. And I'm not sure whether that was radio or telephone.

J: Well, actually that helps a lot because I thought that was the case about

Anzak but I wanted to make sure.

S: Maybe that's what was in the little second jeep, was the radio, I didn't have one in mine.

R: Where did you fit 10 men and 90 rounds in a half-track?

S: All over.

R: Yeah, those half-tracks were full, I remember that much.

S: Well, in one of them, we even had 4 cases of dynamite.

R: What?

S: Dynamite. When we got up and was going through the Siegfried Line.

J: Oh, for blowing up dragons teeth, or something like that.

S: That's the one that caught on fire, I didn't want it to go off close. That's when my sergeant said I was crazy.

R: Said what?

S: Said I was crazy.

R: Oh.

S: I got in the half-track and drove it out.

R: Good for you.

J: On fire?

S: Yes.

J: With dynamite in it?

R: Where was this?

S: Oh, I won't set the dynamite off.

J: Well, yes, but it's not a happy thing to be driving a vehicle with dynamite

R: Where was this, Tom?

S: When we were going through the Siegfried Line I don't remember the name of the town. I know they had a brick factory there with a big smokestack and we had the vehicles all parked back in the brick factory because they had a big wall around and we didn't want them out where the guns were. And we were just targets of opportunity. I don't know how we why we got, artillery sergeant, hitting on us and one of them hit the half-track and

set it on fire and everybody scattered. Boy I don't want that thing going off in here. So I just drove it out, headed it down hill and bailed out.

R: Did it eventually explode?

S: Yes.

R: In a spectacular manner I'm sure.

S: Well, you know, flames, just the ammo going off, you know, goes every direction.

M: Kind of think back to Mortain now.

S: I'm looking for the Company CP, now that it's all over with.

M: You got the after action down there?

R: Yes.

M: We got a (??60th??) grid.

J: If we had it, it'd be on this map I put on the bulletin board.

S: Cause we would send a vehicle back everyday, I don't remember ever sending a report back of how many vehicles and stuff we knocked off other than when we went back and we didn't write anything down. Where's Company A platoon?

M: I'll be back in about 5 minutes, let me go up to my office and get the after action.

S: Yes, I got it.

J: Do you?

S: A Company, CP at 630 moved to 516122.

R: 516122. There has to be a road down here somewhere.

J: Here it is. It's not a great road, but it's a road.

S: The only time I took that road back

J: When was that?

S: Battle of the Bulge.

J: Battle of the Bulge. That makes sense. OK. German reports mention that when they came down the road when they came down the road to where your roadblock ended started taking fire from three sides the lead company got all shot up and right behind them on the road were, their company command staff, the battalion command staff, the battalion they were in and then

also the regimental command staff coming right up there at the front, and they started getting hit not far from the roadblock and they took cover and it ended up all three command posts, at the same house, same building. And they were taking American fire all day and they said that after a few hours of it they started get a little battle happy. When the shells going off they started singing, some of their folk songs. "Ode to ?????????????????". Around 11:00 this American, unarmed, who was looking for cover from the shells, burst into the house, ran into the room and stopped and saw all these Germans standing there singing, and said war is a strange thing and of course they took him prisoner. And then they said about an hour later around noon, the shelling and stuff stopped long enough for them to disperse out of that house get out of the front line and not have all of our command people all in one place. They were definitely taken by surprise, they were not expecting, they were told that they would run into a little resistance in Mortain itself, maybe just scatter out ... and they just did not expect the roadblock at all, not at all.

S: Well, maybe they knew what was going in down here and so they didn't have to get up there.

J: Uh, that may be true, yes.

R: Smith and I slept eight hours in the field that day... just to get back ... Juvigny and Juvigny was deserted, but about every 15 minutes the Germans would fire 4 or 5 rounds the unearthly howl.....

S: You know that I got so that when I'd go to sleep, anybody would come within the area, I'd wake up. Not in Mortain, but afterwards and before. But after the first couple of days, why, you know, other than them trying to knock us out of there. We didn't receive any, what I would say, was a real attack. We got a little platoon squads and I just figured that everything they sent this way afterward must have been more or less recon to see what their ... outfit I don't know where they went and I don't think they knew what we were because they never did actually get into that.

J: No, the only thing they did, they moved a bunch of guys down past you, this way. This, of course, is Hill 314 was all cut off. They actually did, they were able to take, there was like a little knoll here, there's a smaller part of the hill. And they were able to take that, but they weren't, and they took Mortain itself, but they never took this, and they never took this ridge, they pushed back a little bit here, but they never took this ridge, never took they were sort of like, after they took Barthelmy, they were sort of like this around your position.

S: They set up down here. I don't know what they really had in there, but we could see guys changing clothes and washing and eating their bivouac. That's when I knew there was no mortars left. We didn't have any because I

J: You had them under observation.

S: Yes, no way I get them.

R: Did you ever have ammo up there?

S: The fact did we have any artillery backing us up?

J: There were 7 battalions actually total in support of the whole division, 7 battalions and you can see we've got some of their batteries marked. Some of the battalion positions. Yes, there seven tanks backing you all up.

S: Well, they couldn't get in there.

J: There were two artillery outfits that got caught on Hill 214 with everybody else, and they were able to keep enough batteries, I guess, to keep their radios running the whole time, and they were just, they were calling in artillery left and right everything I could see and they could see everything. Yes. And all down this road. They could see everything, and they were, they reached..... they called artillery the whole time they were up there.

S: Well, we needed all the help we could get they did. But I don't think they knew what we were, because every time the Germans would show up we would kill them.

J: Sure sounds like they didn't know. Yes, see these are the code names that I've been able to pick out so far. Some of them I'm not sure about. Some of them I have no idea.

S:I didn't, I didn't, once in a while talk on the radio and I'm pretty sure it wasn't in my division.

J: Did they ever write those down, the code names?

R: Yes, they did, but

J: I was hoping that, in going through all the boxes in the Archives I'd come across a piece a paper that would have those on it.

R: I went through all those boxes briefly.

S: You did?

R: Yes. Yes, I went in there and identified myself and get a card and all that ... pushing a cart, 14 envelopes ... General Orders from the guard at Camp Clayburn cause most of it's tactical stuff. You can telephone journal ... Anzak 6

S: Rose said that they were in contact with headquarters, but they weren't in contact with us.

R: Yes, they were in contact with A Company. I was in contact with them practically all the time but I had an AM radio also.

S:Sally?

R: Yes.

S: She accused us of being rude.

R: I know it.

J: That's a nickname I could live with.

S: But see the after action report only shows about half you know that we actually knocked out, the fact is, I'm not even sure that get through at the end of the day we could see all these vehicles one side of the road or the other, when they go off the road if it was a heavy vehicle it would shove one off to get up the road.

J: Did they normally burn?

S: But you know when you shoot an AP or two and knock them out destroy an AT and they don't burn then, don't give away your position. Is your After Action better than mine?

M: This is the battalion's, believe me compared to other battalion's what are we trying to do, the 9th?

J: Well, they were looking for the CP.

M: Oh, where was it? B552143. Bottom of 692.

S: See Chris got in there at 6:30 according to this.

R: On the 6th of August? Yes.

S: He moved one place then he moved you 630 the first time he moved 615 closing 7:00 then he moved again. See, that's when we got our, on the 6th we got our orders and we were going to go with the 120th Infantry on a special task force.

M: Yes, now they sent a battalion, of 120th went down through Barrenton, their 2nd AD task force, they were supposed to take Barrenton. See because you're guys were advancing, they were having trouble taking that town and you were just stopping overnight here.

S: Yes, that's right.

M: The 1st Infantry told me that the threat, basically if there was one, was up in this area. So this attack was totally unexpected. Now, also warned of this but that stuff didn't fill you out.

R: Bradley knew about it.

M: Yeah, he apparently knew but it didn't get down to division.

S: Well, see when you look at the map, you knew they were coming, they were coming this way.

R: In fact ... I guess that officer stuff was not supposed to go below Army.

M: It ... didn't go very far down.

R: I think Army commander.

M: Yes, I'm a little surprised that

J: The only thing they did, the only action they really took on was they intercepted all the German planes that were scheduled to support the attack, right over the airport the Germans had promised 300 planes to support the attack and none of them descended down.

M: He didn't have a better gun than he did. Just go ahead and underline. You'll get to read the whole thing. So if the ... knocked out Mark VI at 2000 yards, but he couldn't do 3" guns less a 1000 yards.

S: They tried it but they couldn't knock them out.

M: You couldn't knock them out at ... either.

S: They couldn't knock them out. We have some, the reason I know, we had some 9s ... big Tiger (BREAK)

S:set up in here to protect that from the hill. I think that Miller and I, the last that I saw him was after we talked and he was going to set up to protect south.

M: He set up. Yes, he was down south of the hill right about south of the town, about in here. I don't have an exact location on him.

S: Yes, we first set up there.

M: Wait, we've got the After Action, what's the grid they gave. On him. Did they give one?

J: Yes, they did.

S: Well, let's see, it would be right here, 6th August.

M: Nope, don't have the grid. A3.

S: No. He was 3rd platoon. Yes.

M: OK.

S: It says ~~B3~~, but it don't say nothing, 3rd platoon, A Company is attached to search battalion.

J: 3rd Platoon, A Company is right here... 6 coordinates roughly.

M: 3rd Platoon wasn't north of him.

J: According to the After Action

M: That's about right. We know there were guys down here.

S: We must of had radio contact because it says 3rd platoon they lost radio contact. So we must have had it too we just gave them a coordinate. It doesn't give any coordinates for the 3rd platoon. I don't see it in there anywhere.

M: He was about, in the interview they put that ambulance right about in here, south of the hill, right about there by the roadblock. Apparently he had no entries for it.

S: I, I

M: Yes, 3rd platoon. He was apparently down there by himself.

S: Yes, he wasn't up there, Andrews was up there.

M: No, I came up with apparently was with you guys, down much south of you. He might have been at the southern gun there, but

S: Well, he might have come up there. You know showed up. It says that that went on all Saturday night, but on till Saturday night, they didn't hit till Saturday night or early Sunday morning.

M: I didn't understand that either.

S: Well, he must have got mixed, maybe he was

M: He might be mixed up, I mean that's, or miswrote maybe made a mistake and wrote down the day.

S: I didn't know what day it was, Saturday or Sunday. And he says those guys came off the hill Saturday evening. Not the 120th.

J: Maybe he means the next Saturday.

S: Oh, well that's

M: I think that's the way I read that. It was an hour later.

S: OK, that could be.

M: I think that tracks.

S: But I was taking this report right here.

M: Yes, they didn't get off the hill until the 13th and that would have been about Saturday.

S: We were there 7 days, I guess, Saturday. We were relieved on the 13th, that's seven days. See, he's talking like it's all right then. OK. He says it was the 35th that relieved them.

J: It was the 35th that came up from the southwest and the 4th ID came across directly from the west through St. Barthelmy.

S: They came through St. Barthelmy?

J: Yes, the 4th Infantry did. 4th Infantry Division came west down, from Juvigny to St. Barthelmy and then the 35th came up from St. Hillarie, St. Hillaire up towards Mortain.

M: Yes, if anybody ever wants to play "what if" games about if the Germans could have won this battle, within 24 hours the US had

J: 7 Divisions.

M: Elements of 7 Divisions moving into the area.

R: No way.

M: If you guys would have surrendered on the spot. The Germans still weren't going to get through.

R: Yes, not a chance.

S: See that tank battalion came in, must have been Saturday night, and they tried to attack, no they must have come in Friday.

R: What tank battalion was that, Tom? Our own 743rd.

S: Oh, yes. No, no. Not the 743rd.....

J: Somebody from 3rd Armored Division?

R: Yes, but we had attached tank battalion which was the 743rd.

S: OK, that would have been the one and they came up and tried to attack up the road where guns 3 and 4 are pointed and they didn't get but to the curve before they got shot at.

R: Did they?

S: Germans must have been setting up there. I didn't walk up and see, if I

would have been in the tank, I would have been out and up there walking before I would have ever taken those tanks round that curve. Course I'm conservative.

R: You're what?

S: Conservative. Well, you know, when we had to move up or towards the Germans and we knew they were around, I always went on patrol that night. I didn't just try looking down the road there.

R: Yes, I walked too. Cause the infantry, were reports that the divisions, that they had cleared such and such a town so the battalion would have me or whoever go down and see, and half the time we'd get down there something to whatever goes you draw fire from Germans.

J: The Germans had stragglers from earlier fighting with the 1st Infantry Divisions still going through Mortain headed east as of the 6th, Saturday the 6th. It wasn't organized, by any means, but it was just some stragglers. But there was still a little bit of fighting here and there going on in the hills around Mortain and the Germans counterattacked. So that area wasn't really even clear.

S: We didn't go down in. We had a lot to do.

J: I'd say.

S: Well we had some reporters up there?

M: That's afterwards.

S: I'm going to say one thing

M: That's afterwards I'm sure.

S: I didn't see any.

M: This says hospital in England, Jay.

J: Does it?

R: Yes, I don't

S: He must have got hurt but he never even talk about that.

J: You said that up here at the end of this trail there was a machine gun and a bazooka with some mines across the trail.

S: Well, first of all we put a 57mm gun up here.

J: You did?

S: Then we took it away and moved it down

J: OK, so ~~it's~~ down in here. Alright. When did that happen? When did you move it? Was it before they attacked?

S: Pretty sure it was, because according to him we got that message from him that Mortain had been hit so we were worried about it, I guess he was too.

J: So that would have been the night of the 6th?

S: This came out of Mortain.

J: Right, right. So you moved that gun down there the night of the 6th?

S: Yes, you could move them with ease.

J: OK.

M: So you got an itty bitty dot on the map where those guns were.

J: So, what was left up here was a machine gun and a bazooka to cover that trail.

S: And a mine field.

J: OK, so now that's here. This is where the trail comes up and then bends off like that. So were they often behind a hedgerow or were they over in one of these houses?

S: No, they were setting about right here.

J: OK, cause that is a hedgerow which it might have been this, this

S: Maybe they were behind this.

J: OK, yes, cause that's a building, that's a building, and that's a building, and there's a trail, and then that's a hedgerow that goes along there. That straight line is a hedgerow.

M: Could you mark on plastic with that thing, Jay?

J: With this?

M: Yes.

J: Yes.

M: OK.

J: This is a contour line that's not a hedgerow unfortunately, but

S: Yes, this is, this is contour, but not right here.

J: Right, right. OK. So they would have been. OK. So there's a machine gun and I'll use my own little personal symbol for a bazooka covering that, and then there were mines across the trail.

S: Yes.

J: OK.

S: I don't know how far out.

J: I wouldn't think that

S: 20 yards.

J: Alright, now this 57 you had moved down that would have been here covering across this bridge here.

S: Yes, cause we had another one up here.

J: Right.

S: Where's that trail?

J: That trail comes in, it's sort of hidden by the things, but it comes down here and it comes into here, OK.

S: Yeah, that's where he was.

J: So he would have been on the right side of the trail, between the trail and the bridge. The bridge is underneath the

S: No, he was setting up here, and the machine gun and bazooka was either up above him or, they had to be up above him. On that same side of the road, they weren't on this side.

M: Jay use a dot rather than a symbol, that's how we are getting fowled up I think because you don't know where in the symbol the gun was.

S: That's a gun.

M: Yeah.

J: OK.

M: OK, yeah.

S: That's supposed to be a gun.

J: Alright. What I'll do is, I'll just make numbers and I'll just write down what they are. OK.

S: Do you want me to send you a symbol book that the Army publishes?

J: We've got one, but the thing is they don't agree with the symbols that we used on the original sketch.

S: Right. Nobody memorized that book.

J: Right, exactly.

M: And they don't agree with modern symbols so it tends, when you turn it over, modern-day Army guys, they can't read it.

J: OK, so that was a 30 caliber machine gun covering that gun.

S: Yes.

J: OK.

S: That's all we had.

J: Alright. And then there was another gun down here, right there at the intersection of 57.

S: Where's that?

J: Right here.

M: Covering that bridge?

S: Yes.

J: OK, covering that bridge here.

S: It was setting up in here somewhere.

J: OK.

M: Right beside the house, that makes sense.

J: It does.

S: And then we had mines out. All these roads had mines coming in.

J: OK, what side of the bridge?

S: I don't really know, I think they probably right on it.

J: OK.

S: Because those tanks, I don't think they the thing was so steep there I don't think they could get down enough course we could of got fooled too.

J: Alright, now, you said there was a, this is the bridge that went over the

railroad, you said they could shoot at you when you came across that bridge. ____

S: Well, when you walked

J: Walked across it.

S: Yeah.

J: Now, there was a cave down here on the other side? It's kind of hard to read because of all the weird lines coming through.

S: It would have been right here. I think it started sloping down from here.

J: Yes, that looks right. OK.

S: They fired their machine guns at these vehicles that we knocked out here. I think we woke them up, I don't think they were awake.

J: And then there was a 50 caliber that covered this bridge?

S: Which one?

J: This one, the one near the cave.

S: Here? Yes, we had one 50 in there.

J: OK. Was it, like maybe in that house at the base of the bridge?

S: No, it was just setting there right up above the hole.

J: OK.

S: That's all it was, we had this, I think we only had two or three ground mounts.

J: Now you said your CP was down a little further, you said it was a couple of buildings on this road it might have been right there in those buildings right there.

S: Right, because that's where the wounded came with the half-track.

J: OK. Good.

M: Put a little flagpole there.

S: We had to establish the CP so we could tell the infantry battalion commanders where we were. So my men knew where I was, but I didn't want to come back.

J: Alright and then your guns, your guns were up along this road

M: Yes, that's what I really want to try to get nailed down.

J: Yes, I think it's not a problem because you say your guns were up on this road along the curve, and then you said two of them pointed this way. There's a hedgerow that goes here. So they would have been facing that way.

M: Is that a hedge row or a contour line?

J: This is a hedgerow.

S: It is?

J: I'm pretty sure it is.

M: Looks like a contour line to me.

J: Yes, it is a contour line. Maybe it was

S: We were right in here. We were right in here. Right where. See how far up those are? We weren't right across the bridge.

J: OK.

M: You weren't right here.

S: No.

M: You were right here but before the road curves.

S: Maybe that's a little too far, but it was right in there.

M: And, these two guns were about 10 yards off the road, 5?

S: 8 - 10.

M: OK, 8 - 10, that's real precise. And it was right before the road curves, so probably right in here?

J: Yes. They have this listed, the reason I colored that green is because they have this listed as sort of like being wooded.

S: Well, it was.

J: OK.

S: And that's where our guns were, setting up here on this hedgerow, and that was a little berm there see, and they

M: Is that a contour line or a berm? That's a contour line.

J: Well, right here you can see there's a hedgerow that's comes down like

this, it probably parallels the road.

S: Because ~~They~~ farm these little, you see these places where these guys around here have soil conservation and they do this, and the ridge there and then ~~they~~ farm in between it and you got the high

M: So you were right, probably right in here.

S: True.

J: And the guns pointed off this way off towards the

S: Well, two of them did.

J: Because this is the main, this is the main road.

S: Two of them did, and the other two sat up here.

J: Oh, this way.

S: Now this number 3 gun could also take this road under fire.

J: OK, so he would have been maybe like this, pointing up that way, cover this road and he could also hit this road, and this one would have been right across the road from him?

M: No, no, no, he's saying his number 3 gun.

S: Was on this side.

J: Yes.

M: Yes. The way we numbered them 1, 2, 3, 4.

S: Where did you put the other two?

J: The other two I haven't put on yet. They're going to be

M: Do the northern most pair first, get those down and we'll work from there.

J: OK, well that would be

S: Now, they show a trail here, but that is not a road, that was a foot trail.

J: A foot trail, OK.

M: So let's get rid of this one and get the

J: It's only alcohol based.

M: Oh, OK, I didn't drink enough.

J: Oh, let me go get some alcohol out of my office. Oh, thanks.

M: Yes, let's get the northern two located cause then the other two got to fall out.

S: Well, the other one was on this side. One on this side and one on this side. See, these could shoot up here and so could this one. This one here could actually shoot up the road further that this one could.

J: OK.

M: It looks like right along the edge of this what they got is an orchard, that was probably the hedge he's talking about because that would be a logical place to end an orchard. So they must have been right along in here somewhere.

S: Well, and they farmed this, because they had a berm built up on this hedge line.

M: Yes, I would tell you the age of that, what they listed orchard there, was probably the berm he was talking about.

S: See and then there were trees right here, now there were some trees right in here too. Not that far out, right in here. The way I remember it. One of these things was a blacksmith's shop back here. I don't remember a, wonder what that was. We didn't expect anything but infantry up from there. We thought infantry would hit us here and they didn't. Well, maybe two or three of them did, but that's not really an attack.

M: So we think the two northern guns were about, about here? Or a little farther north, toward the curve, about there?

S: About right on the edge here, where they can see.

M: OK, how about right there, and right there, about 10 yards off the road.

S: The 10 yards there, is only going to be barely to the black line.

J: Right. Yes, that's true.

M: So OK, go ahead put those on.

J: When we zoom in on this, though, we will get it more fine.

M: Go ahead and put them down. Let's start at the base.

J: Which way, are they going like to be exactly parallel to the road, or they pointing more up this way, or are they pointing more up this way?

S: Well, they were pointing so that, you know, they could shoot more this way than that. They might not even move you know, so they could get a better shot.

J: Sure, OK. That makes sense.

M: We'll put the base if you've got the base here, yes.

J: Put a dot where the gun actually is.

M: Yes, and then right across the road about that close. And, now we think this is the berm, the other two must have been must have been right about here and here. I think.

S: Yes, that's right.

J: And they would have been pointing more up this direction.

S: They could take this road under fire over here and they could take this road around here across that bridge, where's that bridge? There it is.

J: Yes, that bridge right there. OK.

S: See and that was a hill.

J: Yeah, I can see the contour lines as it slopes up towards there.

M: So I'd put them right on that black line, right at the edge of the orchard, like right here.

S: The tubes are sticking through the hedge.

M: See that's a good position, that's why you didn't get hit, they couldn't see you. What time do we have to pick up?

V: He's supposed to be there in 15 minutes, his plane is early. This is two days in a row these planes have been early.

M: How early?

V: 3:50, he was supposed to be here after 4 and she said 3:50 is the time I just called.

M: You better be going.

V: So I need to go.

M: Tell him I'm interviewing Tom.

V: That's OK, Joyce is going with me. This is what, let me just, you all continue, what I'll do if I could just get your receipt from you tomorrow for the

S: Does this say I'm buying one of these buildings?

V: Not quite, the Government's not that rich. I'll just add the hotel on there and then I'll just go ahead and submit this and I don't think you need to do anything else. OK, thank you very much, even though you were pessimistic about this you've given us a lot of information that we didn't have.

S: I just couldn't see, what do you guys want to know all that for, that's bad history.

M: Well, the strange thing is this project, Concepts Analysis Agency is not going to do anything, per se, with this data. They are collecting it to turn over to this Brit. So I'm a little surprised. Now this guy does logarithm scales and tries to relate suppressive fire to effectiveness truly one of these ORSA magic things that I don't understand, but as a historian I love it because this is data could just go away.

J: The Center for Military History, no, Military History Institute up at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania they have expressed an interest in the transcript of the interviews and the results of this when we get done. So it will be preserved in an archive and it will be there for other people to look at.

M: As a historian I just think this is great stuff I mean the Army let's us do some more.

V: Thank you both very much, and I really appreciate you're taking the time to do this.

R: You leaving us Vicki?

V: Pardon me.

R: You leaving us now?

V: I'm going out to the airport to pick up George Greene?

S: Maybe I'll get to find out who George Greene is.

R: Yes, nice meeting you Vicki.

V: Nice to meet you too.

M:in the hotel about 6, I guess.

R: George will?

V: Yes, I'm going to bring him back, and he's going to stay over here at the Westpark Hotel.

R: Well, I won't be coming over tomorrow.

V: OK, I guess dump this stuff back in my office, the tape recording machines

and the viewgraph machine when you all finish.

M: Oh, viewgraph too. Sure.

V: Yes.

M: Will do.

JB: You all can use side B on this tape too. Side A is with Neel.

J: OK, I guess the only other thing I need to pin down on here is make sure I have the location of where you shot up these vehicles correct. I think this one and this one are going to be pretty easy. This one was just along the road over here, I mean, you were, you had them all along that whole stretch.

M: The two half-tracks you said about thirty yards.

S: They're right up here.

J: And, so like between this area and then the two half-tracks would have been up here?

S: Yes.

J: OK.

S: Coming out of the fog, OK.

J: OK, that's pretty easy. Now the first one in the morning with the motorcycle and the armored car. Now this trail comes down like this, it's hard to see because of all the writing over it. It comes down like this and then down this way past these two buildings here. And, that's where the gun is and the 30 caliber is covering it so it would have been probably along in this direction I would think.

S: That's true.

J: OK, great.

S: Because this machine gun up here on this ridge could take them under fire too.

J: Oh, OK, alright I'll extend the area then just to show how far it goes. That they could have been taken under fire in that area. Great.

S: And all this machine gun did here was, when the guys attack and up through here, but they didn't come up the road, they came through here.

J: The infantry that came up

S: Yes.

J: The flamethrower attack you mentioned, that was over

S: Right in here.

J: Over in here. OK.

S: Because I was right up in here behind these guns.

J: OK.

S: I guess if we had guns we might have hit these guys.

J: Yes.

S: And then some of the action must have taken place down here or further on down. Now I can't make out.

J: Yes, I think it did too, but we don't have anything in the records.

S: I didn't remember any action other than this LT. and a couple of infantrymen trying to remove these mines.

M: Not to bug you really, what was that guy doing? I didn't read platoon leader in that you know like we were sitting here with Tom and he can tell us where his guns were, he knew what they were doing even when he wasn't with them, and this guy, he's the 57 gun platoon leader, and I just didn't read platoon leader, it's like his biggest job was to get back to regiment his jeep every

R: You're right, I agree.

S: We sent people back but I didn't

R: He didn't talk about placing his guns, he didn't talk about knocking out any German equipment.

M: The thing that really struck me, he wakes up at 6:00 in the morning and he thinks he's all by himself and says hey, wait a minute, I was platoon leader. You're right with them, they don't leave you.

R: Yeah, that's strange.

M: In fact I didn't read about it till I talked about he was going to battalion, did the guy get relieved? I don't know.

R: But it doesn't mention where he got wounded.

M: That's later, I talked, Lofgren, the guy that interviewed him from downtown, said he got wounded days later, some point later, so he in fact was wounded and shipped out to England. I thought, without that comment, this guy was a battle fatigue case, I don't know.

S: I sure didn't remember any infantry being across here. Any friendly — infantry.

M: Well now, I think that might have been, the hill's about here and there were stragglers coming off that hill for days so there could have been, easily somebody could have spotted American infantry.

S: But I'll bet they weren't on this side of it. I'll bet they were on that side. That's where the German fire was coming from was right here. It would have been stupid to touch that.

M: From what we had before out of After Action Reports and so forth, we thought you were attacked directly for three days running. And, you were attacked once actually, and then the Germans set up a shooting gallery for you.

S: Sure, we couldn't have lasted that long. It wasn't a frontal deal.

M: No, after the half-tracks you had a shooting gallery. That explains a lot.

S: We could have got tanks coming down here, by knocking out the tracks. Cause we got smarter the further we went you know instead of trying.

J: Not try to destroy it, just try hit the track immobilize it sure.

S: Shoot a round between the gun turret

J: Oh, and to have it try to ricochet down into the

M: Because later they redesigned the gun mount to stop it from doing that.

S: Might have. We knocked the whole turret off a tank one day.

R: This describes the M1 3" gun. I'm quite sure based on recent studies they didn't know that. The one they took into combat was the M5. The difference was

S: Well, maybe they didn't.

R: The flat gun shield on the M1 just like the 105 Howitzer but the M5, that we took into combat was kind of slanted.

S: Yeah, it's slanted.

M: M6 wasn't it?

R: You're right. Maybe it was the M6.

M: If I had my book here I could tell you because I knew then. That was the main difference. There were a lot of refinements. I think the spades were a little different. They improved the trails but there wasn't much

difference between the M1 and the M6. The gun shield was the biggest difference.

S: And our gun sights weren't any good to me. No way. And when we lost those two gun sights, we took one off of one of those other guns and moved it down so we would have some on that other road, on the road to the east. But, until we did, we were about half smart. We were using the 2.

M: I meant to ask you, the, I've never been sure of this, World War II, both tank and your gun sights, you did not have illuminated reddings? You know I think later tanks at nights in terms of your could see your reddings lighted up.

S: You might have been when you went to Korea, they might have gotten lighted. Now they got night sun.

R: Yeah, infrared. Heck yeah.

M: Because I didn't understand to be a soldier myself why these lights were no good at night because even the oldest stuff I ever had used lights and as I recall I had illuminated radicals.

R: Yeah, I'm not sure.

S: We didn't have any kind illuminated types.

R: I don't think we had it in Korea in '44. I fired an anti-tank gun ...

S: What'd you have on those tanks?

R: 90mm gun.

S: Oh, good. You didn't need any tank destroyer.

R: No, we didn't need any tanks at that time either.

S: You couldn't go anywhere?

R: No.

S: Did you go anywhere with them?

R: Yeah, they got around pretty good. The final drive was weak and we were demonstrating the M26 to a bunch of reporters one day and the battalion CP that ... partial detail in Korea and we showed how it climbs a hill about 45 degree angle. Well, it climbed the hill was maybe 200 yards high and got about 100 yards and broke apart in drive and there it sits.

S: Sounds right.

R: Yeah, embarrassing.

S: You know of a the snapus that went on all the time in the army, all the screwups, it's a wonder we even whipped the Germans.

J: They just had more of them than you did.

R: Well, they had their share of them.

M: Back to the Korean War was telling me that this was late in the war like '52, '53 and static positions

R: That's when I was there.

M: They had some little guy who every day was some kind of a courier rode through a little saddle on the bike only had about a I recall a story about, about a 10 second picture of this guy

R: Oh, yeah?

M: And so for fun, they had to use shock, they couldn't do anything but shock, it was unfair to use HE to try to nail this guy. They spent weeks you know every time he'd come out they'd get about one or two shots at him and try to get him with an AP round. I think they said finally about three weeks they finally got him.

S: It was hard to hit a moving target going very fast.

R: Yeah.

J: About how fast were the vehicles going up this road when you were firing at them?

S: Well they were down in low gear

M: They probably if they were climbing a hill

J: Going up the hill, yeah, yeah.

M: Five miles an hour.

J: Yeah.

S: That's how we got so many of them. They'd come through there trying and then before they hit the big ... they were slowly in and that's where you knock them off and then some of them would roll back.

J: Did you ever see any large rounds of traffic come up this road and then come this way?

S: No, they didn't come that way.

J: That's surprises me because I mean that's a pretty decent road it looks like.

S: Well, I think the report was that there was probably a roadblock down this road.

J: Oh, OK.

S: And the only thing that I can see, we never did see much come up this road unless they came up at night. Now we could hear grinding away going on at night but there was nothing we could do.

M: Basically, it was coming on this road turning the corner and heading up so he also had a shot there at the corner when he had to slow down and turn the corner.

J: This is where the ones that came up this road you shot at this is the road they came up and they turned this way?

S: Yeah.

J: OK.

S: Well after we got to where we could see what was going on. We thought maybe for a while they came up this road but then we never could pick them up. In fact, we couldn't see too much and I wondered why they didn't come down through here come down through here. They never did. As far as I know. I wondered why don't they come up this railroad track?

J: Yeah, I was thinking they might have. In the records, they aren't any real specifics.

M: Are these your handwritten notes from the time?

S: No.

M: OK.

S: No, these are, had to reread this thing.

M: OK.

S: And that's about, I picked those up off of here but that's only about half of what we got knocked off. That's why when I read that after action report, I said, hey these guys don't even know what went on.

J: That's probably not too rare. I mean they probably

M: No, that, I think Seites probably actually wrote it, Seites, maybe Lohse signed it. Lohse? Lohse, Lohse signed it and I suspect Seites actually wrote it and all he had to go on I would say was your radio report saying maybe he went out and talked to some of you guys afterwards nail it down a little better. I don't know how else he would have done it. And I talked to the company commanders apparently when you guys were turned over

to the infantry, you were just turned over. When I talked to Wilkes about, I figured he would know because he had one platoon up at St. Barthelmy, somebody wanted another gun from another platoon to go up that goes to the company commander. He didn't know a thing about it. Absolutely not. It goes through the hands of infantry and apparently that was through the infantry chain of command that told Neel to take the gun out because Wilkes was absolutely unaware that he was out of the net.

J: Well, I'm happy with the placement that we have of his men.

M: Good. How about we go over the chron a little bit we can. You can stay over here too. Your company's in it.

R: Yeah.

S: See, when I was talking to Garth, he never did tell me what he already had. So, it was hard to put anything in place.

M: Well, it's

S: That was only five years afterwards ...

M: That's why I wish I'd like to get a hold of the letters whatever you did because my better memory of Vietnam was a lot better after about five years than it is now. God, I hate to think. Geez, I was already out of Vietnam. This has been over twenty years. Let's march through the maps here OK. This is the 1st Platoon's position. Six rifles, 50 caliber machine gun manned by TD men were placed in and among houses between the orchard and the railroad bridge. That's the one on the road junction there. I'm looking at this thing. That's the one. Do you think that corresponds to this one?

S: Not if it's on the south side.

M: I'm sorry. What does it say? It doesn't say. It says 6,000 men we think were placed in and among houses between the orchard and the railroad bridge.

S: OK. That could be but I don't think I had

M: ...Were there houses up in here?

J: Yes, you can see from the map there are.

M: OK, so that corresponds to that position. So now we think we got it more accurate. A 3" TD gun is placed on either side of the main road and two 30 caliber machine guns on each side. The bazooka and BAR team and half squad of ... placed ... positions along a hedgerow of a sharp left turn north of the railroad bridge. So we think that would probably be the two northern guns. No, that doesn't make sense. That would place them right here. That's just dead wrong isn't it?

S: What?

M: The sharp turn would be this one. That's just dead wrong.

S: No. It was up a ways.

M: Yeah. Yeah, that's how we got our placement. That's just wrong.

S: Who filed that?

J: This is out of the combat interview.

S: Oh, 823d TD Battalion Unit Journal. They didn't know where we were.

M: Yeah, see that, that places these two guns but we know that's wrong.

S: Yeah.

M: So that's an error. The 57 was placed at the end of the road paralleling the main north-south road covering not only any penetration down the ... also from the road to the left that curves into it. I guess that's

S: That's the paralleling road.

M: Yeah, that's this one I would say.

S: Right.

M: OK. Then we got two other TD Battalions

J: Actually, actually to show you it was meant to be that was meant to be the one that's marked 57 AT on the far left.

M: This one?

J: Yes, that's the one it was meant to be because it's marked on the map as such. When he says they originally put one there and then they moved him down south later on.

S: Right.

M: Well, that might be true then. That might be accurate. Two loaded 3" guns are placed north of the railroad bridge.

S: See, that don't parallel the main road that one down below though.

J: On the sketch though, he has, on the original sketch, they've got this road continuing up like this.

S: Well I didn't think it did.

J: It doesn't. I mean the map, this map says it doesn't. You can see on here

see he's got it where am I?

M: Over here.

J: Thank you. Coming like this and the trail turns, he's got the trail continuing up this way paralleling this road on the sketch.

S: See, I walked a lot of that.

J: Yeah, well, I looked at that and I said well that's wrong because it doesn't continue up that way but that's the thing.

S: I didn't go clear over here to check on these roads.

J: Uhum.

M: See, two other 3" TD guns are placed north of the railroad bridge one to cover the main road and the other facing southeast across railroad to cover any enemy feared ... along the straight strip. That could fit either of the two guns to the south because the ones in the north could, in fact, go either way.

J: Right.

M: And let's see and in the interviews, there's a comment that you made about your original positions were right by the bridge but you moved them about 200 meters up which is about where we got them place now about 200 meters from the bridge.

S: Yeah.

M: OK. ...57 AT covers the road coming in from the northeast from a position of the road junction of the river and Abbaye Blanche itself.

J: That's the one

M: To the south.

J: Southwest of the big rock.

S: Yeah, we take those under fire.

M: And immediately south of the railroad bridge and ... your positions on either side the road, rifle and bazooka teams replaced the right flank which was protected by an eight man and 30 caliber machine gun and a big rock off the road. OK, that, I'm not going to worry about that one. The mortar squad, I'm not going to worry about the placement. Along the left flank, a squad of rifle and two 30 calibers were placed in an orchard that covered tactically two road junctions.

S: Well, you know, I would dispute this because I talked to them and they didn't have any mortars because we wanted some flares.

M: They didn't have any mortars? OK.

S: I don't think they had any mortars or if they did, they weren't going to tell me.

J: Yeah, one way or the other, I don't know.

S: Maybe they didn't by the time I got around to asking them.

M: Well, now, you know, they wouldn't normally in an infantry platoon in that day and age.

S: They what?

M: Mortars weren't in an infantry platoon in that day and age.

S: I didn't think so.

R: They had sixty mortars

M: At company.

R: At company, yeah.

M: They had the, compared to when you left the army and when I got in the fire power down at company level, they had the company had a weapons platoon which had two 30 caliber machine guns and three 60 mortars and then I think that's also where the bazookas were.

R: Uhum.

M: By the time I got in, the platoon had, the platoon had a weapons squad of two 60s.

R: Uhum. Where were the 81s in those days?

M: Battalion. Heavy Weapons Company.

R: Oh, yeah. In 'B' Company here.

M: Then later on, by Vietnam, all that stuff was pushed down. The companies had the 81s. Course when you went to Vietnam you couldn't carry them.

R: Yeah, we had a cannon company in those days, I think.

M: Yeah, that's the interesting note. They put that cannon, in World War I, they found out that the infantry, or excuse me, the artillery just wasn't responsive to infantry advances and retreats and maneuvers and so the solution was let's put the cannons with the infantry. You know, the problem was a communications problem, but they solved it with a fire power problem. Then they went to World War II and found out that the cannon

company wasn't worth a damn when you get tied into division artillery. Then it was pointless to have it.

R: Yeah, yeah.

M: See the two ... of mine, I'm on page 4.

J: Along the left flank. The one above that.

M: Along the left flank, a squad of rifle and two 30 caliber machine guns were placed in an orchard to cover tactically two road junctions in addition to a short stretch of the north-south road.

J: Now what that was, they're talking about right here, putting 30 cal's like here and here to cover this road and this road and a little bit of this road.

S: But I think they were on this side.

J: OK.

M: So that would have been about the same approximate positions as the seven 57s.

J: Right.

M: Yeah.

S: Or pretty close to it.

M: I don't think we can plot machine guns, but OK, it makes sense. Two were laid near the bend in the road from the southeast at SN, south end of the roadblock. Yeah.

J: Yeah, we've got those.

M: The composition, does that sound about right to you? I talked to Eichen over the phone.

S: That might have been what we started out with.

M: Let me make sure I got the right I think he told me he was 2nd lieutenant.

S: Who was that?

M: Eichen.

S: Well, I've got that Andrews was one of the and another lieutenant I'll look it up. It's in my critique there but

J: I don't know what platoon number Eichen was, I know he was one of the AT platoon commanders.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS SPRINGFIELD

This follow-up telephone interview took place on February 15, 1990.

Participants:

S = Thomas Springfield World War II veteran

M = Mike Bailly SAIC

M:Too long ago and you won't remember but do you remember on the 2 days how much ammo you expended or maybe you remember on the day you pulled out, how much you had to reload because as far as I can tell you didn't get resupplied during those 3 days.

S: Yeah, we did.

M: Oh, you did get resupplied?

S: Well, yeah. We had our own and we pulled from the company. I don't know if that included the whole 2nd, let's see, B Company, 269 rounds of AP. That's in there somewhere. It's in one of the After Action but I think that was the second day or third day, it was before we pulled out.

M: About the second day, you got 269 rounds?

S: Well, I'm just going to quote you what was in the after action reports. Did you have a after action on the 823d?

M: Yeah, I sure don't remember ammo expenditure though. No, not for your platoon anyway.

S: Well, not just for the platoon, just the company.

M: Oh. Well, let's see, that would have been, yeah, I do have an after action.

S: Do you have ammo?

M: Just a second. Let me look at the after action.

S: See, we were carrying, we were carrying 500 grams.

M: Looking forward to the 12th. I don't have anything on ammo expenditure. Now, this is the battalion after action I'm looking at. We thinking of the same thing?

S: Yeah, it would of been the battalion. Should be there somewhere. I thought I brought it up when I was there and you was asking that.

M: OK, we're still working on typing the transcript out. I'll look for that.

S: Well, I'll check and see if I can find it. I haven't looked at it since ...

M: OK, so, well as much as I know then, during the action you got, you did get resupplied on, probably the second day?

S: Yeah, cause they were bringing up someone was hauling supplies, we were sending, I guess it was the half-track men, every once in a while, to get stuff from the company.

M: And do you remember what your expenditure was each day? I know that's probably gone long from your memory but.

S: No way did I know.

M: OK.

S: Other than you know each vehicle we fires on till it quit. So, sometimes it was 2 guns firing on a target.

M: Yeah, I was trying to do a little kind of reverse engineering cause remember when you came up, you estimated probably 2 to 4 rounds per target and if I had a fairly good count of the rounds, maybe that's give me a target.

S: Could even be more cause I

M: I know. I've been there myself.

S: Eight rounds you know. And then we expended a lot of small arms ammo because they were trying to you know to send their infantry up there to us.

M: Yeah.

S: And they'd set up machine gun nests and they were firing that thing. Of course, we should have just quit. There was no way they were going to get us.

M: OK, I'll go back and I'll look at the battalion after action report more carefully.

S: Now you might, you might look at that or you might even look at the 30th after action reports. I don't know which one I read it. One of them.

M: OK.

S: I'll go get it and check it out ... do some other stuff for today anyway.

M: OK, the other, the other thing heads up, we should have thought of this before when you came back here but we didn't, for accuracy, Jay Karamales is going to send you back some pictures of German vehicles and if we can,

we're going to identify what you knocked out.

S: Oh boy.

M: No, he's going to send you pictures you know if we didn't get it we didn't get it but it just occurred to us you know, this is our one shot at this, we probably ought to try to get as precise as we can. So, for example, there, I found two candidate half-tracks that, you know, fit the description that you mount on a 75. One of them was more of a production version that used a Howitzer and the other one was kind of a ... looked like a field-fix almost. They used to put an anti-tank gun in the back of it. You know, if we could figure it out and if we can't, we won't, but he'll be sending you the pictures back.

S: Some of those we knocked out were just like what we started out with when we first had 75s on our half-tracks.

M: Well that's, what I'm thinking is what you probably knocked out, there's one that just fits that description. It was the later version. Instead of, you can kind of tell the difference. The one with the Howitzer was kind of earlier in the war and they changed the whole, it looks like the whole superstructure of the vehicle a little bit so it was something done on a production line, where the other one looks like something you maybe could do in a motor pool. You just sort of slap that anti-tank gun at the back of a half-track and probably welded it in.

S: Yeah.

M: But we got both pictures so you'll, you can probably, and also it's got a, the Howitzer, of course, is a very short barrel so if you're telling me it look like the old M3 half-track, it's probably the second version I was talking about.

S: Well, you got any mobile field piece too with the little short stub gun on it?

M: For the Germans? That's one of the pictures of the half-track we'll show has that on it. It's a real, it was what they used in the Mark IV tank a little early in the war. It's a real stubby, stubby gun.

S: We weren't too particular what they were as long as they were moving ... were German.

M: I know how you feel.

S: That wasn't our objective to verify just to stop them. Yeah, that's the only thing I know ...

M: OK. Well, I wanted to see if we could do anything on the ammo thing. That's kind of a, sort of an after thought so

S: Most of the tanks we met were IVs and Vs and then once in a while we'd get

that Tiger tank that was a VI.

M: Well, actually you know, there were two of them. There was a Tiger II that they never changed the designation and they're totally different tanks.

S: Yeah ...

M: Yeah, actually, it was a totally new vehicle.

S: I don't know whether we ever got one of those brand new ones. ... ones that had 11 inches of armor on the front.

M: Yeah, that's the II. That's the new one.

S: Not many. They didn't have many.

M: They only built about, out of my head, 485 I think, total production.

S: I think the biggest majority were IVs and Vs.

M: Yeah.

S: That's what we ran into.

M: That's mostly what they produced.

S: Otherwise, we would never been able to knock them out at all, without being lucky.

M: Oh yeah, with a Tiger II, you have, you had to get a flank shot, couldn't touch the front of it.

S: Or put one through the machine gun mount on the front.

M: Yeah, we figured that's what Greene

S: We did that.

M: You did?

S: Yeah.

M: Greene knocked one out frontally and that's one of the things we figured out that might have happened. It might have gone through the

S: Do you think it was the VI?

M: No, I think it was a V and I think, well see he did it extremely short range. The only test I know of done over there or the shortest range I know of was about 200 meters and he figures he had one less than 50 meters. Conceivably at that range, he might of even gone through the front of the hull but yeah, if he had the machine gun mount, it'll go through and there

are places on the turret, particularly at that range, where he could have penetrated it also from the front. You know at that range.

S: Well, you can go through the turret and the body of the tank, if you can get it in there.

M: Yeah, the, even at the 200 meter ranges, it was possible, about one out of four, to get a penetration of the front of the turret on a Panther. But at 50 meters, you could, you got more chance.

S: The best place is on the side just above the

M: Yeah, only about 40mm armor. You had no trouble.

S: See, we learned all those things after we got over there. We didn't know any of them ...

M: The Intel and Ordnance Committee at the time frankly didn't do a very good job of getting information off you guys. The first thing, the earliest dated thing I've seen, it was intended to go out to troops and tell them where to shoot a tank was dated 19 July and I have no idea if it ever reached the, when it reached troops or if it actually you know got down to say company or platoon level.

S: We never did get any written information. We did ours by running into the tank. That's how we found out.

M: Hum. That's interesting. Just digging through some of the stuff I found years ago and the Ordnance Department published a thing called "Kangaroo". They called them that because you could put them in your pocket and it was a little pamphlet dated 19 July 44 which basically, it didn't show the Mark V but it showed the III, IV, and VI and where they were most vulnerable.

S: Well, I'll tell you how slow

M: Sounds like you never saw one.

S: How slow they were to get anything up to us. We had been in waiting in snow for two months before we ever got overshoes. You know how quick they were and I don't remember any kind of pamphlets that we received, yeah, telling us about the German army.

M: Hum. I can't give you any clue as to how many were printed, how they were distributed or anything. I just don't know. I just found the document.

S: All the time that we trained with the 3" gun that 76, they told us that that gun would knock out any German tank. We found out

M: Yeah, that's what they told Eisenhower too and he got mad when he found out it wouldn't.

S: You know by testing it out we found out, no it's like pea shooting

off a tin can. So, that's how we learned.

M: OK, well, if you find anything on the ammo and feel like calling me back, please feel free. I appreciate your help and I'll quit bugging you. Thanks a lot, Tom.

S: That's alright, fine.

M: OK, bye.

S: Bye.

INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE GREENE

This interview was conducted at the SAIC office in McLean, Virginia on January 25, 1990.

Participants:

V = Vicki Young	SAIC
M = Mike Baily	SAIC
J = Jay Karamales	SAIC
JB = Joyce Boykin	SAIC
G = George Greene	World War II veteran

V: We split it up into several parts and this part we're doing right now is Phase 1 and the purpose of Phase 1 was when they came and they said we want to collect as detailed information on US, American defensive anti-tank actions during WWII. Everybody says, "Oh, you're never going to find this." They really felt the detail wasn't there. So we said, "OK, let's do this task, but let's approach it this way. We'll do a historical data search and we'll look through the archives and look through the data sources that we think are going to be there and we'll do one action and see, first of all, how long is it going to take us? Can we get the information? What kind of resources are we going to expend because it may be too expensive for them to pursue this?"

The reason that they wanted to do this is, there are some people in the United Kingdom that are doing the same kind of information, a similar type of agency. They are collecting the same kind of information from British records. They've done some work, they have completed some work in small arms and they wanted to transfer this to other weapon systems in determining a degradation factor of a weapon system in actual combat. And it's particularly for use in their modelling efforts. They put these weapons in a model and they run a wargame and they say OK, they're going to work this well because this is what the proving ground tests are. What the British were saying was they don't, there's a lot suppressive effect but they are not that effective and there is no degradation factor that we need to apply against it. So that's exactly, and they have come up with one for small arms that they're using so they wanted to extend it and they decided to try anti-armor weapons which is why we are going back, since really WWII was the last time they really used anti-armor weapons and they have done some collecting of data on that, so they have asked the United States to some as well to see if we can put the databases together to give them a broader base to work from. So that's kind of what we're doing this for. For this particular project we have to find, so everybody was clear as to exactly what it is we're looking at, a battle that's a large integrated set of actions or firefights or engagements or whatever. For example, we are calling Mortain, all of Mortain, and everything surrounding it, a battle. That whole 7 or 8 day period of time is a battle. An engagement then is going to be something that's lesser than a battle that's some kind of an integrated set again with some small action. Hill 317, Abbaye-Blanche, we're calling an engagement. St. Barthelmy we're calling

an engagement. Now what we are really looking at is the actions. The actions, we're kind of corresponding to the data points that we are collecting for them. So that maybe a squad, an attack on a squad, maybe at a platoon level of just an individual combat action, almost weapon system against target. Probably, and we have in fact in some cases come down to that level of detail sometimes it may be a series of weapons against a series of targets. Generally within a 10 or 15 minute time period separated from anything else around it either, again by time or by distance. OK. They may have occurred at the same time, they may have been 100 yards apart. Maybe it was two different squads, or two different platoons or something like that. But that is what we are looking for is down to the action level. I think some of the things we talked about earlier is what we are trying to get at. The Center for Military History, go back to this, between the British and CAA, this is the list of data that they wanted. This is what we have been trying to find. See, some of this brings us the meteorological data, the time and day, generally the terrain, a lot of time casualties. We can find that in the records, the After Action Reports report that kind of thing. Things like supply of on-hand ammo, perhaps rounds that were fired, we have been able to find maps in a lot of cases. A lot of times the strength of the infantry that was associated with the armor or anti-armor weapon is not there. The kind of stuff that people, when you're writing a report and you're entering all this data, maybe you think that's not important and I'm not going to include that. But that's the kind of thing, it's really a lot of detailed kind of stuff, but we need that in order to build the story around the action that we haven't been able to find. That's why we have been real excited, I mean people like you remember that, a lot of times remember that.

M: You'd be surprised how much you remember.

V: That's where we've gotten a lot of the information from. The Center for Military History, when CAA went to them first and said do you think we can do this, came up with a list of thirty engagements that they thought really going through the official history, that were fairly major tank actions. Now we are not looking at tank versus tank. We're looking at anti-armor weapon against tank. We went through, then, all the data sources that, they wanted original source data not secondary source data, and came up with a, based upon the data that we found and this was sort of a preliminary search, but we came up with of a list of engagements that we thought would have the best potential for developing actions from. A lot of them in the Bulge because that was where a lot of the tank actions occurred. You see there's several here from Mortain. We didn't do the ones in the Bulge of course because CAA is developing a database from that. So that's why we chose Mortain to look at that particular one. As we do, if and as we do, follow-on work for this we'll do some of these others and get more into the Bulge in that time frame.

G: What's its score. You have these scores written down.

M: Vicki came up with a scoring system based on how much data we had, how much action ~~we~~ thought there was, to try to get some way, other than just

V: To prioritize.

G: To try to get priority.

M: We had Dom Butgenbach because the sources there, we had some very detailed monographs, and we thought we could do that without interviews. But they wanted us to go ahead and do Mortain since they are already working on the Bulge in great detail. They wanted to do something besides the Bulge so Barthelmy popped right to the top.

V: The North Africa ones are very good, however, the Americans didn't keep real good data, I mean their records are very sparse. I mean it's the beginning of the war, the whole methodology wasn't in place, they weren't doing a lot of historical record keeping so we can't find a lot of information. And those are probably really good tank actions.

G: I call a battle disorganized chaos, anyway.

V: That's true. OK, what we did, what we have done up to this date, we were supposed to do one action. We were going to do it for St. Barthelmy and we found that all the information for Mortain was together. So we just looked at all of Mortain and actually have come up with about 8 maybe actions I think that we are going to be able to get from St. Barthelmy and Abbaye-Blanche. We have gone back to Suitland, the archives over at Suitland, MD, and have looked at the After Action Reports, the S Journals, the G Journals, both from the infantry, the 30th Infantry Division and the Tank Destroyer Battalion records that are over there. We have a gentleman in Germany, whose a consultant for us he's an American who served, I think, in Intelligence in the Army in WWII and is a fairly well known military historian now. He went over and he looked at the records in Germany to see if he could find some things that weren't available to us. We did look at what we had here at the National Archives, the Americans did microfilm a lot of the German records. A lot of them are here in Washington. We have found that there's not, we don't have this level of records for the Germans mostly because we think they destroyed them. This was just prior to the Falaise Gap and we are surmising that they were destroyed. That they never got back because they, and then they were being chased and so that the records just never survived. We do have some unit histories that we consider a secondary source, unit histories from the Germans so we do have some information from that side to correspond with what we got from the American side. We have been able, well we looked at the map, we have been able to at the Archives we have the maps, the WWII maps, that we've gone back to of the overlays that we found in these records that you know go to these maps so that was a real find to do that because we were afraid we weren't going to be able to anything with them. OK. We have gone through and pulled out everything on St. Barthelmy and everything on Abbaye Blanche, like I said we talked with Tom Springfield yesterday and Tom Raney a little bit on the actions that occurred at Abbaye-Blanche. We have

talked with Lawson Neel on his involvement and where he was at St. Barthelmy and Mike has done a lot, which is how we came across you, done a lot of trying to find some people who were there and see if they were willing to talk with us. I'm going to let Mike just go through, just kind of put you back in the context. We will just kind of go down the state of events and how we got down to Mortain and then get into those in a little more detail. Perhaps may jog your memory a little bit.

M: Thanks. Just to kind of set the stage where you were. The Allies had been, of course, confined up here to the Beachhead area until the 25th of July. Broke out of St. Lo. By 7 August the Germans had planned a counterattack, a major counterattack, from the clearly the tactical commander, 7th Army Commander's point of view, all he hoped to do was attack toward Avranches, establish a defense along the See River, re-establish a static defense, mobile operations was out of the question for the Germans. From Hitler's point of view, what he expected this attack to be, and he tried to delay it a couple of days to give the division reinforcements, this was to be a major attack just swept the allies back into the sea. Totally unrealistic. But he expected to attack right through here, cut off all the 3d Army breaking out here toward Brittany and toward the southwest and major attack four divisions.

G: I found that out later that that's where we were sitting.

M: Yes, you were, sure you didn't know at the time you were right in the middle of it. This was the main attack. The 2nd Panzer division was supposed to attack through St. Barthelmy to Juvigny, it was supposed to open the breach and the 1st SS Panzer was supposed to exploit all the way to Avranches. 116th Panzer in the north was supposed to attack to cover the flank of the attack. 2nd SS Panzer was supposed to attack in the south to seize Hill 314 which had observation all the way to Avranches. And similarly get observation to the east from American perspective. And they were supposed to support the attack by attack along the southern flank.

G: That's a much better perspective right there.

M: One thing that you, you probably remember this, this road between Juvigny and Barthelmy runs along high ground. This, I would call it a ridge line, I guess you would have to be a real flatlander to call it a ridge line, but this is definitely the high ground. See River is up to the north here. And this is what actually happened in the attack. The St. Barthelmy attack didn't go anywhere. Basically it bogged down here the first day. The high water mark, I'd say, Lawson Neel killed a tank right here and blocked the road. That was probably about as far as they got. 116th Panzer never attacked at all. The division commander was relieved. He just got his, didn't attack. And 2nd SS Panzer, going into a vacuum, managed to advance deep into the American center, but it didn't go anywhere. The main attack bogged down. This attack, after St. Barthelmy, after they failed the exploit through there, they tried to attack through Hill 285 on the second day and it was a close run thing but they didn't make it through. In the south they attacked south Mortain and seized most of the town, overran battalion headquarters, didn't get the hill, the hill,

those guys hung on for a full five day period, actually it was about a week later before they were finally relieved. And then the Germans there exploit toward the southwest, they made it deep into the American rear. They got as far as division artillery in at least one case. But again they were stopped, ran out of steam, I wouldn't say stopped they just didn't have anything to support them up here. And the attack around the north side of Mortain, as Tom Springfield in Abbaye Blanche never went anywhere. They stopped it the first day and the big thing we found out, and this has just been lost information, he was only attacked once. Basically what he did, he spent his days, the Germans kept trying to run forces up to the north, to the main attack, and gave him a shooting gallery for two days. Just amazing to me. They just kept putting troops down the road and Tom Springfield kept shooting them up. See this is what Barthelmy, we started to pin it down. Really this information is not typically available. Particularly when you get down, the After Action may have locations like this. This is about as good as you will ever get from an After Action Report. The 823rd's is much better than the infantry's, regiment's, or the division's records and then supplementing this, get the next slide, we'll give you that in detail. Now one thing we are going to be asking you is, I kind of warned you of this, see it doesn't really apply to you because we're trying to track down something else. We found an infantryman who was at one of these roadblocks. He doesn't know which one because he doesn't have a map and he was a private and he followed a the sergeant. But I think if we can get you to describe these two roads which you are probably familiar with, we could pin down the roadblock. We think it's this one. Talks about a trail versus a road so we think he was probably down here. Those guys knocked out, they spotted three tanks rolled up in front of the roadblock. The Germans got out and started babbling away. They had a Norwegian gunner that was really good with a bazooka, apparently fired a round into the middle of the Germans, and then burned those three tanks from about 75 meters with a bazooka. Good shot.

- G: That's the weapon that I think has been best for that country, I'll tell you. It had a lot of mobility.
- V: Well, we've been surprised with how many instances we've noticed in the records where bazookas stopped tanks.
- M: Yeah, I was personally surprised. I've done considerable research, WWII has kind of been my hobby all my life and I've been constantly struck how many times I've read that bazooka incidence, because that's not the theme kind of you get in official histories. Bazookas are sort of an exceptional thing. I find it particularly interesting. They were kind of the weapon of choice.
- G: In that particular area, you see, at no time would you have a field of fire over 50 yards.
- M: That's what we found out.
- G: At no time, because that's solid hedgerow.

- M: We got to this level of detail, squads, company headquarters, gun positions. During northwest Europe's SLA Marshall, you may have heard of him, he was a historian. He had an old group of operational researchers, typically historians, who were able to go around and interview people after major actions and at the time Mortain was identified as a major action. And a guy named Rubenthall became an official historian and went around and interviewed people in divisions and battalions from the CG all the way down to privates, and developed a very detailed set of overlays. This is kind of a blow up of his overlays so we could position things. This is unusual and this is one of the reasons we are doing Mortain because we had this kind of thing to start with. It's kind of one thing to bring you in here, and we've got positions marked out to help you remember, and they may be wrong, we were wrong yesterday, but to give you a start. Just asking, kind of sitting a guy, and dragging him all the way up from Texas and say, "Well tell us about the battle." That's kind of nonproductive. It's kind of hard for you to remember if we don't have any back up for you. And to show you the kind of changes we found, we had, this was Lawson Neel's gun, he came up about 9:30 in the morning, he was supposed to support you. When he got there he couldn't find you. So he, he just flat couldn't find you. So he established a position here. We had placed the gun here based on the overlay we had. This was the actual position. We did pretty good. We were only 30 yards off, but to understand what really happened this is kind of key. This position shows, he looks like he's got a field of fire down a road, sort of makes sense except that that puts him in a frontal engagements with Panthers which is very chancy thing for a 3" gun. Not very good field of fire down this road. As we found out what the actual position was, he was right beside, really beside the road, firing across this crossroad and he engaged, the German tank he engaged there was about a 20 meter engagement. And he said the same thing you did, throughout the bocage, typical range was 40-50 meters. Except in the case of Springfield, he had about a 400 meter
- G: Yes, but you see it had cleared.
- M: Yes.
- G: Once the fog lifted, the fog lifted about 10:30. Then you could start seeing where you were, but see the problem was, my platoon moved in at night. They didn't even know the terrain.
- M: In the, I think of, I haven't been able to actually pin this down, the TD battalion that typically supported 1st Infantry Division, habitually tend to be habitually just like you guys support 634th TD. They were in tents. So their positions would have been useless to you. I don't know if they tried to move you in their positions or
- G: That's what they did. I was in those positions and see the thing is that we got there they were already gone. I don't understand, of course the Germans weren't fluid at that point, but those positions were abandoned for 12 hours. 10-12 hours, they had to be.

M: To put it in perspective, nobody expected an attack. You probably heard about Ultra in all those code readings you did. That stuff didn't sink down to the divisions. It was just extremely close hold. At the Army group level, Bradley thought he had already reacted because he put the 30th Infantry Division in position but the CG of the 30 Infantry didn't get any advanced warning. They got a, 2 hours after the attack was supposed to start, they were warned there was going to be an attack. About 2:00 in the morning they found out they might expect an attack but we know that 1st Infantry, they were telling you guys, there was nothing out there. You were oriented, the defense was oriented to the northeast not the east. And, yes, it was a surprise. 1st Infantry Division had only, they really hadn't put defensive positions in there, from their perspective they were only pausing. That was just a hasty position because they were going to be advancing the next day. So they really didn't have good positions. And that comes through with all the people who have written about the battle that's a key to understanding the losses that you guys took was a fact that you didn't have a chance to prepare the positions. This gives you an idea of the kind, and when we interviewed Lawson Neel, we already knew quite a bit about his action, a lot more than we know about yours. Because what, we already knew that what happened, that this, there was a gun position here from his platoon. We knew the gun was lost and we thought that we knew the details, we knew he knocked out the tank, we knew that off to the west subsequently there was another position. So we knew a lot, it was kind of a controlled experiment to see if interviews were worth the money it takes to do it and in his case it was. Let me give you an idea of what the real shot was. All of a sudden, when you get down to the actual position, this tank rolls out from behind the house, from 15-20 meters away. He could hear the tank commander calling fire in advance of the gunner. And, one round, one tank. The crew abandoned it, then the infantry company started, as he put it, it was like water from a hose hitting his gun shield. He pulled the pin from the gun, it's funny in one of the anecdotes he talked about one of his privates he remembers he came up to him and said, "Sir, does this mean we're running?" "No, we're just changing positions." But he had to abandon the gun and he had to abandon the prime mover and got his troops out and went down the road to get another gun. And about, Oh, a mile and a half to the west he established another position later in the day knocked out another tank that blocked the road and we didn't have all that detail. Again, Mortain was the objective we sought. We did a pretty good job because of those interviews, we did exceptional for the action in WWII but we still had some big holes we just couldn't fill. To the rounds fired by type, nobody writes that stuff down. I mean, it's just not written down anyplace. I understand that. I was in the Army 23 years, you don't worry about stuff like that. You don't write it down. You kind of need to know that. Max operational effective range, this is terrain dependent.

G: Well, that's right. And I've said that's where, the gun was 1,000 yards.

M: Yes, a good rule of thumb, we are calling a 1,000 yard gun, they were lucky shots but they were greater ranges. They're about 1,000 yard gun. But it all depended on training, of course, you sort of get it from a map, but not completely and you can't get, when they don't show you some of the

trees and so forth, you can't, you just can't pin it down. One of the things--in the records that was very confusing, let me go back to this.

J: They were out of microcassettes. They had three empty racks and when I asked this brainless girl that worked in the aisle if they had any more, she said, "Oh, let me check."

M: In Neel's action, they mentioned a post that interfered with his field of view or field of fire. It didn't make any sense. Nobody is going to set up a gun with a post beside the barrel so you couldn't traverse. If the post is out front you know it's not wide enough to interfere with your field of fire. You just shoot right through it. It didn't make any sense at all. But what we found out talking to him, the problem was when he put that gun beside the road, he'd moved into a gateway. And the gate post prevented him from traverse, spreading the trail sufficiently, he was worried about gun stability. So all of a sudden it made sense. And the written record, it just leaves you cold you don't know what happened.

V: Mike, let me just introduce, this is Jay Karamales, this is George Greene. Jay's done a lot of work on, sort of as a hobby, but also under this contract, done a lot of work on pulling a lot of this information together. So he's also very knowledgeable on what we're doing.

M: So after we interviewed Neel we can fill all the blanks. Of course, the narrative is much stronger now. We know a lot more about the obstacles. That post thing is all cleared up. We knew we didn't have much time, we found out quality of defense preparation, he had 10 minutes. Like the time, he just put the gun in position, he got two rounds in the gun and all of a sudden here's a German tank coming down the road. He had no opportunity to set up any kind of dig in gun or any kind of

G: We had a little more time, as far as getting there, but we weren't prepared.

M: I think you told me you moved in at 2:00 in the morning.

G: We got the last gun in it's hole at 2:00 in the morning, that's right. And like I say, the men had absolute, the gunners themselves had absolutely no concept of what they were looking at. It was dark.

M: Yes, terrible time to move in. Kind of overview of the battles we have done, one of the actions we had here, this won't tell you much about it, it was just a little roadblock up here to the north that was hit about 4:00 in the morning. You might have heard the action, I don't know what was going on in your area, 57 fired 10 rounds at a tank, didn't penetrate, the guys left the roadblock. It doesn't sound like much, but that's the kind of data, in fact, that the British were looking for. Then we already had Neel's action here in Barthelmy and then one later in the day. So those two were already filled, and now the ones we are trying to fill, your action at St. Barthelmy. The roadblock, again we think that it's this one to the south. Springfield at Abbaye Blanche. That's represented by these two. We think that we might be able to do something with 285. The problem

is that we don't have any interviews to reflect positions and so forth so we have to start a guy really cold. I don't know if we will be able to do anything. That would be 2nd platoon of Alpha company. Some of the problems, and I have not had a lot of luck as you found with 30th Infantry, finding guys who recollect this or around. I'm just having trouble making contact. The 823d network is pretty solid. So the battle list we're getting is pretty much as you guys in the 823d found which is not all bad from our point of view. We were looking for anti-tank and you guys were looked at as the anti-tank guys in the division. I think that's

G: Like I told you, I was a replacement on this thing. I really didn't even know my platoon. I knew my sergeants and so forth but as far as knowing the individuals in the platoon, I regret to say that I didn't know that many of them. I was getting down to that point, but I really didn't know the whole platoon.

M: No, that's what I found out because all the other, before I got to you all the other guys I talked to, Oh, yes, they remembered each other very well, and nobody seemed to remember you and it didn't fit in. You told me you were a replacement, yes, because the other guys had been together for two years and you had only been there five weeks. So you were kind of different from the rest of the guys.

G: Right.

M: Were you in SP battalion or were you just a replacement out of school?

G: Well, I had been, I had been in the TD training center.

M: OK, I wasn't sure if you had actually been in another battalion and they had moved you over.

G: See we were the training troops up 106th street and they had the training battalion. We trained all the TD battalions. So we had gone through all of the different types of battle conditioning courses and all this other stuff, you know we were super, supposed to be superly well trained. And, of course, we learned how to use guns a whole lot different, hand guns, what I mean to call hand guns, you see, I ended up carrying a light machine gun. At least they taught me that. It was kind of rough.

M: And again, for Neel, before we talked to him, we had a good idea of what had happened, the sequence of events and so forth. What we have on you, we have this overlay. We have, you've already told me there are mistakes in this thing, and that's fine, that's why we got you to fix it. And we have the results in the After Action which said I think you killed 7, they gave you credit for 7 tanks we know you were overrun. So, after that it's all up to you.

G: I know, I know that number 1 gun got 2 and a possible 3rd and the number 2 gun got one for sure. Then the number 3 gun got two for sure, and the number four gun never fired once, never got in position to fire. When the fog finally cleared and we could fire, we could have covered the road

earlier. The low road that they were coming in on. But by the time the fog had ~~risen~~, they were already in under the guns depressing level so the gun could not be depressed. We tried to move that gun out then and move it into another position but we, by the time we pulled it out and started in the other position, the Germans had taken the top of the hill and we were getting so much small arms fire, we couldn't even turn the gun around.

M: Let's see Jay on here. The first thing we need to do is do the lead in. We want to try to do get some idea. You told us you did, you told me over the phone, you didn't have a chance to recon the position during the day. Now when did you do this?

G: About 3:00 in the afternoon the day before they sent me up there with and so Sergeant Mark and I both went up, platoon sergeant went up because they pointed out that there was going to be split set up. There was going to be one section on one side of the road and one section on the other side of the road. So we went to the infantry had set up, like I said, I still say there was that hotel. It was a huge building. A large, large building, which had a big wine cellar in the basement. Later I found this out. This is where they put all the wounded. This is where they had the major medical station down at the bottom. And we had one gun set just to the side of that which looked right down the road, straight down the road. And the road probably had about 50 yards, I imagine, till the road started to crest actually dropping off the hill. Then there was another gun across the street.

M: Let me get, the day before you went in, OK, you went down this road?

G: That's the one that came from Abbaye, is that the one that runs up from Abbaye isn't it?

J: Yes.

G: I started, we went up that road and we got to about where that roadblock was

M: About here?

G: Yes, now at that point there had been a jeep with coming across from St. Barthelmy, had been, got a mortar round right in the middle of it, knocked it out and the guys were trying to get guys off the road. That's the jeep there they pushed it off the road. Cause that jeep there, there was a ditch ran right along that road. Now that was a, there an area there probably 75-100 yards that was open. There was a wide open field on the left.

M: In here?

G: On the left, no, up there about where that arrow is I would say.

M: OK, about here?

G: Yes. There's a large field there and, but it, it was a hill, it was high, it went up, raised up, but evidently the Germans had a higher point over there that they could see that point. So anybody that crossed that thing they dropped a mortar on them.

M: Yes, there was

G: You know they kept mortar fire on that road all day long. Everytime somebody moved they dropped a couple mortars.

M: There's high ground over here. This map doesn't show terrain. We've got a one over twenty-five.

G: I don't remember just, but I remember the mortar rounds coming in. We had to go down the ditch and

M: About what time of day was that?

G: At about 3:30/4:00 in the afternoon.

M: So it was in the afternoon before you could even get there.

G: It was clear.

M: So you made it this far, found that jeep wreck, and what, just turned around and went back?

G: No, no, we just got out of our jeep and walked. Went across St. Barthelmy to look at the positions that we were supposed to take over. And then we went to the A company headquarters and told them we would be up later.

M: Which way were you coming from? Were you coming from Abbaye Blanche or did you come in from the north when you did your recon? You remember what time you drove in?

G: I thought we came in from

M: You came in through St. Barthelmy and then you headed south down this road. Do I got that right?

G: No, I thought we came in from the south and we went up the other way.

M: OK, yes, you could have done that. You could have come into Mortain and then up through Abbaye Blanche. OK, you came up this way?

G: Yes.

M: OK. Now this road, was this hard surface, good road?

G: Yes, that was a blacktop. One lane type and I'm thinking of where that little dotted line there I think that's a sunken road.

M: OK.

G: Because that's where I brought my guns in at night. Because we came back that road in order not to draw fire.

M: OK, you were coming, you were coming from the south. This would be a trail, I guess just wide enough

G: It was a trail. The sunken roads where the trees, its a country road is what it is but it's sunken. And you could move right down it, of course you had to make sure it wasn't mined. That's the reason we went back down through there cause see the Germans hadn't mined it so we could bring the guns up that way that night. And there was also come upwards from the south.

M: OK, makes sense. Did you look at this road at all?

G: I don't remember that road.

M: OK.

G: I don't remember that just really don't but, that, the way that dotted line goes off it there just reminds me it's about the same direction the way that sunken road came into, came right into the edge of town.

M: OK, what you're saying makes a lot of sense. You brought your guns up. You took them up the sunken road to get them into position.

G: Yes, started about ten o'clock maybe nine thirty, maybe started moving in and we moved in till, everytime we'd make a little noise, why they'd draw a little, they'd interdict fire on that intersection.

M: Up here?

G: Yep.

M: OK.

G: They were putting interdict fire on it and they were shooting, everytime they heard a little noise, like I say, it was pretty quiet. Wasn't a lot going on and they'd get that interdictory fire on there and five, six, eight rounds and there infantry would raise hell. "Be quiet, be quiet, be quiet!" So we'd have to stop and then we'd move a little more. Well, you can't move a track-type vehicle without getting lots of squeaking, strattling, and banging and of course towed guns were just. If you were going to shoot artillery, it's trying to put an anti-aircraft thing on an artillery base is what you have. It just can't be used, doesn't have enough flexibility. Anyway, we moved up in there and we put right about where that crossroad is up on top is where we had a gun on each side of that.

J: We have a slide of this map?

M: Yeah, I'm going to put it up.

G: It shows that on that map there though.

M: Get a better idea of, OK, you said you starting moving at 9:30. That's moving wherever you were, right.

G: Yeah, yeah, we were really just sitting down there along the road. Down by Mortain.

M: OK. About what time did you first before you got position you got actually got to St. Barthelmy with the platoon about what time?

G: Oh, 11:00. But we finally got all the guns in the holes around 2.

M: OK, when you first arrived, it was just about dark?

G: Oh, it was dark.

M: OK.

G: It started getting dark there about 11:00, 10:30, that time of year, maybe 10:30.

M: Now, I, one account said you had moonlight. Is that

G: Yeah, it was bright.

J: That's good.

G: Where this fog came from, I have no idea. But that stuff, we started moving in about 3:00 in the morning and I mean it was thick. I don't know where it came from and you see, that eliminated all the air coverage. That's with no air coverage. Had absolutely no air coverage. We had no cover what so ever. We were strickly out there with light arms and anti-tank guns. There was absolutely no, we couldn't call any artillery in, couldn't call infantry, couldn't see where we were.

M: Jay, you got anything? I was going to go on the detailed map.

J: No, so far so good.

M: OK.

G: I could say the captain sure as hell didn't know where the gun positions were because he was spread all over the countryside there.

M: You mean the company commander?

G: Yeah.

M: Uh, I was

J: Could it be Wilkes.

G: Wilkes, yeah.

M: I talked to Wilkes and I was kind of surprised. I knew you guys were put out with the infantry but when I found, you see, Neel was in another platoon and I figured if somebody was going to take one of his platoons from one position to another, you know a totally different position, they'd at least tell the company commander kind of you know make him in charge of the movement. He didn't know a thing about it. Basically the way, I won't say it's true of all platoons, the way that division operated, when you guys went out to the infantry, you belonged to the infantry.

G: That's right.

M: And your company commander had no control.

G: Very, very little control in that respect. He had control over you know we kept in contact with him and tried to tell him where we were but he had to go strictly by what the map, the maps he had. And so all he knew was he could move us around on the map. But as far as actually knowing where we were, we were more or less set there to protect the infantry. And of course the infantry loved the idea of us being there until we fired the first round. Then after we fired the first round, they wanted us to get the hell out of there because that drew a ball of fire.

J: Everyone knew where you were.

G: Yes, then drew more fire, because a 3" puts about a 16, 18 foot fire ball. Really lights up during the daytime but in the fog or something like that it really lights up and of course at night we took some interdictory fire at night and they really do a lot of aircraft.

M: OK, now let me explain the positions we've got. These numbers are ours. We will go to yours if you had gun numbers to help you remember any names. We have 1, 2, 3, 4 as your guns. Now this gun number four here, at some point before Neel was ever signed, they sent up a 2d Platoon gun in the middle of the night.

G: We heard it was back there somewhere.

M: OK, frankly we don't know squat about that. This is the position that Rubenthall plotted for it. I have no idea. So I guess this would be the sunken road you moved in on. OK, if your, the guns we're talking about for you, I guess let's give them your numbers. Your number one gun is which one?

G: About where you got it there looks like if I'm looking at this thing right, I would be just about right where that gun, it might be just slightly ahead

of that, both those guns just might be slightly ahead of that road section there. —

M: Move them farther south.

G: No, move them up, yeah, up the road. I think one of those guns was right, reason I say that, I say I think my guns, if those are supposed to be buildings, those guns were close to those buildings.

M: About how far? Again this is, about how far off the road? Now, the way we've got it they're about 15 yards off the road.

G: Now, is that supposed to be a sunken road, that other dotted line?

M: This is the hard stuff.

G: No, I mean the other road coming off to the left there where that number two gun is.

M: Uh, that's from the map. It's a trail or we don't know.

G: OK, that's a sunken road.

M: It might be a trail.

G: OK, I think to me that's where infantry, that tank company got in behind us see.

M: Oh, OK. Was this about a little bit farther north.

G: Yeah, a little bit farther up the intersection.

M: About how far from the road?

G: Oh, right on the side of the road.

M: OK.

G: I mean we're right, we're setting, we're looking down right straight down the road. We weren't setting 10 foot off, fact is, one was in a cabbage patch garden. Right in a garden, just right looking

M: So we probably have them about here and about here, right beside the road, little bit farther north.

G: Covering these roads see and see this gun got one and this gun got two.

M: Alright, we got it pointed in the right direction?

G: Well, they should be, I thought they were pointing up cause here's the infantry headquarters.

M: Yeah. You were pointed this way.

G: Yeah. —

M: And this one was also pointed north?

G: Yeah.

M: OK. You just turned us around 180 degrees.

G: Well, I may be turned around now.

M: North is this way. We haven't messed you up. This we're pretty confident. That's the kind of thing you can go back and find. That was the, that would be the company headquarters.

G: Yeah, that's right.

M: Then they had a temporary battalion headquarter we placed in a building here.

G: Well, I don't know about that but see they, you might be right, I'm trying to place. I think your right about those gun positions. We're facing south.

M: South?

G: Yeah.

M: OK. I'm not going to draw anymore.

G: I think you're right from that particular position, like I say, they were back up close to those buildings because we had the half-tracks around the corner of the building in order to get ammo out and keep covered.

M: OK, so the half-tracks would be about what.

G: Oh, 20, 30 feet.

M: 20, 30 feet?

G: Yeah, see, I'd say they were right close to those buildings.

M: And then beside each gun you offloaded what, 8 or 10 rounds?

G: Usually offloaded about 5.

M: OK.

G: Five rounds and then we may use 1 AT, throw 1 AT down there.

M: But any case a half-track is only twenty feet away?

G: Yeah, ~~but~~ still, you know when you try to keep them, we were trying to keep them covered, but the biggest problem is once you give your position away, there is no way to get the half-track back and 5 men sure can't handle that. I mean you can't loop, you can turn it. Five men couldn't pick it up.

M: Did you have a full ten man crew?

G: Five.

M: Five is all you had?

G: Five to seven.

J: That would make life rough.

G: Five to seven men is all we had. Now we had what you call a security platoon or security squadron and Sergeant Higgins was head of the security squadron. Higgins had a security squadron and we had accumulated 4 or 5 BARs replaced the M1s with BARs but that of course that was the thing about them.

M: But you had, OK, they're right beside the road with a field of fire down the road, how far down the road could you see?

G: About 50 yards.

M: 50 yards?

G: Dropped off. The road dropped off see you had to come up. And when they came over the hill is when you could see them if, if, but like I say, we had no way of seeing them because the fog was there. We had to wait till they practically came down the gun barrel.

M: Yeah, I'm trying to get kind of a theoretical field of fire.

G: Yeah, well I doubt it was 50 yards where the hill started dropping off see. See, that hill was contour. It contoured, I don't know whether it was contoured from ... like I say ... not normal contouring.

M: Do we have a good handle on what they grew there? I guess I don't know.

G: They grew everything. They grew a lot of apples because they had a lot of

M: A lot of orchards.

J: As a matter of fact, what I've been doing, part of this to get some perspective on it was, we found some German divisional histories and I've been translating those and matter of fact, the section I translated last night, a guy mentions like a, this is down toward Barthelmy, but he

mentions an apple orchard or a meadow with a whole bunch of apple trees in it so-i know they did grow a lot of apples.

G: Well, they had a lot of calbedose in that area.

J: A lot of what?

G: That's what the guys were drinking and what they were running their motorcycles.

J: What was it called?

G: Calbedose. It's apple jack. Beer.

J: Oh, I've never heard it called that.

G: Yeah, calbedose. That was the drink down there.

M: I tried it once in Europe. I couldn't stand it.

G: It's terrible stuff. It really is. You wouldn't give it to a dog you know. It worked with your little two cycle motorcycle though.

J: Well, that's useful.

G: And it would burn in a coma stove. We had those little coma stoves you know in those armor units had those little bitty jobs you could lay the thing down and boil water in it.

J: Yeah, yeah.

G: It'd burn it that real well.

M: I heard about it in WWII. It was God awful stuff. I couldn't stand it.

G: It's the dregs. It's just about like drinking tequila you know I mean it's that bad. I mean bad tequila.

J: Uh-hum, oh yeah.

M: Where were you at? Were you at these two guns or?

G: No, I was about by that next building right there.

M: About here?

G: Yeah and that's where Eddy Taylor had the jeep. That's where our, that's where we had our radio jeep and Eddy was keeping contact was supposed to he was saving that thing until they shot it up.

M: Who were you in contact with? Were you in contact with the infantry?

G: Tried to contact Wilkes most of the time.

M: OK.

G: Talking with the other units telling them stuff was coming you know. So that's basically what we were doing of course then the infantry lost their command post some way. I don't know how they lost it. They lost contact. Then the infantry moved down there with us for a while, the captain moved the infantry down there and then he disappeared. Then the infantry disappeared and we were sitting out there as far as I know. sergeants came back by there late. See the half-track that was behind that building, that's the one the sarge and I got to have ... and the infantry sergeant at this building this way. This way, we had the half-track, we had the half-track right behind that building.

M: OK, now what about the other two guns? Do we have those things?

G: OK, that gun

M: Well, let's do three. We might as well.

G: Three?

M: Yeah.

G: Three, I'm trying to think of three. That looks pretty close for that number three gun only I think it was on this side of the road. To me, it was on this side of the road and it was covering that hill area there and that number four gun was the one we could never depress far enough because the hill ran all the way around there and fell off.

M: Do we have three pointed the right way? I mean toward the west? I wondered about that myself.

G: No, I think it should be pointing, pointing more. That's about right though. I think it's pointing pretty close to being right.

M: But on the other side of the road?

G: Yeah, on this side of the road.

M: Pointing the same direction?

G: They were both on this side. That section, yeah, that section was on this side of the road and he was covering that, he was the one that got, he got two tanks. That one there was the one that was pointed, he cut a piece out of the hedgerow and that's the one we couldn't depress and there was a, we couldn't get it down to cover the area at all.

M: But he was pointed north?

G: He was pointed basically that direction. We pulled him out and tried to come back and cover this sunken road here. That's where the tank was coming from.

M: Here? —

G: Right there. That's where they came in.

M: Yeah, see this one's never made any sense to me. I can't see what he's covering. Is he covering this road?

G: Pretty close, pretty close. It was an oddball set-up. It was really an oddball set-up.

J: It's looks like it's maybe set up to cover the road that comes down from the church.

G: Yeah.

J: You see.

M: If it's an M10 position, it's kind of a reserve position.

G: Yes.

M: They never thought they were going to fire from it. It gives you good access to this road junction, so you can cover that. In other words you move out of this position into the road junction or somewhere else to fire. So it was never intended to be firing position.

G: But you see, when A company broke down up there, when that, completely, the infantry completely evaporated. And that just left us open. We had, they just kept filtering through and when my guns got to the point when the guys you know talked to them on the radio, radio outfit you just going to have to move into infantry. There's nothing we can do about it now, just have to move.

M: OK. We ready to get into the guns. We already got the chron. You started, you're in position about 2:00 in the morning.

G: Yes, we dropped in position about 2 in the morning. Finally the last gun and that would be that #3 gun, the last one that got in there.

M: Is the field of fire is down the road this way?

G: That's what it was, but like I say you're looking, you're behind a hedgerow there. That was the sad part about that gun. It was behind the hedgerow but fortunately they did break out into the open there.

M: Oh, through the hedge, OK, this is a road.

G: Yes, there's a hedgerow right along there.

M: OK, if this is the hedgerow, I've got down here hedgerow and there's the road. I can't even see the road.

G: That's right.

M: OK.

G: Didn't have a good vision. You could see the top of it moving down in the hedges, but like I say, the gunners had, didn't even have a chance to really see the territory and then when the fog came in they absolutely had none. They hadn't really had an opportunity to see what it was. The sergeant and I were the only two, and the sergeant was the one that kept the company together. Hell, I'm not going to say he wasn't because he was the guy that knew them all see.

M: OK. Yes, I guess your field of fire there was 40-50 yards to the next, I guess probably the hedgerow over this, down here.

G: Oh, yes.

M: Well, I guess, could these guns see each other or was something in between them?

G: Yeah.

M: They could see each other?

G: Yeah, well there was a hedgerow in between them but they could see each other over the top of the hedgerow. The hedgerow ran across that, right across that corner there, this one, that whole country was just, you know, like I say

M: The more you're tell me about this position, I don't think those were firing positions at all.

G: For towed guns.

M: Yes, well, I think even for SPs I think they were just positions. They were positions off the road to park M10s and then you're going to move them later to fire.

G: Well, I don't know, there were sure sure poor I thought.

M: Yes. Sounds like they really were.

They were. They were very poor positions.

OK, 2:00 you're in position, 4:00 I guess, 4:00.....

..... Well, we had interdictive fire all night.

OK, so you had some fire

They would drop it into those, they'd drop first into one road section and then the other road section. They kept popping it in there all night. So they had definitely set that up the night, the day before when it was clear set up their elevations and their ranges and they had it pretty well covered so they could drop in stuff all night. One time it got quiet, it was, oh, probably and then just around 4:00

OK, we've got, we've got 5:00, is that wrong?

Well, it could be, it was before 5, but anyway it was dang early in the morning. I was pooped by that time because I hadn't had any sleep for about 24 hours we had been moving up see we had been laid off a couple days and when we started moving we just started moving, we would move around and then we would stop, move around and stop, and finally we

We got it started at 5:00 for 75 minutes they, apparently it was some fairly heavy artillery.

Yes, they threw some pretty heavy artillery. I don't know of any rockets, I wouldn't say there was any rocket fire. There was fairly heavy artillery.

Now I'm trying to get, I've could you give us some idea of the numbers. Do you think you could do that?

Fired numbers. No, just that it was pretty steady and most of it was falling, to me though it wasn't falling down on this end of town. It was more down on the entry end of town.

..... end of town. A round a second.

Oh, I

Boom, boom, boom.

Yes, about that.

Or faster.

No, I don't think it was faster

..... a number.

I would say any faster than that. They just covering, tried to cover their guys coming up. Then they knocked

OK. were not effective against your guys. Didn't kill very many of your guys.

No, no ~~we~~ didn't have many

Did you know if this effected the infantry, get any reports from up there
.....

Well, I think they had a few but they were pretty well dug in. I think, of course, that hedgerow stuff was really funny stuff. If you hit on the opposite side of the hedgerow the damage and that's the whole thing and that, see those troops there, that'll probably come out later, the attack troops, the German troops, a lot of I think
.....

Your guys weren't dug in though were they, or the guns weren't dug in?

Well, not to say we dug down but they were in little soft ground and the wheels were down in pretty good, yes, I mean you couldn't pull them out by hand. You had to pull them out by truck.

So you did the same thing, you dug the wheels in.

Yes,spades. Of course once you shoot one gun those spades spades you have on those are probably twice what's on a 105.

Really?

Oh, yes. On a 3". They are that much longer because, I guess that's to keep the thing from going over.

I guess so. Yes.

Stability that way.

It's going to have more recoil

Then you see you weren't shooting up in the air, you're shooting straight so really getting strain against the spade, you see, and I think that keeps the gun from going over. That would be my concept of it. It's a matter of leverage.

Right.

If you get a chance, I don't know if you, what you're going to do tomorrow, the 3" guns.

Yes, I knew that there was a few around yet. See, that's the Navy, right? From what they tell me that was the Navy, that was the Navy

I've got a guy in California whose a buff on this. He works for Machinery Corporation. He just sent me the most, it's really complex document, well written, he's chapter and verse. There's a whole family of 3" weapons. Your's is more directly related to a, got it

at home, he's got a family tree of 3" guns and your's is directly related to a 3" anti-aircraft Army gun. And there is a, I think, there was a Navy 3" gun as I recall whose family tree there was some kind of

We called it a 3" 50, but then I could be wrong. I don't know

I don't think the 50 caliber is wrong.I don't think his family tree

The chart that Springfield gave us said it was 150 calibers long.

OK.

It could be 150.

That's what it said.

A caliber is a board anchor.

No, it used caliber as

Length?

Yes, as the length.

It's a long barrel, I can tell you that.

Yes, it's a long barrel.

I'd say it 12 foot or 14 foot out on the end of the barrel to turn them.

If we got the data, I might be able to figure out, I think it was, I don't think it was 50 caliber.

Well, I just say that

The Navy had a 3" gun.

Yes, but that, I couldn't see a lot of difference, but them like I say and they could use them we had a few of them on the tanks

Were they M10s or 3" guns?

.....

Hellcat had 76s.

Maybe that was the one, but I was thinking later

Well, see the 76 was designed to have the same ballistic ... 3" gun. It was lighter weight. The big advantage was you could take, that gun was also designed to fit in a 75 recoil mount. So you could plug it right into a Sherman tank if you wanted to.

That was a sort of a complicated operation.

..... Did you guys have foxholes or did they find foxholes?

Well, we dug some, there were a few more than foxholes in the ground

Because the M10 crews, particularly if they were doing just a hasty, you know, hasty positions probably wouldn't have bothered to dig in.

We found a couple German positions that were dug down that were almost like storm cellars. They were near this gun position that we was digging that when they were doing the interdictive fire we would move into those. At night.....

Now I've got some confusion over the report of the Germans were going to begin the attack at 5:45, but that overlaps with the 75 minute barrage. Had the artillery barrage stopped before the attack started? About what time do you remember the attack starting.

Well, right after the barrage, then you could hear them. You could hear them real clear. You could hear them talking, you could hear them giggling, and they were jabbering like a bunch monkeys coming up the road. And, like I said, they moved in on the gun and, I doubt 50 yards, I still say it was probably 35 yards.

What time is it now?

Oh, probably about 6:30.

6:30? OK, now you said

Somewhere between, well, probably about, maybe 20 minutes, maybe 6:15/6:10, was 20 or 30 minutes later

Where?

That #1 gun.

Here?

Yes.

So tanks coming up the road.

Yes, we knew.

By sound?

Oh, yes, by sound, well, we could just see a little bit of, they were constantly shooting the 30s and we finally picked up just a little reflection of the fire coming out of the 30. The bank wasn't high enough, we saw it. It was just moving, but it was moving slow and boy he nailed it. I mean, boy, boom, blew up and started a fire right then. I mean it started a fire right then.

Do you have any idea where you hit the tank?

With the 5, Mark 5?

Yes, Mark 5, I mean, where it hit, was around up next to the turret?

Well the turret was knocked loose, but I couldn't tell you 100%.

Oh, the turret was knocked loose?

Yes, then he tried to turn it, the guys tried to turn the thing, and he got it crossway between the road and that's what really helped us out because it kept them from coming this way.

Blocked the road.

Yes.

Blocked the road or maybe just to horse it around and the guy getting killed driving it just a reaction. Turn the tank, tank was, when we finally could see it, fog lifted the tank had been

The turret was, what?

The turret was knocked loose, but they moved that, they pulled that tank out of there.

OK.

Well, when I say the turret's knocked loose, it was kind of an angle so I assume they hit it right at the gun turret, right up front there. I'm sure what he aimed at, Martin fired the first round, he was Sergeant, because that's all we could see.

OK, Martin didn't get along.

..... Sergeant Martin was a nice guy.

So, theoretically, 3" gun can penetrate

No, but if you have to hit it in the machinegun ball or just slightly below, you could penetrate Tiger is the one you couldn't

penetrate at all, but the Mark 5, why, if you angle it you had about 37/38 degree angle, pretty hard to penetrate

So you are talking about aiming at the machinegun ball that's on the chaise in the front?

Yes, they had a ball

That was over on the right, over on the right hand side

Yes, machinegun went through and the driver was over here on the left.

We got a, is the picture package handy?

I call it a machinegun ball, but

I know.

It look just like a ball, they could throw, could mount or push a light, one of those light machineguns in there.

We're talking picture here, and I know we got, I'm talking about the picture package I put together back, way back when.

I know, I know. I'm not sure where it is right off the top of my head.

I guess, what I'm, kind of theoretically we want to know if the

Basically, we never really did see where we hit that tank, other than the fact that it turned and blocked the road. Because we know it blocked the road because it completely confused them. They didn't expect to have anything like that in there. I'm sure.

This is the Tiger, this is the Tiger II right there.

Yes.

See he's got a ball mount with a light, with a light gun in it. Light machinegun in it.

And that is what was firing, so if you just aim at the gun flash.

Yes, that's all you could aim at.

And your shell might go through there.

It could go through there or it could hit right at the lower part of the turret, come right up under the gun mount. And knock the gun out.

Yes, that's, one of them was knocked out by that. If you hit that gun mount, the gun amulets, it could ricochet off that and go right through the

Well, it doesn't necessarily have to go through, because once you hit in there you broke the whole system.

Right, because you can just jar the turret loose?

Yes. It broke the turret loose and it would also jam the gun.

How many rounds did he fire?

He just fired once, that first one. And then when they started jabbering and going on, he probably AT down the road.

I guess he did.

And then they really started jabbering.

..... the AT?

Well, he hit something off the deck, and boy they really scattered then. I mean they took off and we didn't see them for another forty minutes. They backed off. And then about forty minutes later another one came back up road.

OK. So we got a tank about 50 yards.

Probably about where that little triangle is. Yes, that's about it. And he was probably, maybe, Oh, I'd say 10 yards over the crown of the hill coming over the crown of the hill coming down, down because the grade started to drop round a little bit in front of him.

So, OK, we've got a tank about here knocked. He's blocking the road.

That completely confused them because I don't think they expected to have anything like that in there. And I, it confused us too because we didn't expect, but it confused them and the sit around the AT of course the infantry was help us, but they didn't have any, see they were

Yes, you said the infantry squad here, on top of them.

So they fired a round at the AT and then everything got quiet, they backed off, it must have been, oh, 50/40 minutes.

There was the fog. How far could you see?

Oh, you couldn't see much farther than the door.

OK.

I mean it was heavy fog. And this is, like I say, this is what completely kept us under problems was the fact that we had nowhere, we were supposed to have British, was it Hawker 20?

Typhoons.

What were they British Typhoons?

And they were supposed to have petty artillery. But, none. You see we couldn't call around it, because you couldn't see anything. An the Typhoon didn't show up till noon. That was too late. This would have been, anyway we AT down there, and like I said were

And that was about 6:30?

I'd say about 6:15 or so.

6:15 or so, so the next one

So around 7:00

Would be around 7:00, the next one was.

Then they started back up the road, but at the same time I think the #3 gun started bring some, getting some, seems to me long about maybe, anyway the next tank came up about the same distance.

You're not, you have the road blocked by one tank.

Well, like I said, for the next 45/50 minutes those Jerry's moved that.

Oh, they did?

They tore that thing I know that they did because that road was open and we figured that it, oh, we had it blocked.

Course you couldn't see a thing.

We couldn't see a thing, but did hear movement. But like I said, it got quiet as far as infantry. You couldn't hear, like rattling rifles or equipment rattling, infantry type equipment rattling. You could hear this heavy piece of equipment move up there and I think they just hooked on the back and towed the dam thing out.

Burning? You said it was burning.

..... you usually could hear it crackling, you know, and we figured it was burning, we'll put it that way. We didn't, we couldn't smell anything at that particular time, at least I didn't anything. I'll put it that way. But you could hear the crackling sound like it was burning

So around 7:00 they were coming up same road again with another tank.

With another tank. It's just like the shooting gallery thing. It just exactly outdone the Irish. They pull something out of the way, pull the plug out and go right back to the same hole, I mean it's dumb.

And, we never would have figured out without someone telling us that they pulled the tank out of the road.

Exactly.

We would have assumed that that tank would have had that road blocked forever.

No, they moved it some way, now, whether it was still there, we may say that because I think, I can remember two tanks in a row, I don't remember final sequence whether they pushed it off to the side, but anyway they got around. Then they got down

OK, so about 7:00 you got another tank coming up.

Yes.

And he gets even closer.

Yes. He wasn't shooting like he was kind of just crawl and stop, crawl and stop, crawl and stop. So, then he finally when, the last time he stopped, Old Martin just pulled the plug on him.

Did the #2 gun stop firing?

The #2 gun wasn't firing because he couldn't see because of the hedgerow. The hedgerow runs right along that road.

Oh, that's right the hedgerow runs this way.

Yes. His field of fire was zilch as far as the road was concerned.

OK, did he have a field of fire this way?

Yes, he had a field of fire that way. So then after he knocked out the second tank then they moved out and that #2 gun got They rolled up maybe 8/8:30.

OK, they decided not to use the road anymore. They decided to come around cross country.

Is this, what is this a small hedgerow field?

Yes, that's a hedgerow.

So he was in the, this #2 gun, he was

He was in the hedgerow field and all he had was, when they moved inside of that ~~hedgerow~~ and then he had a chance. They tried to move over, I guess, to that sunken road.

OK, so about 7:00 another tank comes up and Martin engages him.

Tries to

.....

What happened to that one?

Well it just burned. And so then they moved in, I kind of think you got an engagement up at #3 gun before they moved out into the hedgerow for #2 gun, but anyway that #3 gun got a tank somewhere around that spot.

Do you know which direction the tank was coming from?

I really don't remember. I think it was coming from this direction.

From this direction?

Yes.

So it really hadn't turned the gun around. OK, turned the gun, but you don't know what range or anything.

Oh, it was close too, I mean, the same thing. It was practically on top of them before they knocked it out. But, now, I don't remember where the road is and the open field is. I'm trying to remember.

But since then you were, they actually started here, seems to me like you kind of focused your attention

Yes, like I said, I had my command post set right there in the corner of that second building up there and I was trying to be between the two sections. Martin took care of this section and I started working on that other section up but every, all the action was down here to start with see.

Oh, that's right, I forgot to ask you, the second tank. Martin fired one round?

Yes.

But they hit him right in the front.....

That's what we were talking about, it had to hit him somewhere

Right, they were close frontal attacks. We think that, I know that the only thing they could see was the flashing of the machinegun. I'm assuming that's what they shot at. And they either hit the gun or the went just

above it. Got it up under the turret and broke the turret loose. But they put them out of action.

Yes, #2 tank, one round burned the Panther. One possibility is could have hit the machinegun ball, could have hit the front of the turret. He had a chance to penetrate there. Another place they got to penetrate quite a bit was the lower part of the

Yes, once but you have to get there from the side. Oh, you mean the lower part of

Yes, under it, this way.

Well, but that had an awful angle on it, because that

I can't explain it theoretically, but wrote about they hit the front slope and it bounced off the Panther, but then they, I can't explain.

Another thing that I heard happened, too, is they fired the gun low and it would bounce off the pavement and bounce under the tank.

That would be a very good possibility. That would be a ricochet.

We don't know how but we know we burned it. With one round.

Yes, but that would be a possibility because that, again see that nose on that thing that we were talking about goes like that.

Yes, that's right.

So about 7:00 you knocked out the second tank and now about the same time or somewhere

Somewhere's around there, they started to moving on the other road and I'm going to say about 8:00 probably you got a tank up there.

Do you know which it's coming from?

I don't believe it, but I would assume he came in the backside over here which would be north.

From here?

Yes.

OK, They would have had to turn the gun all the way around though, wouldn't it?

Well, that's right

Does that seem right or do we have the gun was it pointed in the other direct?

No, I think the gun would have been turned around. Yes, the gun would have been turned around, but like I said, he was covering out toward that church there.

OK.

That area out there. He was more less pointing out across the road.
.....

..... That's what I'm saying, he's covering, he covering, I remember the church. And he was kind of covering the whole side of the hill there along with the road, but the tank did come down the road and then it moved off into the field.

Came down which road?

I think it came down this road here.

Yes, now see, if he's pointing this way, generally up this way, the thing will, the gun traverse the few degrees so he, sounds like the tank might of rolled right down the road right in front of you.

Yes. But that fourth gun, like I say, it's location was such that the field of fire it had was pointing out there toward that church someplace, it was, no way it could be that was a real sharp

OK, so we think it, what, it either came down this way and tried to cross in front of him or it came down and just moved across this way.

Well, I think that's, that more like what you're talking about, it moved out across here.

Sort of like this?

Yes.

Well, he would have stayed on the road, wouldn't he?

Not necessarily. Depends on how much, when we say not necessarily, depends on how much the infantry group was..... they were getting

So I guess we what the range was.

No, well, it was short. It was still foggy.

Probably still less than about 50 yards.

Yes, 50 yards was about the maximum

So at 9:00 they were still shooting at noise in the fog?

Yes, basically.

Oh, were there a lot of reports about shooting at muzzle flashes?

Yes. The other thing

..... after the first two engagements down here they were, other than machinegun muzzle fire

Well, he could have gotten a muzzle flash up there too, because they could have been, but I don't know what the hell they were shooting at.not, not a large gun, not a large machinegun, they just kept spraying the countryside with that stuff tanks moved, they would just open up those machineguns. I guess they must of had two or three of them inside the tank, they burn one up, throw another one up there. see they had

Oh, yes.

.....

OK, so we've got one engagement, two engagement

So gun #3 was probably a flank shot maybe?

Yes, it was semi-flank shot.

So about 9:00 #3 engages one, What's the next one?

Then they moved back over here and down toward 2 gun, like I say it was 8 or 9:00 that he got one, so those two guns got one about the same time. Both 3 and 2.

OK, now 2's getting one

It was out in the field. Yes, roads and was out in the field.

It was still foggy so you were shooting at flashes, shooting at flashes.

How did they get through the hedgerow? They can't

They had gates.

A tank can actually climb the hedgerow. The problem was when they did it, it puts the belly of the tank, it makes it a target. It's very easy to penetrate, that's the problem we had trying to go, a tank could bull it's way through, bull its way over, but it's very vulnerable, it's very slow, it's a sitting duck when it does it.

All of those little fields got at least one gate on them. There was a gate right there at the top of the hill, that came into that field.

OK, so #2 engages, OK, we know it's less than 50 meters

..... Right about here, that would be coming right here. Well you'd have enough, you could probably penetrate, you probably would have penetrated right

.....

..... They stopped him dead

How many rounds did you use?

Two.

Two rounds?

Well, they shot once, cocked it and they put another one just in case.

That's the same, yes. Figuring out that was pretty much

..... I use that to explain to folks who are not familiar with why the German crews bailed out. For example, when Neil killed this one tank, he put a round in the tank, and the motor was still running, but the crew bails out because the crew is expecting that second that second round.

That's right.

OK, so now it's about 9:00 and 2 and 3 are both engaged.

Yes they each got a tank about that time.

OK, about, then what?

Then everything was kind of quiet infantry really getting pressure, a lot of pressure.

Did you have any infantry around your gun, other than the squad or the platoon that, I guess, that watched

Just our, what we call security group and they, we had two or three guys we each trying to

You weren't getting any protection from this squad, for example.

Not, not we would notice that much anyway. They were, and of course, like I say, everything was quiet. Well then #3 gun engaged a tank after the fog died

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TELEPHONE INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE GREENE

This follow-up telephone interview took place on February 16, 1990.

Participants:

G = George Greene World War II veteran

M = Mike Baily SAIC

M: First of all. Some confusion I've ended up with talking with you on the phone before you came and then after you got here, the positions at Barthelmy, when you initially moved in, did somebody give those to you, point those out?

G: Yeah, yeah.

M: Oh, OK.

G: They were there.We were very poor for towed situations because they were soft. Like, one of them was in a cabbage patch or you know, garden, real soft. So once you got your gun in there you were pretty well limited to even moving it because it settled so bad, see. And then, let's see, and the other, well basically two of them were fairly soft positions in that respect in other words they were in little gardens alongside the buildings see.

M: You remember when we were talking about it, we had the two in the south, one two, and then the ones in the north, three four, which ones were the soft positions?

G: Well, one of them was, one on each side. One on the, the one on the let's see, be on the left, left hand, the left hand gun in the north and would have been the one that was close to the building on the, on the south. Let's see, now, was there a building on that south? No I'm trying to remember if there was a building right there. There was a house in there and we were in the back of that house. That's what I'm trying to remember. ...Only two of those things are what you would call soft positions. In other words the ground had been torn up and it was pretty damn soft. Once you dropped the guns in, they were in.

M: So when you went up in the afternoon on your recon. you what, you talked to the infantry and they gave you the positions?

G: That's right. The infantry said this you know this is where where the outfits were, that's where we want you, you see. So we

M: That being the 30th Infantry not the 1st? Your own infantry?

G: Yeah, our own infantry, yeah. That was after they moved out. See, they evidently, I'd say the 30th probably must of moved in about somewhere

around noon to two o'clock in the afternoon is when they moved in there. I'm guessing because they were already in there and had their command post set up.

- M: OK, just clearing things up, now, the position that you'd moved in, could you tell what had been there before?
- G: No, I thought they were, that they might have been the small 57mm but then after you talking to me and stuff, the way they were torn up, they probably were track outfits because the ground was so soft see.
- M: OK, yeah. That was my next question. Did you see tank tracks, you know, track marks?
- G: Yeah, there were some in there but then at the time, now see as soon as you, those had hard-surface road kind of blacktop like hard-surface roads. You moved off the road, you moved right onto into the soft part see, so, basically there's a lot of times that it had trucks and stuff running in and out so they would pretty much obliterate everything as far as known tank tracks and besides that, I think those M-10s that they had at that time were rubber-tracked.
- M: Oh yeah they were. They had rubber lock tracks.
- G: Yeah, yeah. So they don't show up near as well.
- M: OK, yeah. We wanted to clear that up because I know you told me over the phone beforehand and then we didn't pick it up when we talked to you.
- G: Yeah, well that's true. Then of course the other thing I wanted to really point out too that this platoon sergeant I had was a crackerjack and he was the guy that really ran the damn thing. I'll put that through his name was Martin course he passed on since but the guy was he was the one that really helped me because again, like I said, I really didn't know my men that well, personally. That may be kind of tough in a way.
- M: OK. Next thing I wanted to clear up because we've got a real disagreement. The, toward the end, the infantry sergeant came up asked you for help with a machine gun,
- G: Right, right.
- M: Got a machine gun, then he was cut in half.
- G: Well, just about, he was hit in the groin and really ripped open, yeah.
- M: OK, our confusion is, I thought that was a, you thought it was a tank gun and Jay thinks it was a machine gun.
- G: No, no, no, no. It was a round that came through the it was shot into the hedgerow and exploded in the hedgerow and it was fragments that tore him all up. I think he got the base of an 88. Whatever that, that

was supposed to be an 88 on that Mark V right?

M: No, 75.

G: Alright well whatever that Mark V was, I don't remember but I just, whatever the millimeters were on the Mark V tank, that tank fired damn near point blank at us. When I say point blank well we're talking again in 50, 75 meters but he shot in at a hedgerow see we were running down behind the hedgerow and see it burst, it burst, it was an HE. It had to be an HE because it burst see.

M: Yeah.

G: All I got, I got a little piece in the arm is all. Right above the elbow and, right below the elbow actually and I carried that damn thing till '47 before it ever come out of there. But, that, that, that's what, I'm thinking of the base of a round, in other words, the biggest ... of the round caught him right above the groin and just ripped him right open. I mean, Christ, he just bled to death almost immediately. Course I grabbed him, but I mean you know, what the hell, you're scared to death, running and doing everything else you know.

M: OK, that's cleared up. I just thought it was a hit from an AP round that hit him but the fragment makes sense now. OK.

G: No it was fragmentation. It came through the hedgerow.

M: OK. Another thing we've ended up with a gap is between the time that guy was killed and you were captured, what happened?

G: Well, I started back with a gun and that's if I say, uh, it's really kind of fuzzy. I guess I was so God damned confused, anyway. But anyway, I fired the gun until the damned thing run out of ammunition just dropped it.

M: The machine gun?

G: Yeah. And then when I came around the corner, that's when I ran into all the God damned goons.

M: So, between the time the guy was killed and you were captured

G: Ah, it wasn't a matter of, I'd say 3, 4 minutes you know. That had to be somewhere right around 11:00 in the morning, between 10:30 and 11.

M: OK, yeah. That kind of clears up. It was a real short gap of time. Basically you were firing a machine gun at the Germans until you ran out of ammo.

G: That's right.

M: Did you really have targets or were you kind of

G: Just spraying, just spraying the damn hedgerows trying to keep them down. That's all we were doing, trying to give us some movement to move around in. Then of course the big thing was that the 30th just didn't have any ammo. I mean they run out a couple of times see. I don't know, I think if I remember right that their ammo supply got one of them they lost, I think got overrun and then the other supply I think got blown up that they had. I think they had one truck that got blown up, ammo truck. But it was just a matter of small arms, lack of small arms ammo was what it finally boiled to there.

M: OK, another thing I wanted to clear up. The two guns in the south, one of them was pointed right down the road

G: Right.

M: The other one was off to the west on the other side of the road in a hedgerow

G: Right.

M: And at one point you said it couldn't fire on the road.

G: That's right. There was a sunken road or low area that .. started ... that got light enough or that is clear enough to see. Those tanks started moving in there in that little low area there and we couldn't depress the gun low enough.

M: Well, uh, now we've, one of the tank actions we figured it was the number 2 gun from what we got from you talking to us. Would this be more correct that that gun couldn't fire, it could fire on portions of the road, but it couldn't fire on all of it?

G: It couldn't fire on all of it.

M: But it could fire on portions.

G: If we could see you know had the long at the long range before the fog raised, then we could see a portion of the road we could hit. But by the time we could see, those were half-tracks moving in there and stuff and the Mark V tanks were moving in that road, we couldn't depress the gun long enough to cover that area.

M: But, uh, you did, that gun did knock out a tank that was on a road.

G: Yeah.

M: The way we figured it out, it knocked out one of the tanks later coming up the road. That's the one that rolled on down the road in front of your CP.

G: That's right.

M: So it could see portions of the road.

G: Yeah, yeah. It could see portions but what I say is that the positions were such that I didn't think, I didn't notice it the day before of course when they pointed out the positions to us. But the thing about it was, I didn't realize that the gun could not be depressed far enough to cover a lot of that road in the area where it was set up see.

M: But the, yeah, the part it couldn't cover would be you know farther down the road toward the south.

G: That's right. Yeah, yeah.

M: OK. OK.

G: Is it working out pretty good?

M: Yeah, we've already done narratives. We're turning in a draft at the end of the month and we're just filling that out and we went to do the narrative and found out you know we had these kind of holes we couldn't, uh, Jay and I were disagreeing on what happened to that sergeant and you talked to me over the phone before you came up about the positions and we didn't pursue it here but I was pretty sure that you thought they were that there were positions pointed out to you.

G: Oh, yeah, yeah. Those things were already there. That was, that was the thing about it that had I had time in other words they'd given us another 12 hours, those guns wouldn't have been those places. We'd of moved them, got them in better position. I would have thought of better positions for that area.

M: Yeah.

G: For a towed gun that is see cause you got to look at movement with those things and God damn, they're hard as hell to move anyway and you sure can't move them in soft ground.

M: Yeah.

G: Like we were pointing out, you know, it only takes 8 men to pick one up and move it and one guy out on the barrel you know and it's damn near impossible to turn one around if you don't do that. They're just hard to, you can, I think Neel pointed that out too that as long as you could have your half-track where you could just back right up, close the legs, and take off with it that's one thing but when you try to put it into a defensive position where you've got to move your half-track, oh, 20 yards even. You're in trouble.

M: OK, uh, OK, let's see I think I got all the points. I know what happened to the sergeant. We know what happened to you between him getting killed and you getting captured only 3 to 4 minutes.

G: Yeah, it wasn't very long and that and then see I was just trying to think, that's about all I can remember that well on it. Like I say, the last, probably the last 30 minutes was the most confusing thing in my life.

M: Oh, yeah. It's chaos.

G: To really remember exactly what you did, you know. You just become so, you just become mechanical almost because you're scared to death and you're running and you're doing things, and you don't know and you know that this is what you were taught to do but then you're doing it mechanically rather than really using your mind.

M: OK. Oh, and you might care about this. We talked to a guy named Noble who was in the infantry anti-tank unit.

G: Yeah.

M: And apparently they had a gun a little bit farther down the road from you.

G: That's what I understood they did but I never did see it but I remember unless they moved it in later that day some.

M: Well, anyway, he came, this is the guy I think we told you about that went down with the bazooka team

G: Oh, yeah, yeah.

M: As we, as best we can reconstruct it, he went down the sunken road that you came up. Not the hard-top but the other one and so about, uh, something like 7 or 8 o'clock you know after the first engagement apparently their gun had already been overrun but they were farther down the road

G: Yeah.

M: Uh, the Germans had stopped probably stopped by the tank that you'd knocked out and they were waiting to see what happened and they knocked out three tanks probably we figured about 400m down the road from you.

G: It's very possible because

M: But it's confusing because we don't know the timing

G: There was a lot going on down in there because like I say we could hear them and could hear the confusion but you couldn't see anything.

M: Oh, I know. I had one more question. After you knocked out the first tank, uh, you started firing just firing HE into the fog.

G: a Mark fired 2 rounds of HE in the fog but as you said, that gun didn't help.

M: 2 rounds?—

G: Uhhuh. —

M: OK. That was the question, how many rounds.

G: Yeah, 2 rounds.

M: No idea what happened they just

G: No, you could just hear them scattering you know I mean you could hear them hollering and yelling and everything else but that all they did was just fired down into the, into the fog and then like I say everything was quiet for by some time you could hear I think basically you know after thinking about it what they did is move another tank up there hooked onto that burned or that shot out and burned tank and dragged it out of the way.

M: Yeah.

G: That's what they did.

M: You can't be sure when we've gotten to the point where you hit the tank and it slewed

G: Yeah.

M: You could have penetrated and that range you could have penetrated the turret front also you could have gone through the machine gun bulb.

G: That's where I think we went through because that's was the, that was the thing that was doing the firing. They were firing the ... and you could just start to pick it up in the fog.

M: Yeah.

G: You could just start to pick it up in the fog, the flash of it.

M: OK, I think you got all my questions. I'll check with Jay. Will you be around please don't change any plans I just wanted to find out will you be around the house?

G: Today?

M: Yeah.

G: Uh, I'm going to be gone for the next probably three hours but I'll be back here by noon your time.

M: OK. I'll talk to Jay. I think I've got everything cleared up. I may have to call you back and finish it up.

G: Alright.

M: At some point here we'll get it a little more finalized. We'll send you a copy of the draft we've written up so, uh, cause we're going to make sure it's accurate.

G: Yeah.

M: So you'll get a chance to look at it again.

G: OK.

M: OK?

G: Yeah.

M: Thanks a lot. Bye.

INTERVIEW WITH G. DEAN NOBLE

This interview took place by telephone on February 6, 1990.

PARTICIPANTS:

M: Mike Baily SAIC
N: Dean Noble WWII Veteran
J: Jay Karamales SAIC
V: Vicki Young SAIC

(Start of relevant conversation)

M: Joyce Boykin and Jay Karamales and it's sort of a group interview and we are going to be taping this if that's OK with you?

N: That's OK.

M: OK.

N: Hope I can hear you.

M: OK, if you have trouble hearing us let me know, we will move in closer to the speaker.

N: Well, I have a little bit of trouble. I wear a hearing aide but I hear better on the telephone when I don't wear it. But I still have a little problem.

M: OK, first of all some of this is review that we have talked over before but I wanted to get it down on the tape. What unit were you in?

N: Pardon.

M: What unit were you in?

N: I didn't understand you then.

M: Which unit were you in?

N: Which unit?

M: Yes.

N: I was in the anti-tank company, 117th infantry.

M: OK. What time did your, the company initially move into St. Barthelmy? About what time of day on the, I guess it would be the 6th?

N: Well, we moved in, as I recall, we moved in a little bit, we're kind of later in the afternoon.

M: OK. Did you set up positions, or did you know you were going on a roadblock and didn't do any digging or have anything to do with positions yourselves.

N: No, at that time we didn't know what we were going to do. All we knew was that we relieved the, I guess it was the 1st Division.

M: Did the rest, did the company go into positions? Were there positions for you to occupy?

N: Were what?

M: Were there positions, 1st infantry position that you could occupy, foxholes or gun positions?

N: Well, at first we didn't do too much. Only, just kind of sit around and wait until we found out what we were supposed to do and as I recall we did, we did kind of set up our gun and made a few positions for our protection and that about it. Because we were told by the 1st Division that there wasn't a German within a hundred miles of there that wanted to fight.

M: OK. When you put your gun in position, was there an existing position or did you have to make a new one?

N: This was what?

M: When you put the 57 in position, did you have to dig a new position or had the 1st Infantry left one for you?

N: We were just relieving them, and that's what they told us so we were taking it kind of easy.

M: OK. When were you told you were going on a roadblock?

N: When?

M: Yes.

N: Oh, gosh, it seemed like it was the next morning some time but I can't remember exact time.

M: So it was late at night or very early in the morning?

N: Either late at night or very early the next morning, I can't remember. You know in 45 years you kind of forget thing.

M: No problem. Who else was on the roadblock team?

N: Who else?

M: Yes.

N: Well, there was the squad that I was in and I don't know what happened to the other two squads. Just where they were, I just know that there was a squad I was in that we were, we were sitting there on a, well I guess your would call it a, a sort of a lane. It wasn't much of a road. That's all we were doing.

M: OK. Which people were on the team with you?

N: Which what?

M: Your squad, who all was in it, who all was in it, how many people? Names if you have them, if you can remember.

N: Well there was ten of us.

M: OK, and the whole squad went on the roadblock?

N: Yes, we were spread out there, kind of up and down this lane a little bit and then there was one, there was a sergeant, two other privates and myself were sent out, to go down this lane, or whatever you want to call it with a bazooka and see what was going on. And that's what happened. And the other six, I don't know seven, I don't know what happened to them. I don't know where they went.

M: OK. What time did you move out to establish the roadblock.

N: Oh, gosh, it must have been in the morning sometime but I can't remember just when. It was fairly early.

M: Was it still dark?

N: I don't believe it was. It seems like it was just getting light.

M: OK. You've kind of done this. Would kind of describe this road or lane whatever you moved down, was it

N: Well, it was more or less a sandy, just a kind of a dirt trail that was a little bit wider than the ordinary trail and there seemed to be a sort of, well something like a hedgerow only it wasn't exactly a hedgerow on each side and it kind of wound around down through there and that's about it.

M: OK. About how far did you move down that? How long did you move, whichever you can remember better.

N: Oh, we must have moved up that trail probably 2-300 yards, I don't know exactly but we just moved up there a ways and then we just kind of waited right there to see what was going to happen.

M: Just a second, I want to look at a map. We've got him way down there. OK, you don't think you moved only a few hundred meters.

N: Pardon.

M: You moved only a couple hundred meters, or couple hundred yards?

N: Well, I would imagine probably that far.

M: How long did you walk?

N: Pardon.

M: How long did it take you to move there?

N: Well, it didn't take us very long, we just started out and we just walked up there. And we were there for a little while, I don't, a few minutes and heard some tanks. The sergeant that was with us, crawled up on this bank and looked over there and he told us that there was three, I think it was three German tanks over, there's a small field right there and then over the other side of that there was another sort of a hedgerow-like row of trees and shrubbery and stuff. He told us they were the other side of that.

M: Were the tanks on the same trail that you moved down?

N: Were they what?

M: Were they on the same trail that you walked down?

N: No, no. They were over, Oh, probably, let's see, I would have to stop and think a minute. I would say they were over probably across this very small clearing. Probably 75 yards or such a matter.

M: OK. Were the tanks, it sounds like the tanks were, almost about the same time you got in position you encountered the tanks.

N: Yes.

M: OK. So this is, it's daylight by now?

N: Say what?

M: Is it daylight when you see the tanks?

N: Yes, by that time it was daylight, yes.

M: We've got reports that an artillery barrage started on St. Barthelmy about 6:00, about 4:00 in the morning. It would still have been dark. Is that your recollection?

N: There was an artillery barrage, but I, as far as time, I couldn't tell you when it was. It was probably towards morning.

M: OK. Were the tanks on, they were just across the clearing, were they on a road?

N: Later we discovered that there was a road that came around and curved around and and that's where, they were just off the edge of that road.

M: About 75 meters away from you?

N: Oh, something close to that, you know.

V: Let me ask him something. Mr. Noble, Mr. Noble can you hear me? Maybe not, maybe you ought to ask him. Just what they were doing. I mean were they getting ready to move, or were they

M: What were the tanks doing?

N: Well, at the time we first saw them, they were just kind of sitting there, just the three of them. They had their motors running and the crew was, I guess, it's the only ones I could think of, were standing around talking in a kind of, you know, kind of in a group and they were just standing there talking.

M: Which directions were the tanks pointing, do you remember east?

N: Gee, I couldn't tell you what direction.

M: OK, Ok.

N: Weren't pointed toward us.

M: They were or weren't?

N: They were not. They were just sitting there and the crews were apparently gathered there in a little group there talking.

M: OK

N: They appeared to us like they were half drunk. They were pretty noisy and everything.

M: OK. Then did you watch them for a while or did you go ahead and engage?

N: Well, we kind of watched them for maybe five minutes and the sergeant said I think we better try to see if we can hit one of them with the bazooka. At least hit one of them. And the fellow that fired our bazooka, he didn't have too much love for the Germans because he was chased out of Norway when they took over there. He was the guy that was doing the firing. So he fired a round right in the middle of that group of men, but I don't suppose he hit anybody but it sure did quiet them down.

M: Did, what did they do after the round hit, did they get in their tanks or hide behind them or what?

N: I don't know what they done. It was hard to see. You could hear them, you could see the tanks but they were kind of hard to see. Once in a while you'd see one moving around and they quieted right down and I don't know where they all disappeared to. Whether they got inside the tank or went behind it I don't really know.

M: OK, then after the first round, what happened then?

N: Well, he decided then maybe he'd better fire a round or two at the tanks if he could and as I recall he fired about, I don't know, maybe 4, maybe 5 rounds. He hit most of them, couple of them he hit on the motor because apparently the motor stopped and there was an awful lot of smoke. They were on fire or something.

M: So he hit at least two out of the three. Do you know if he hit the third?

N: Pardon.

M: There were three tanks, he hit at least two out of three, do we know if he hit the third?

N: We think he hit all three, but two of them we definitely stopped.

M: OK. OK, he's fired 4 or 5 rounds then what happened?

N: The sergeant decided that maybe we should leave. So we took off back down the trail the direction we had come from and when we got back to where our, the rest of our outfit was supposed to be, they were gone. So we just kept going. Started going cross country, cross the field there and then, oh, maybe 500 yards from there, I don't know exactly, but it was a distance, we came across our truck and it had a tank gun. Apparently they had hooked it on to the back of the truck and took off. And it was bogged down in a mud hole that was in the road. They were gone, we don't know where they, we didn't know at that time where they had gone.

M: When you say it was bogged down in the road, what kind of a road was that?

N: It was a, it was a trail, sort of like a path down across this open area and there was a low spot and it was muddy down in there and they apparently tried to go through it and they got stuck and just left it. The driver, the driver put a thermite bomb on the motor and they done something to the, as I recall they took the firing mechanism out of the gun and they just took off. Well then, a little bit later the Air Force came down through there and they were strafing everything and they apparently set it on fire.

M: OK. I'm going to try to find out what happened so I can retrace, we're still not sure of your location. From where you found the truck, then you headed off, do you remember generally what direction?

N: Pardon.

M: Do you remember what direction, I suppose you moved out, you found the truck and then moved out again?

N: I couldn't tell you what direction it was going, I know that we just kept going. We kind of figured the general direction in which they might of gone and we just kept going. I don't know just how far we went, but we came across a group from Cannon Company, and they were there and were kind of stayed with them for a while because they didn't know where our outfit was and we didn't know, that was for sure. So we stayed with Cannon Company for, I guess probably two days.

M: OK. Again, I'm still working on location. You left St. Barthelmy, you went about 200 meters down a trail. When you saw the German tanks were they generally like in front of you from the direction you had been travelling?

N: No, they were, we were travelling one direction and they were over to our right.

M: OK. You know, Jay could this have been this position? Just a second we're consulting here. If he had moved down that trail, then the tanks could have been over to his right, you know, in other words they never made it to this position. No, I'm talking about, they went this trail. They never made it this far but somewhere down this trail they spotted the tanks and shot them down here.

J: Could be.

M: And we had a 57 up here which would be consistent with down here 2-300 meters. Spotted German tanks and headed in the other direction.

J: Yes.

M: Makes more sense than this one.

J: Well, told us that this is a sunken trail, see this.

M: Yes. Would you describe the trail you went down as a sunken trail?

N: Was what?

M: A sunken trail.

N: Yes, it was kind of sunken.

M: OK.

V: They never fired their gun.

M: No he left the gun.

V: But it was never fired,

M: Oh, do you know if the other group ever fired the 57?

N: No, I don't, I don't know what they did with it. I just know, All I know is what we did and I know that when we got back to where they were supposed to be, they were gone. And, as I told you we found the truck and the gun and it was, I think it was two days or so before we connected up with the rest of them.

M: Oh, did they tell you what happened afterwards.

N: Well, we got with Cannon Company and then they were trying to locate our Company, but they hadn't had much success. Things were pretty disorganized for a short time there.

M: No, I mean when you finally got back with your own company, did they tell you what happened to them?

N: Well, yes, they took off, then they cut to a, well, there was sort of a road, it wasn't really a trail, it was more of a well traveled road and they went down that and they congregated somewhere, probably half a mile or so from where we were with Cannon Company. The only reason we, the only way we found them was the fact that they were out, I don't know, I think there was four of them I believe and they were out kind of patrolling the area because there had been some reports that there had been some reports that there was some snipers in the area and they were out looking for them. And we saw them and we got connected up with them.

N: Did the Germans ever fire back?

M: OK. Oh, when you, during the engagement when you fired at the German tanks, did they ever fire back?

N: No. No, I think, I think that they were so surprised and they really weren't sure what direction it came from and so they just didn't fire back.

M: How many rounds, bazooka rounds were you carrying?

N: How many what?

M: Rounds, bazooka rounds were you carrying?

N: Oh, we must have fired 5, maybe 6, we had, we had 12 rounds of ammunition with us and we fired about it.

M: OK. You said the German tanks were beside a road, did you see that road? Was it a good hardtop road, or was it a dirt road?

N: What, the road that they were on?

M: Yes.

N: It was a, it wasn't a hardtop like cement or blacktop or anything of that nature, but it was a good hard surface road. It apparently was a fairly well travelled road.

M: OK.

N: As I remember that's what it was.

M: Oh, what was the sergeant's name, do you remember any of the other names of the folks with you.

N: The sergeant that was with me, his name was Hardy that was with us. Sergeant Hardy.

M: Do you remember the other three, other two guys?

N: Yes, one of them's name was Arthur Jentsh, J,E,N,T,S,H, Arthur Jentsh.

M: OK.

N: And the other one was Alfred Erickson, E,R,I,C, I think it was double C, E,R,I,C,C,S,O,N.

M: OK.

V: He was the one who fired I bet.

M: Was Erickson, sounds like he was the gunner, is that right?

N: Yes, Erickson was the gunner. He was the fellow from Norway. The other fellow, Jentsh, was a German himself from Texas.

M: Do you remember where Hardy was from?

N: Gee, I could, I got a book here with a list of all the people that were in our Company in 43 and I could look it up. He was from somewhere's down in the south, but I couldn't tell you.

M: OK, do we have anything else?

J: I think that answers most of my questions.

M: I'm still not clear, I'm doubly confused on location.

V: Maybe, if we can know, like which direction from the town he went.

M: Do you have any idea, when you left St. Barthelmy, which direction from the town you were going.

V: Did they go back toward Mortain?

N: I don't know, we were, I never did pay much attention to what directions we were going. You know, I just didn't pay that much attention.

M: Do you know if you were headed more in the direction of Mortain, or were you headed in another direction? Did you know where Mortain was in relation to the town you were in?

N: No, I don't.

M: OK.

J: Did they pass any orchards or streams, cross any streams?

M: Oh, we are still working on location, when you, as you moved out of the village, both to your squad position and farther to the roadblock, do you remember crossing any streams or passing an orchard, anything that might help us to locate you?

N: No, I don't recall that we did.

M: OK.

J:along that trail. If it was down this trail there would be all sorts of stuff..... the orchard, the woods, a long wooded area.

V:Cannon Company was located.

M: It's going to back near Battalion Headquarters, it's going to be in general, that direction. I think we might have, we might be able to figure out the grid but it's going to be back in here. Anything else. Dean, I think we got about all we need from you. After we write it up, we may have to call you back with some more question. Do you have any questions of us?

N: No, I can't think of any that I've got. What are you writing, a book or something?

M: No, what we're doing is a study for the Army's Concept Analysis Agent, Agency, and they want some very detailed data on armor/anti-armor engagements in WWII and we've done a lot of work with the 823rd TD battalion in that area. I've been having trouble finding guys from the anti-tank companies. You're the first one that's been able to help us from the 30th ID.

N: I could give you the addresses that we had in 1943 for these fellows that were with me, but that doesn't mean too much because that was too long ago.

M: No, if I, now that I've got the names, I might try to track these guys down through the

N: You might be able to some way, I don't know.

M: Well, you know, you've got a division association and they might very well have names and numbers for these guys.

N: Yes. In fact, this guy Arthur Jentsh might be gone now because he was quite a bit older than the rest of us. I was about 29, and he was, he was at least 10 years older than I was. So he might possible be gone now.

M: Yes, well, we could try the division association. They've got a, they don't have a complete roster, but they are up to date. They know where people are right now.

N: Yes.

M: Well, I guess that's it, thanks a lot for your help.

N: Well, that's OK.

M: OK, if we have more questions, I'll get back to you, OK?

N: OK.

M: Thanks a lot.

N: Bye.

M: Bye.