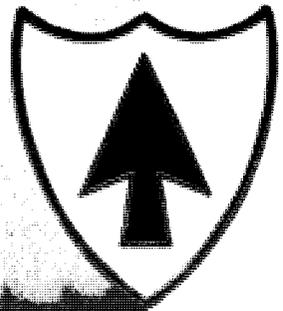
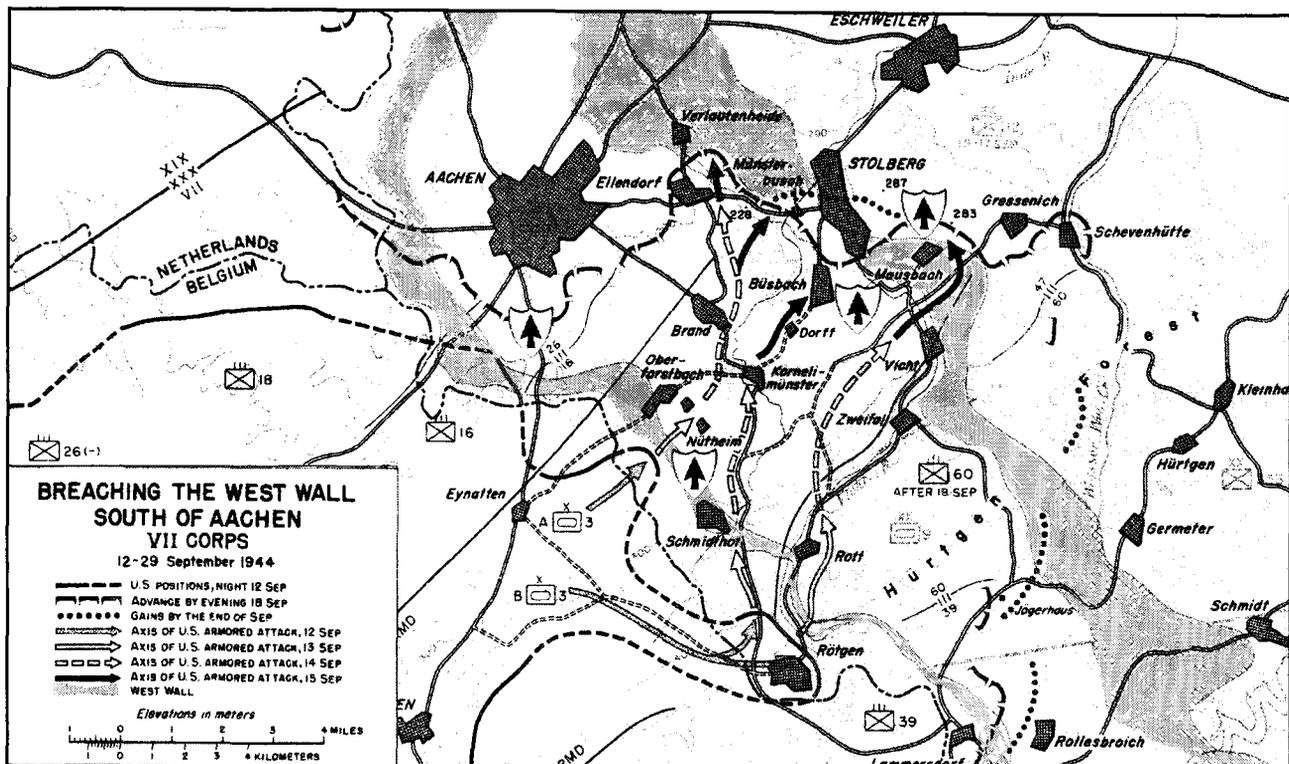


STOLBERG





Before 1940, Aachen had been a city of some 165,000, but in September, 1944 the city lay in ruins from repeated bombardment, and less than 25,000 Germans still lived there, defended by 5,000 troops. It was, therefore, not surprising that American commanders initially decided to encircle the city, expecting the surrounded garrison to surrender. But Hitler ordered that Aachen would be defended at all costs, and committed major forces to prevent its loss.

The 1st Infantry Division, leading the VII Corps' northern (left) axis in its pursuit toward the German frontier, penetrated the forward defenses of Aachen — called by Americans the Siegfried Line — on September 12, 1944, the same day that the 3d Armored Division crashed into the same defenses on the southern (right) axis of the Corps' drive. The 26th Infantry Regiment was split between the two axes, with its 1st Battalion attached to the 3d Armored Division, and the Regimental Combat Team acting as the 1st Division's reserve and flank security on the north. On the 13th, the 26th RCT was ordered to take over the attack on the southeastern environs of Aachen, so that the 16th and the 18th RCTs could concentrate further to the east, and attack toward Eilendorf and Verlautenheide in the main belt of fortifications standing between VII Corps and the Roer River. The 3d Armored Division was to take Münster-busch, Stolberg and surrounding heights — objectives also in that main belt of fortifications.

This narrative follows the action of 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, attached to the 3d Armored Division 13-22 September. Over those ten days it fought in five key German towns: Nütheim, Büsbach, Diepenlinchen, Weissenberg, and Stolberg, leading the attack to eliminate opposition holding up the advance of the 3d Armored. Nütheim and Weissenberg were unsupported night attacks, and the other three were hard fought building-to-building battles. The battalion emerged at less than half strength, but fought resolutely until it was relieved. For its achievements, 1/26th Infantry was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation, the streamer inscribed as shown:



STOLBERG

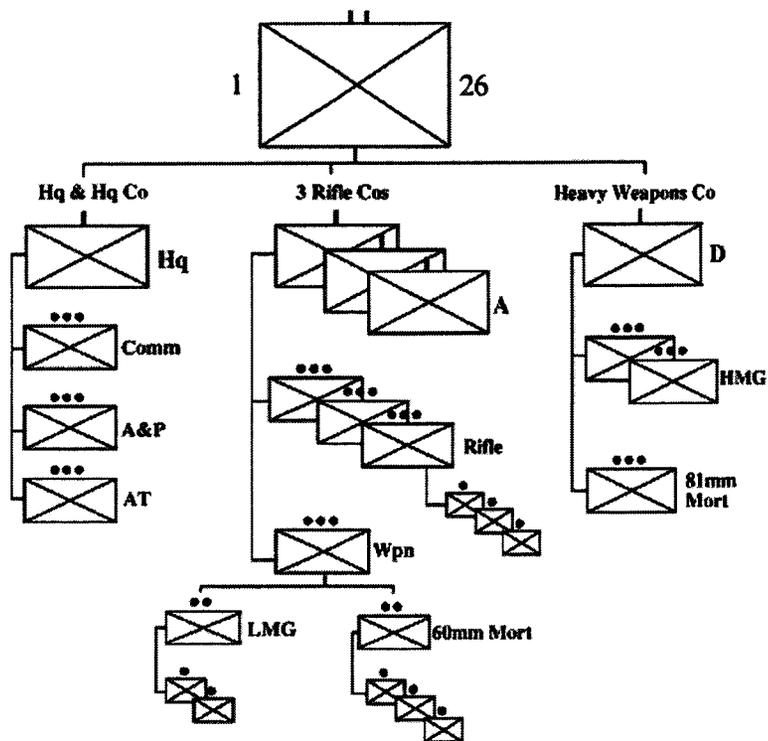
Penetrating the Westwall

1st Battalion, 26th Infantry
13-22 September 1944



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3d Edition, September 1999

In 1944, an infantry battalion of the 26th Infantry Regiment was authorized a total of 871 men: 35 officers, 178 NCOs, 40 technicians, and 618 privates (or privates first class). Each was assigned to one of five companies: Headquarters and Headquarters Company (Hq & Hq Co), three Rifle Companies, and a Heavy Weapons Company. [In an infantry regiment, all except headquarters companies were lettered sequentially, Companies A, B, C, and D being in the 1st Battalion; E, F, G, and H in the 2d Battalion; and I, K, L, and M in the 3d Battalion — "J" being omitted.]



Weapons and vehicles were distributed as shown below (from TO&E 7-15, 26 Feb 1944):

Weapon	Hq		3 Rifle Cos		Hvy Wpns	Bn Total
	Hq	Co	Co (ea)	Co	Co	
Carbine, cal 30	2	51	29	82		219
HMG, cal 30				8		8
LMG, cal 30			2			6
HMG, cal 50		2	1	1		6
Gun, AT 57mm		3				3
Lnchr, Rkt AT 2.36 in		8	5	6		29
Mortar, 60 mm			3			9
Mortar, 81mm				6		6
Pistol, auto, cal 45	2	15	10	34		81
Rifle, auto, cal 30			9			27
Rifle, cal 30, M1		56	143	50		535
Rifle, cal 30, M1903A4			3			9
Truck, 1/4 ton		9	2	10		34
Truck, 3/4 ton, wpn car		1		1		2
Truck, 1-1/2 ton, cargo		4				4
Trailer, 1/4 ton		2	2	14		22
Trailer, 1 ton		1				1

Hq & Hq Company supported the battalion commander and his staff, provided for its own administration, and commanded the Communications Platoon, the Pioneer and Ammunition Platoon, and the Antitank Platoon.

Each rifle company consisted of one Weapons Platoon and three Rifle Platoons. The Rifle Platoon had a headquarters of 5 (including 1 officer and 2 NCOs) and three rifle squads, each of 2 NCOs and 7 riflemen plus a 2-man BAR team. The Weapons Platoon fielded three mortar squads of 5 men and one 60 mm mortar each, and two light machine gun squads of 5 men and two LMG each.

The Heavy Weapons Company manned two Heavy Machine Gun (HMG) platoons, each of two sections. A section had two squads, each of which had one water-cooled HMG cal 30; the company's mortars were organized into one platoon of three sections, with two mortar squads per section, each squad manning one 81mm mortar.

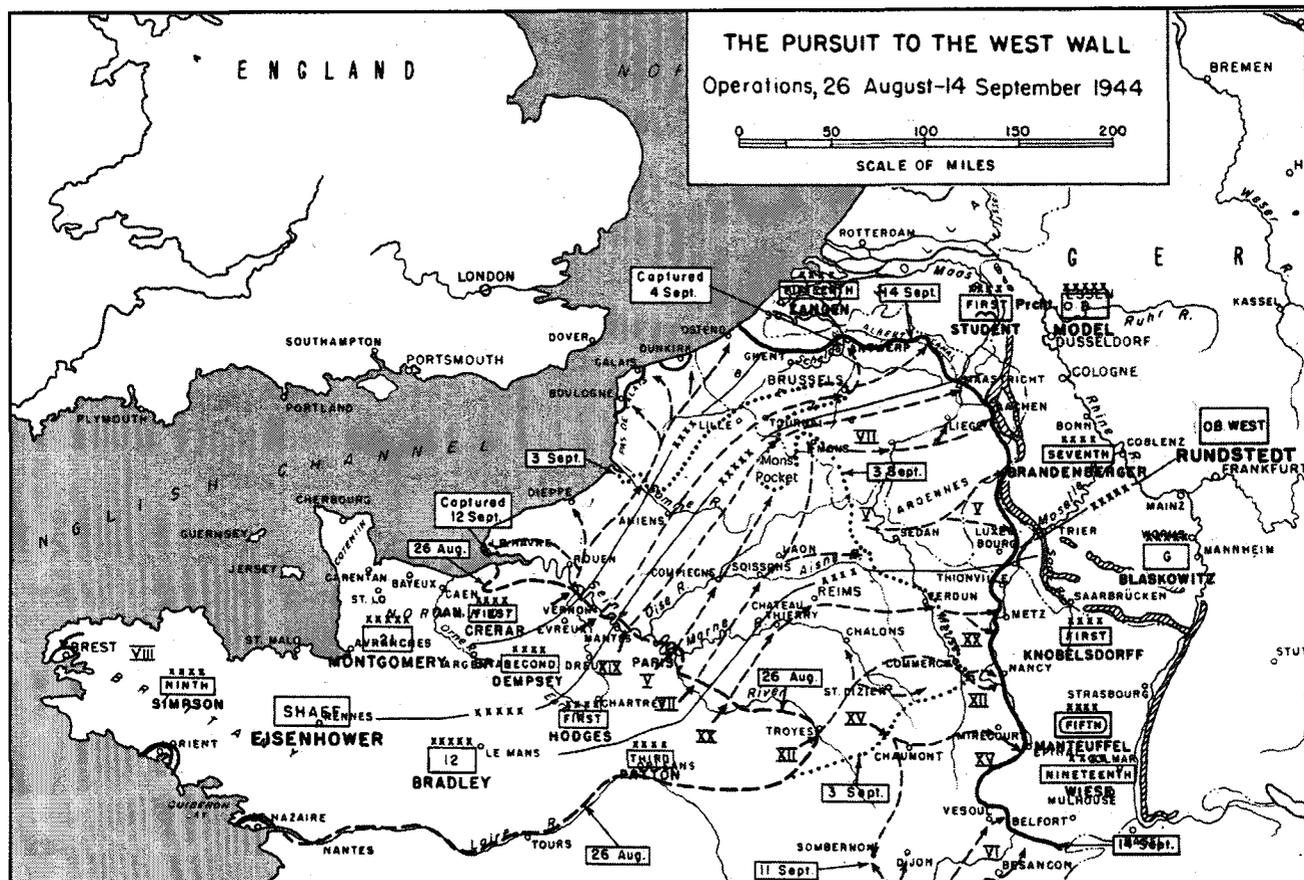
The 26th Infantry Regiment consisted of three infantry battalions and a Headquarters and Headquarters Company. The latter was composed of a Communications Platoon, the Regimental Band, an MP Platoon, and an Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon. In addition, the Regiment had its own Cannon Company (equipped with towed short-barreled 105mm howitzers) and an Anti-tank Company (with towed 57mm guns). By 1944 the 1st Division routinely fought organized into Regiment Combat Teams (RCT) – often called simply Combat Teams (CT) – formed around its three infantry regiments, each reinforced by elements of the Division's organic and attached units. For example, usually there were attached to the 1st Infantry Division the 70th and 745th Tank Battalions, and the 601st, 634th, 635th, and 701st Tank Destroyer Battalions, all normally distributed by companies among the RCT.

1st Division Artillery consisted of three 105mm towed howitzer battalions – the 7th, 32d, and 33d Field Artillery (FA) Battalions – and the 5th FA Bn, armed with the 155mm towed piece. It became usual to attach the regimental cannon companies to the division artillery. Invariably, the direct support for the 26th RCT was provided by the 33d Field Artillery Battalion (towed 105mm howitzers). Usually, 1st Division attached to the 26th RCT a company of the 1st Engineers, a company of tanks, and a company of tank destroyers.

The organization for combat set forth to the right is an example of the composition of 26th RCT (extracted from Regimental Field Order Number 5, 20 July 1944] for the start of the offensive under VII Corps that would lead to the breakthrough of the German defenses in Normandy, and to two months of exploitation and pursuit across France and Belgium in August and September. The plan called for an initial attack by two battalion task forces in column, hence the lead task force, 3d Battalion, is provided the

Troops	
26th Infantry (-2d Bn Reinforced, attached to 3d Armored Division)	
Co. C, 1st Engr Bn (-2d Plat)	
Co. C, 1st Med Bn (-Det)	
Det, 1st Sig Bn	
Co C, 634th TD Bn (SP) (+ 1 Rcn Plat, Hqs Co)	
Co C, 745th Tank Bn	
Co C, 635th TD Bn (Towed)	
1st Rcn Troop	
33d FA Bn	
3d Bn, 26th Infantry (Reinforced)	1st Bn, 26th Infantry (Reinforced)
3d Bn, 26th Infantry	1st Bn, 26th Infantry
3d Plat, AT Co, 26th Infantry	1st Plat, AT Co, 26th Infantry
3d Plat, Cannon Co, 26th Infantry	1st Plat, Cannon Co, 26th Infantry
3d Plat, Co C, 1st Engr Bn	1st Plat, Co C, 1st Engr Bn
3d Plat, Co C, 634th TD Bn (SP)	1st Plat, Co C, 634th TD Bn (SP)
2d Plat, Co C, 634th TD Bn (SP)	1st Plat, Co C, 635th TD Bn (Towed)
Rcn Plat, Co C, 634th TD Bn	1st Plat Co C, 745th Tank Bn
3d Plat, Co C, 635th TD Bn (Towed)	Det, Co C, 1st Med Bn
1st Rcn Troop (-Ln Gp)	
3d Plat, Co C, 745th Tank Bn	
2d Plat, Co C, 745th Tank Bn	
Det, Co C, 1st Med Bn	
Regt I&R Plat, 26th Inf	
Regt MP Plat, 26th Infantry	

tanks and tank destroyers that would have been assigned to 2d Battalion had the latter not been attached to 3d Armored Division.



VII Corps, commanded by Major General J. Lawton Collins, usually employed the 1st Infantry and 3d Armored Divisions in tandem, and it was common practice for the 1st Infantry Division to attach an infantry battalion to the 3d Armored. On 3 September 1944 the 1st Division so attached 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, commanded by Major Francis W. Adams, Cavalry, U.S. Army. That attachment was continued until 22 September, during which time Major Adams and his troops fought in the van of the 3d Armored Division on at least three occasions: in liberating the city of Liege, Belgium, in penetrating the outer portion of the German border fortifications opposite Eynatten, Belgium, and in capturing Hill 283 and Weissenberg near Stolberg, Germany.

This is the story of 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry during its operations in September, 1944.

This account draws on the book Blue Spaders 1917-1967 described on the inside back cover, and on two excellent German books: first, Wolfgang Trees, Schlachtfeld zwischen Maas und Rhein [Triangel Verlag, Aachen, 1995], an essay well supported by photographs of the fighting in and around Aachen and the Hürtgen Forest in 1944, and the Allied offensive to reach the Rhein in 1945; and second, the guidebook to the remains of the German fortifications in that same vicinity provided by Dr. Harald Koschik, Direktor, Rheinisches Amt für Bodendenkmalpflege, entitled Der Westwall – Vom Denkmalwert des Unerfreulichen [Landschaftsverband Rheinland, Rheinland-Verlag GmbH - Köln, 1997].

In early September 1944, after a prolonged pursuit of retreating German units across France, the U.S. First Army succeeded in thrusting its VII Corps into Belgium, directly across the path of German divisions retreating from the channel coast. A wild battle known as "The Mons Pocket" was waged around and in the city of Mons, Belgium, in which the 1st Infantry Division and the 3d Armored Division played major roles in rounding up the remnants of 20 German divisions. The commander of First U.S. Army, Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges, told his staff on 6 September that with ten more days of good weather, the war would be over.

Some 25,000 prisoners were collected in the pocket and several thousand more were killed. In addition, tremendous quantities of enemy materiel were captured or destroyed under effective combined air and ground attack...The fact that these units might have been available to man the defenses of Germany itself opened up a great opportunity. Those defenses would be just that much less strongly held if we could reach them before reinforcements could be brought up. This circumstance caused a quick readjustment in the army plan to be made even before the captures southwest of Mons were entirely complete. [First U.S. Army, Report of Operations, 1 August 1944-22 February 1945]

On 3 September, 1944, 3d Armored Division, with 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry attached, was alerted to move toward the German border vicinity Aachen. Lead elements departed on 4 September. On 5 September, VII Corps ordered 1st Division to advance on north (left) of the 3d Armored, but tasked it also to protect the north flank of the Corps. The division advanced with 16th RCT on the north, 18th RCT on the south, and 26th RCT (-) echeloned to the left (north) rear for flank security. 9th Infantry Division was to follow 3d Armored Division.



8 September: Townsfolk of Liege greet their liberators

1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, further attached to Combat Command B (CCB), 3d Armored Division,* did not begin to move eastward through Belgium until 6 September. Rolling down the valley of the Meuse River on tanks and other vehicles, the battalion was back in combat on 7 September, capturing that date 215 PW. On the following day, 8 September, 1/26th Infantry led the 3d Armored into Liege, capturing 552 PW, including one Major General Bock von Wolfingen. Between 9 and 12 September, the battalion advanced with CCB through Verviers to Eupen, Belgium, as part of Task Force Hogan (named for Lieutenant Colonel Samuel M. Hogan, commander of 3d Battalion, 33d Armor Regiment). Progress was fairly rapid, and unopposed except for occasional snipers. Some delay was occasioned by the jubilant Belgian citizenry, who staged effusive welcomes for the advancing Americans in every town.



LtC. Hogan

*CCA and CCB operated "task forces" drawn from two tank regiments, and one regiment of infantry in half-tracks.



Lady throwing flowers, Liege, 8 September

Typically, TF Hogan marched across Belgium with 1/26th Infantry intermixed with the tank battalion's three companies, one rifle company and one heavy machine gun section attached to each company of tanks, riding on the tank decks. The remainder of the infantry battalion traveled on organic transportation as a separate march unit in the column. The lead tank company usually sent a section of tanks without infantry forward of the column

as a reconnaissance and security element. Should these tanks be fired upon, or encounter other opposition, the infantry would dismount, move forward on both sides of the road, and help clear out the resistance. Through 12 September, tank and heavy machine gun fire was usually sufficient to assure being able to resume the advance. But by then the German border was in sight.

On 11 September, VII Corps directed a reconnaissance in force of the Aachen area. Accordingly, on the following day, 12 September, the 1st Division's CT 16 and CT 18 sent forward probes that encountered stiffer resistance. Nonetheless, CT 16 crossed the border, and punched through the forward portion of the fortifications [*Vorstellung*]. These concrete and steel defenses, erected in late '30s, were known to Americans as the Siegfried Line, and to the Germans as *der Westwall*. On the same day, 12 September, the 3d Armored Division also crossed into Germany, and encountered the *Vorstellung* some six miles southeast of Aachen, near Eynatten.

Even from a distance, it was clear to the Americans that the nature of the war was about to change. Major General Huebner, commander of the Big Red One, surveying Aachen from a hill outside the city realized that the city might be a "hard nut to crack." He was right::

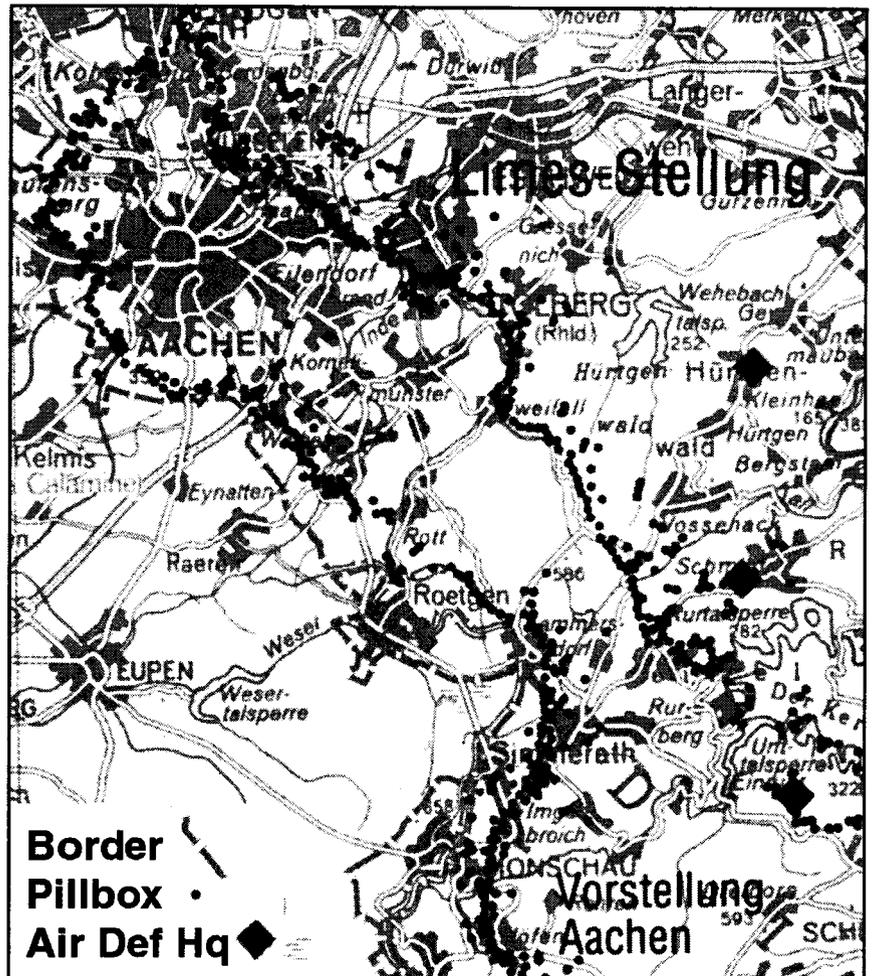
We didn't know it would be the 21st of October before the last German surrendered and the Imperial City of Charlemagne would be ours. The Siegfried line defenses were a spur of the main defenses which were to the rear of the city, but they were the same type: dragon's teeth to hamper tank action, pillboxes and casements from which were sited the automatic weapons, and mines and wire entanglements. [Society of the First Division, Memorial Album. 1947]

Captain Armand R. Levasseur, S-3 of 1/26th Infantry, noted similar forebodings among Blue Spaders. "The men generally realized that the picnic, wine and flowers campaign of France and Belgium was at an end. Now, at last, the German was fighting on native soil, so resistance was expected to stiffen." Even so,

the end now seemed within our grasp. Optimism was high, in fact too high in view

of the tough battles that lay ahead. Sound tactical doctrine dictated that the enemy's defenses, reached at the close of a pursuit which had turned into a rout, be penetrated as rapidly as possible. The enemy was to be given no breather to recover from the staggering blows struck in France and Belgium. For this reason no time was available for specialized training so valuable to the success of an attack on permanent type defenses. Also, at battalion level, little was known as to the nature of construction, strength or depth of the fortifications. [Armand R. Lavoisier, Operations of the 1/26th Infantry...13-20 September 1944, monograph for the Advanced Infantry Officers Course, 1947-1948]

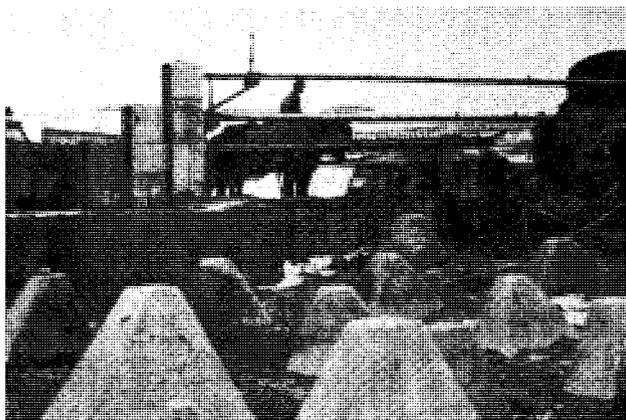
In fact, the Americans faced two belts of German frontier fortifications around Aachen. There was an outer array (*Vorstellung Aachen*) of anti-tank obstacles covered by bunkers (known as the Scharnhorst Line), and a deeper, more extensive system (*Limes-Stellung*) that called the "Schill Line." When Hitler ordered these defenses erected in 1938, hyped as the "Siegfried Line," they attracted much attention in England and France because in just four months the Germans were able to construct 12,000 concrete bunkers and hundreds of miles of tank ditches and concrete anti-armor obstacles, in time to arm Germany's western frontier before the Czech crisis of that autumn. In 1944, clearly visible from the Belgian side of the frontier, were the "dragon's teeth" (*Höckerlinie*), belts of concrete obstacles to



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Günter von der Weiden of Büsbach, who as a boy lived through the battles described below, provided papers, maps, and photographs on the actions around Stolberg and its surrounding heights. He also furnished the reports of Oberstleutnant Gerhard Lemcke, last commander of the 89th Infantry Regiment, German Army, that was the principal unit opposing the 3d Armored Division in September, 1944. Günter von der Weiden and his colleague, Dieter Kopac, Oberstleutnant (Retired), German Federal Armed Forces, have been exceptionally helpful to U.S. veterans trying to understand what happened to 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry. [For his work on behalf of these veterans, Herr von der Weiden has been appointed an Honorary Member of the 26th Infantry Regiment Association.]

mounted attack . Less evident, however, were the fortifications integrated with and designed to protect and to exploit these obstacles, underground reinforced concrete bunkers the Americans called "pillboxes." Captain Levasseur has described these defenses in some detail:



A German unit using the steel-barred border-crossing outside Nersheid, 1944

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The outer perimeter consists of several rows of pyramidal concrete blocks rising above the ground to form an effective antitank barrier. Where roads crossed the barrier, steel gates had been installed or iron rails had been cemented upright into the road. Immediately to the rear of this obstacle, pillboxes were located so as to cover the barrier with fire, thus preventing breaching with demolitions. Depth of the defenses was dependent on the defensive strength of the terrain. Where terrain favored the attacker, the defenses were proportionately greater in depth. In the area a few miles south of Aachen the first belt extended to a depth of 3000 yards.



U.S. Army engineers constructing a road through Höckerlinie

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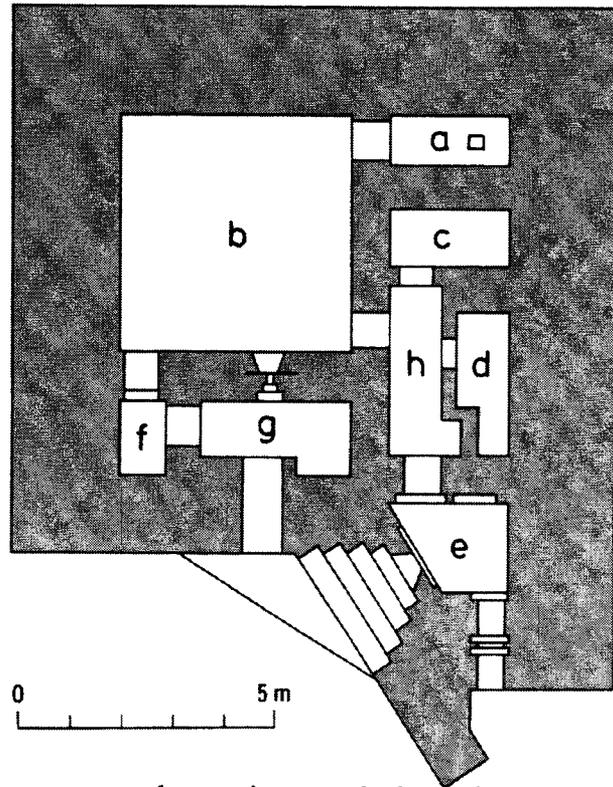
dug in outside the position.

Pillboxes were located on ground providing mutual support and best observation and fields of fire. Distances between pillboxes varied from fifty to several hundred yards. Generally, pillboxes were blind from the rear except when the rear door was open. Firing embrasures permitted only a 50-degree angle of fire. Some contained only one opening whereas other could cover both flanks or contained two mutually supporting guns. Antitank gun emplacements were constructed to accommodate small caliber guns, which had become obsolete against tanks. The standard 88 mm gun had to be

Inside each pillbox, separate living and sleeping compartments were provided, their number and size dependent on the number of troops for which it was designed. Observation and command posts in forward positions were combined in one installation which in some instances were four stories deep and contained a half dozen or more separate rooms. This type of fortification was entirely underground save for a small cupola to permit observation. Communication between all positions was provided by underground cables.

The defense, as a whole, presented a formidable obstacle to an attacking force, Over

a period of several years since construction, nature had provided the works with a natural camouflage which concealed many positions until after they opened fire. Added to this, some were built to resemble garages, cottages and other deceptive installations where they would be inconspicuous. The only part of the pillbox appearing above the surface was that essential to meet its tactical requirements plus overhead cover consisting of several feet of reinforced concrete, which could withstand tank fire at point-blank ranges. [Levasseur, Operations...]



a. observation cupola b. ready room
c. stores d. ammo e. flanking position

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While it was true that after the victories of 1941, the Germans had abandoned the Westwall, allowed its bunkers to fall into disrepair, and moved guns and other equipment to coastal defenses in France, the fortifications had been well sited, and still possessed inherent defensive strength. Moreover, in early September 1944 the Germans began stripping 88 mm guns from antiaircraft missions, moving them to the Aachen area, and hastily manning both defensive belts there with troops collected from all over Germany, or transferred from the Russian front. Collectively, they would indeed present a "formidable obstacle" to VII Corps.

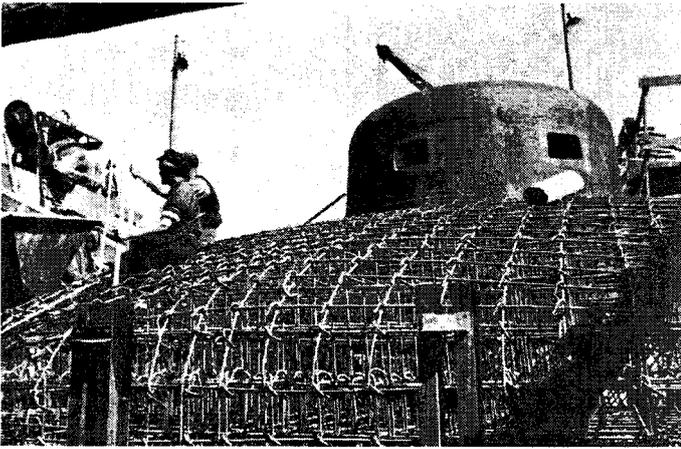


Bunker captured by 3d Armored Div
13 Sept 1944. Floor-plan above.

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Contemporary German historians point out that the quality of soldiers available to man the Westwall was poor, especially in September, 1944, before major tactical units could reach the Aachen front. The troops encountered near the border by the 3d Armored Division and 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry were ad hoc groupings of cadre and students from various training schools and centers in the vicinity of Aachen, together with some air defense troops. Most had not occupied their Westwall positions until a day or two before the Americans crossed the German frontier.

The combat units of VII Corps, after more than ninety days of battle, were showing



Constructing a cupola, 1938

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signs of deterioration: troops were tired; vehicles and guns were worn and battered; maintenance was lagging; and resupply was faltering. At the Belgian-German frontier the corps was nearing the end of its logistical tether.

General Collins, commanding VII Corps, decided to encircle Aachen and to occupy the high ground above Stolberg, an industrial town six miles east of Aachen. From thence the VII Corps, once refitted, could strike toward Cologne and the Rhein.

On the morning of 13 September 1944, 3d Armored Division detached 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry from TF Hogan, and put Major Adams and his troops directly under command of Brigadier General Doyle O. Hickey, commander of Combat Command A (CCA). The general directed Major Adams to assemble his battalion in the Eynattener Wald (now called Freyenter Wald) at the German border, and in the role of CCA reserve, to prepare for an attack.

During the pervious night (12-13 September), Hickey had assembled two armored task forces in the woods, each consisting of a battalion of tanks, one



This cupola at Oberforstbach survived repetitive hits

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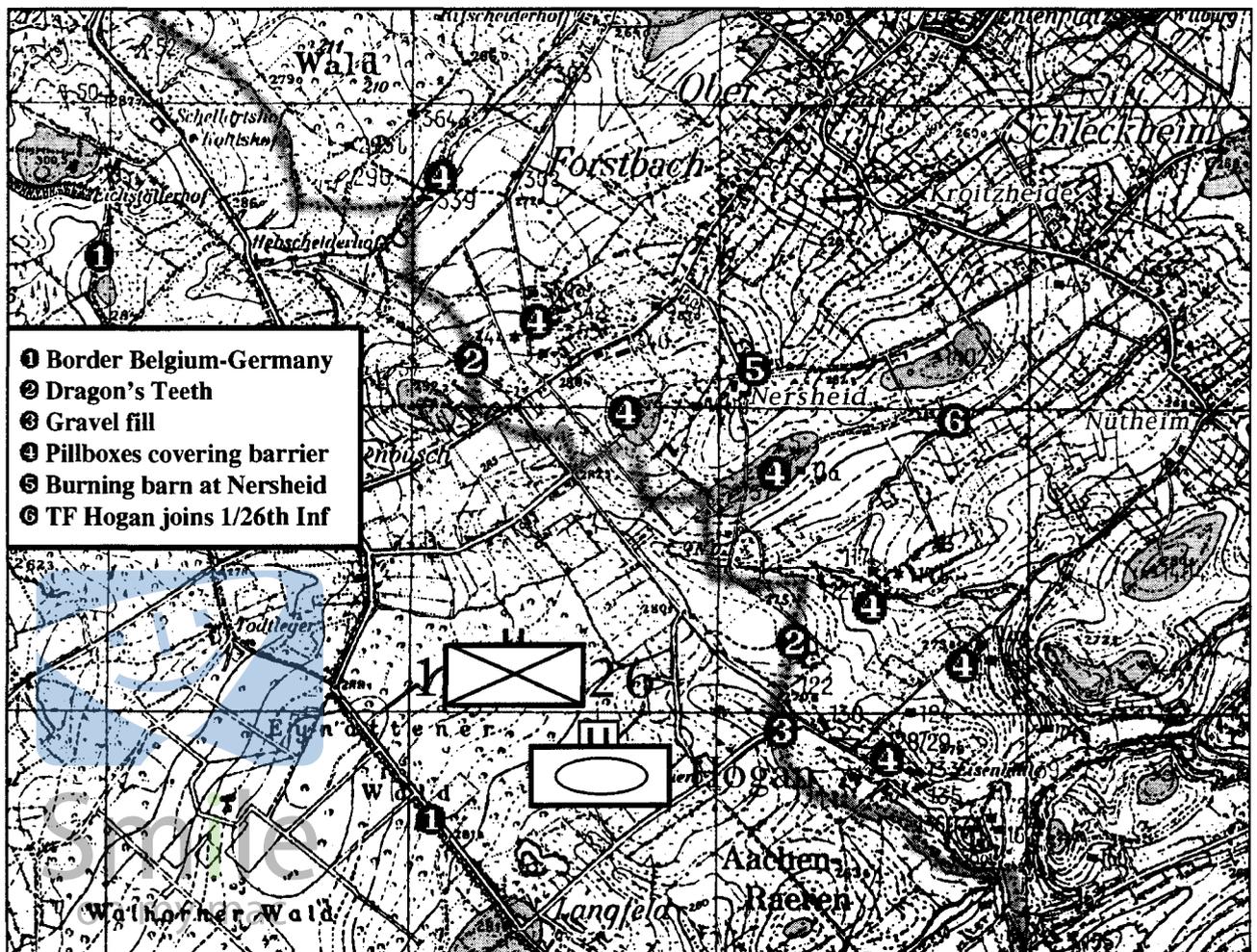
battalion of armored infantry, and assorted engineers and tank destroyers. Hickey's plan was pound the border defenses with air strikes, then punch through with tanks to strike north-northeast toward Büsbach and Münsterbusch. One initial objective was the town of Nütheim, on higher ground some 2000 meters beyond the dragon's teeth, a place that seemed to be the center of a nest of pillboxes and anti-tank guns.

The requested air strikes did not materialize, but CCA discovered a roadway of gravel-fill atop the dragon's teeth to the west of Eisenhütte, probably built by farmers seeking to work their fields on the other side of the obstacles. The roadway had recently been mined, but led by a flail-tank, CCA succeeded in getting 20 tanks across, and into the open ground to the east. Even when attacked at close range, the pillboxes proved difficult to silence; one tank destroyer pumped more than fifty rounds directly into a pillbox without neutralizing it. Enemy fire, direct and indirect – small arms and 88 mm. anti-tank guns, mortars and artillery – destroyed 12 tanks, and forced the remainder and accompanying armored infantry to pull back to the Eynattner Wald. By 1830 on 13 September more armored vehicles crossed on the gravel roadway to engage the pillboxes at close range, but again they

made little progress; At that juncture, with darkness falling, Gen. Hickey committed his reserve, ordering the Blue Spaders to attack on foot to take Nütheim from the west, and to clear out the positions holding up his armor.

Constrained by the roadway over the dragon's teeth, the armor had been forced to attack the Nütheim defenses frontally. Major Adams, calculating that enemy bunkers would be well sited to defend that approach against infantry as well as armor, chose to attack to the north toward the settlement of Nersheid (Nersheider Hof) , so as to keep a low ridge between his troops and Nütheim, planning to wheel eastward once he was behind the pillboxes and could approach Nütheim from its flank. He ordered an advance in a column of companies, Company A (Captain T.W. Anderson) leading, to be followed by Companies B and C. The battalion command group intended to move with Company B.

CCA had assigned one platoon of tanks to support the battalion, but since the tanks could cross the dragon's teeth only over the gravel-fill road, the tanks moved south to the roadway, with the intention of swinging back on the other side. The tankers were slowed by one mishap after another, and by 2000 only one of the tanks (fortunately the artillery forward observer's tank) had joined the battalion beyond the obstacle. Essentially, the battalion executed an unsupported night attack.



German military map, 1944. 1000 meter grid.



"Dragon's teeth" in the zone of the
1/26th Inf as they look today

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Company A, per General Hickey's order, crossed the line of departure (LD), the edge of the woods, in the twilight of 13 September. The dragon's teeth ran across in front of the battalion two or three hundred meters forward of the LD. As soon as the troops emerged from the forest they were met with heavy mortar and machine gun fire from their front and flanks. Three platoon leaders were hit almost immediately, and the formation was disrupted. The lead platoons broke into a run, heading for a burning barn very visible on the higher ground to the north near Nerscheid. Companies B

and C followed, but as they crossed the dragon's teeth in the gathering darkness, they came under mortar fire. Company B overtook the trail platoon of Company A, but found that the platoon had lost contact with the rest of its company. Captain Edgar Simon, commanding Company B, integrated the platoon into his formation, expecting to catch up with Captain Anderson's force near the objective. When Company B reached the vicinity of the burning barn, it turned east-northeast per plan, and advanced toward Nütheim.

Captain Anderson and Company A (-), however, had continued northward beyond the burning barn until they encountered the hard surfaced road near Kroitzeide (adjoining Schleckheim), onto which they turned heading southeast toward what they thought



The "Beacon Barn" of Nerscheid as it appeared in 1998
Rheinisches Amt für Bodendenkmalpflege

was the edge of Nütheim. They found telephone wires alongside the road, which they cut. Soon a German soldier on a bicycle came down the road, searching for the break in the wire; he was taken prisoner. Within a minute or two a motorcyclist appeared, also apparently searching for the break; he too was taken prisoner. Anderson deduced that the wires must run to an artillery or mortar position in the town ahead, so he deployed one squad on either side of the road to work behind the buildings, and one to proceed down the main street itself. The Americans surprised German soldiers eating supper with no posted security. On

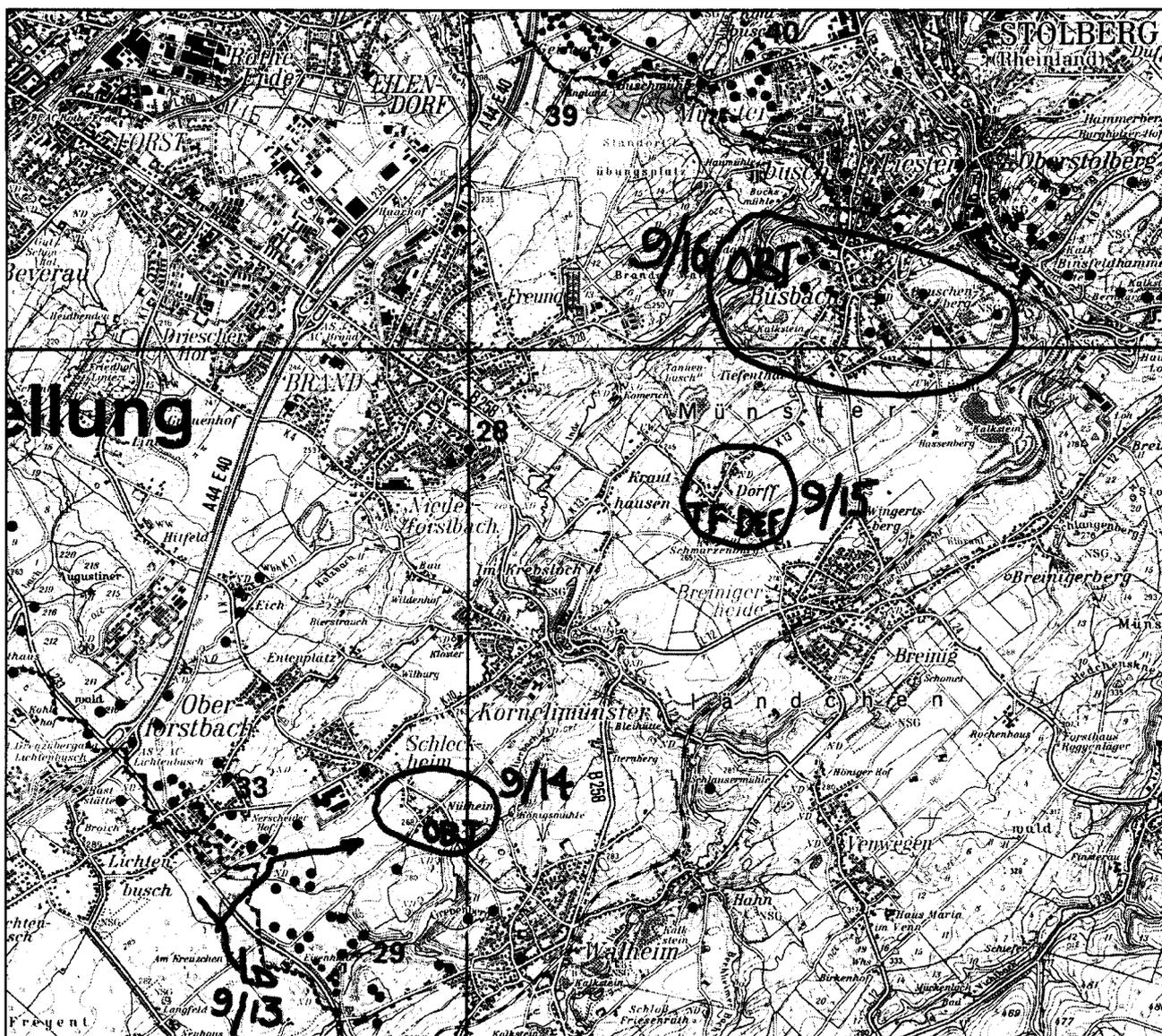
the left side of the road, they captured an artillery piece and two mortars, and on the right, they captured two 88 mm guns. The prisoners said that they had expected an attack on Nütheim, but had anticipated ample warning of danger in their location. That statement, and a map check, convinced Captain Anderson that he had overshot his objective, so he decided to go back to the burning barn. Attempts to destroy the captured ordnance may have alerted surrounding Germans to the American presence in their midst, but in any event, Company A came under heavy small arms fire from all sides, and withdrew in a running gun fight, reaching the burning barn about 2100.

In the meantime, the rest of the battalion had quietly proceeded toward its objective, capturing a few Germans outside of bunkers, but bypassing all suspected strong points. To the south, tracers and explosions indicated that the tankers were doing their utmost to push through. Around 2100 Company A was heard on the radio, and Captain Lvasseur led a patrol back to guide them to the battalion; they rejoined around 2200. About an hour later tanks advancing from the south under command of Lt. Col. Hogan reached the infantry. Hogan and Major Adams conferred, then decided to halt, defend present positions, and resume the attack at daybreak: supported by Hogan's tanks, 1/26 Infantry would then clear Nütheim so that CCA could continue its advance.

During that night of 13-14 September, 3d Armored engineers brought up welding torches and cut rails cemented in roadways to open new avenues for vehicles. Shortly after dawn on the 14th, trucks came through the obstacles with food and ammunition. Company B, 26th Infantry, supported by tanks, cleared Nütheim, then occupied strong points against counterattack. Predictably, one soon developed, but it was repulsed with heavy losses to the attackers, and 22 PW were taken. Company A patrolled south and eastward; in one place they captured PW who showed them their antitank position, a gun with just 12 rounds of ammunition and 3 anti-tank mines. They had no prime mover for the gun. Their instructions were to fire the ammunition, then to use the mines to destroy the gun.

Company C cleared pillboxes to the southwest of Nütheim. Most of the pillboxes were not mutually supporting, but those with embrasures permitting cross fire proved hard to attack with hand grenades or anti-tank rockets. Various combinations of fire and movement were tried. One successful method was to position riflemen to shoot into each and every opening to suppress shoulder-fired antitank weapons, and then to roll up a tank to shoot into an embrasure. Around noon on the 14th a 155-mm self-propelled (SP) gun with a new type concrete penetrating shell was fired at a range of 100 yards into a large bunker. The projectile only penetrated about 18 inches, but the concussion was such that guns within the structure were jarred from position. All 35 PW taken had blood running from eyes, ears, nose and mouth. At noon, the area was declared cleared, and the CCA continued its attack. 1/26th Infantry was then detached from CCA, and reattached to TF Hogan as division reserve.

The description of the engagement at Nütheim, and those at Büsbach, Diepenlinchen, Weissenberg, and Stolberg that follow, are based on Captain Lvasseur's paper previously cited; on a report dated 3 July 1945 from 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, to the Commanding General, 1st Infantry Division, subject: "Infantry Battalion Employed with Armored Division;" on the Unit Journal of 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry 3 September 1944 - 1 October 1944; and on oral accounts from veterans who participated in the fighting.



Rheinisches Amt für Bodendenkmalpflege

On 15 September, to cover a gap developing between the 3d Armored and 1st Division, 3d Armored Division provided trucks for TF Hogan's infantry, and ordered the task force to set up road blocks around Dorff, about 3500 meters northeast of Nütheim.

On 16 September, perceiving a growing disconnect between the attack of CCA toward Münsterbusch and Atsch, and the thrust of CCB through Mausbach toward Gressenich and Eschweiler, Major General Maurice Rose, commander of the 3d Armored Division, ordered Task Force Hogan at Dorff to attack to the north, and to clear the town of Büsbach, about 2000 meters away, located on the edge of the Schill Line fortifications. As the TF approached the outskirts of Büsbach, its lead elements were fired on by a machine gun presumed to be in the church steeple. The 155-mm SP was brought forward to fire at the steeple. [The church at Büsbach was restored after the war, but the reconstruction was short-lived; the steeple eventually had to be removed]. The 155-SP was also used against pillboxes, and its concussions broke every window in Büsbach. Company B, 26th Infantry, fought through the town, halting under heavy fire within sight of the dragon's teeth on the

edge of Münsterbusch. Company A, 26th Inf, missioned to clear Brockenberg, and to take high ground vicinity Bauschenberg, adjoining Büsbach on the east, cleared three large pillboxes using the rifle fire-tank gun method. The company found some 2,000 civilians who had sought shelter in a gravel pit nearby. Company C cleared Büsbach, and was held as TF reserve in the town. Anti-tank and artillery fire intensified, and it became evident that Germans were determined to keep the Americans out of Stolberg.

Only a few Americans sensed that the German soldiers they were encountering on the 16th were categorically different from the fragmented detachments that had formed their initial opposition inside Germany. Stolberg and its southern defenses were manned by troops from the 105th Panzergrenadier Brigade of the 9th Panzer Division, a battered tactical unit, but a cohesive force nonetheless. On the 16th fresh tactical units began arriving in the Aachen sector from the Russian front, lead elements of the 12th Infantry Division (12 ID). Hitler personally selected the division for modernization in 1944, and it was reorganized and reequipped that summer as a "Type-1944 Infantry Division." Authorized a total of 14,800 men, it had three regiments of infantry, each with two battalions: 27th Fusilier Regiment, and the 48th and 89th Grenadier Regiments. Alerted for movement on 12 September, 12 ID had moved by rail from near Danzig to the Aachen sector, and thanks to bad flying weather that interfered with Allied air interdiction, had arrived there expedi-



Büsbach, Brockenberg, Bauschenberg
The three pillboxes attacked by Co. A are V42, V43, and V46. The church (below) is at the crossroads lower left.



Limes-Stellung

Vorstellung

LEGEND

Scale 1 : 50,000

1 cm = 500 meters

Pillbox ●

Dragon's Teeth

Reprint by permission

Rheinisches Amt für

Bodendenkmalpflege

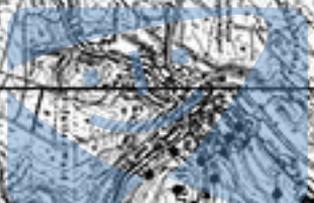
Numbers refer to guides on

Der Westwall — Vom
Denkmalwert des Unterrheinlichen

Aachen

Limes-
Stellung

Centerfold pp. 108-17

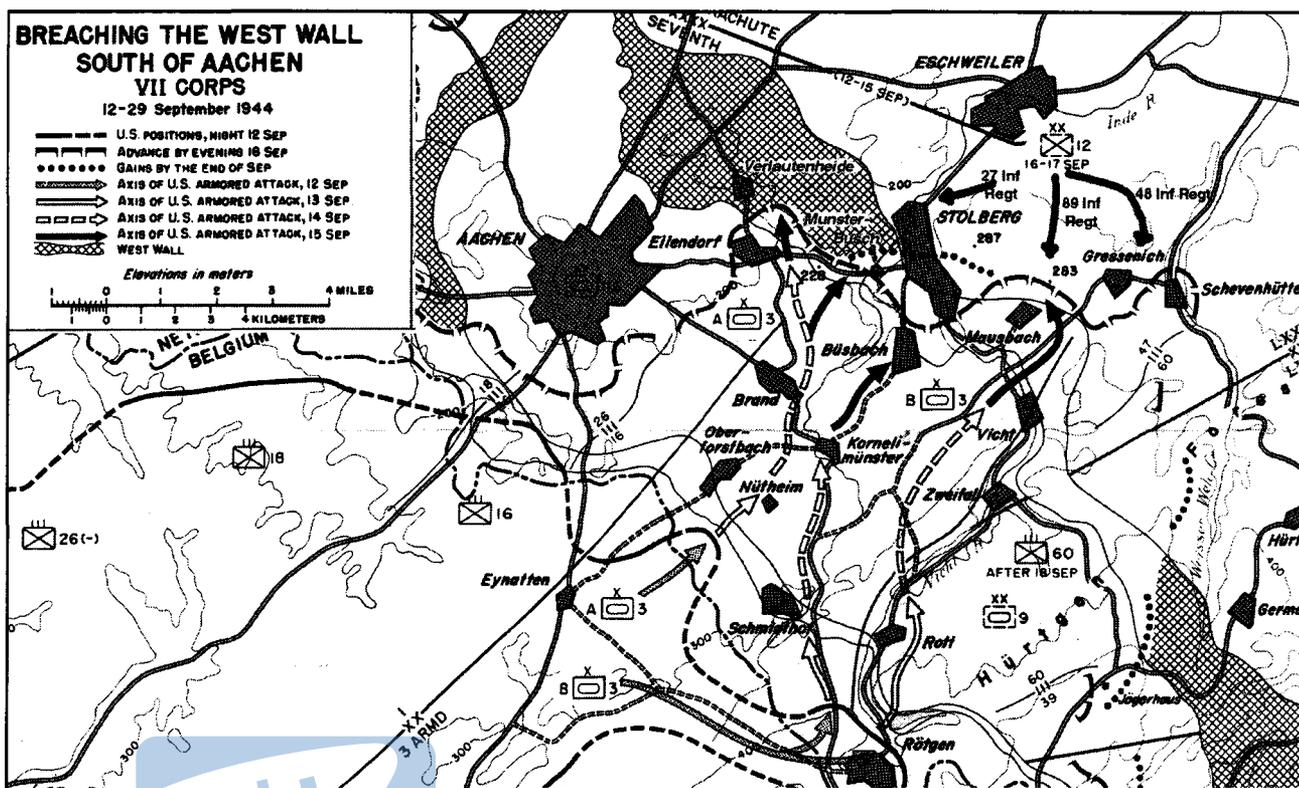


tiously, at full strength, fairly well trained, and with all its heavy weapons (except its assault guns, which were promptly replaced from the resources of higher headquarters). Importantly, its 12th Artillery Regiment had nine batteries of 105-mm howitzers, and three batteries of 150-mm howitzers. The division's antitank battalion had twelve 75-mm anti-tank guns.

On 16 September the principal German headquarters in the Aachen sector, Seventh Army, published an order to its corps that "Seventh Army will defend the positions and the West Wall to the last man and the last bullet..The penetrations achieved by the enemy will be wiped out. The forward line of bunkers will be regained..."

On 16 September 12 ID received the following order:

- "1. Repulse advancing enemy forces wherever they will be met.
- "2. Close the gap Stolberg-Mausbach-Vicht-Zweifall [6000 meters south-south-east of Stolberg].
- "3. Retake and reoccupy the Westwall sector between Stolberg and Zweifall by employment of the complete combat force of the division."



The map above is from the U.S. Army's *The Siegfried Line Campaign*. The battle accounts here are taken from Captain Levasseur's paper previously cited; a report dated 3 July 1945 from 1/26th Infantry to the commander of the 1st Infantry Division, subject "Infantry Battalion Employed with Armored Division", the Unit Journal of 1/26th Infantry 3 Sept-1 Oct 1944, and on oral and written accounts of veterans.

Information on German orders and dispositions is based on Report # 3 published by the *Traditionsverband ehem. 89er Kameradschaftsführer* Hans Zeplein [head of the 89th Regimental Veterans Association], dated 3 May 1953, written by Gerhard Lemcke, last commander of the 89th Infantry Regiment, entitled "Employment of the 89InfRegt in the Period July 1944 to April 1945." The report is supported by photographs and maps. The English translation quoted here in *italics* is that of the *Traditionsverband*. The 26th Infantry Regimental Association is indebted to Herr Günther von der Weiden of Büsbach for this valuable amplification of its records, especially since the 26th and the 89th were to face each other again in December, at Bütgenbach, Belgium, during the Battle of the Bulge.

Colonel Lemcke, commanding the 89th Grenadier Regiment reported that:

The fast movement of the division was conducted without incident. Bad weather conditions denied the enemy use of air power. So the enemy did not recognize the approach of this fresh division, both when crossing the Reich and when arriving at the unloading area. Therefore the division was in a position to show up unharmed in the operations area.

1st and 3rd battalions of 27 Füsilieregiment when unloaded [east of Eschweiler]...in the early hours of September 16 immediately were loaded again onto all available transport means, including civil buses normally used for line traffic and workers, and lorries. In the meantime the division was informed about the villages of Mausbach, Gressenich, and the southern parts of Stolberg having been lost to the enemy [reference is to the advance of CCB] who was also reported to have penetrated Atsch with reconnaissance elements. [Reference is to advance of CCA]. Verlautenheide (east of Aachen) was taken by US forces [reference is to the advance of the 16th RCT]. Quick action was therefore required. Outflanking of the town of Aachen from the south and the southeast was imminent. In addition a breakthrough to the river Rhein across the river Rur near Jülich and Düren [east of Eschweiler] was to be expected. After limited reconnaissance the 1st battalion 27 Füs Regt was employed ...to take ridge near Verlautenheide. The 3d battalion – dismounted in Düren – passed Weisweiler and Eschweiler and arrived at the sector southwest of Eschweiler. Both battalions encountered the enemy in the early morning hours already. Smaller elements ahead of the main force of 1(US)InfDiv quickly were pushed out of Verlautenheide and out of the built-up area south of Atsch. After tenacious fighting Verlautenheide was taken by 1st battalion 27 FüsRegt and cleared from the enemy the same day. 3rd battalion 27 FüsRegt regained the Westwall positions on both sides of Münsterbusch after having repulsed weak enemy forces, and pushed through the southern part of Stolberg succeeding in establishing connections with last elements of 9 Panzerdivision holding clusters of bunkers there. An uninterrupted front line consisting of a system of strong points was established by 27 FüsRegt until the evening of Sept 16. Also links were established with 116 Panzerdivision – the right neighbor – in the Verlautenheide/Eilendorf. By this the threatening encirclement of the town of Aachen could be postponed. In addition US forces were prevented to push towards Jülich for the time being by the taking of the Verlautenheide ridge. 1st(US)InfDiv, taken by surprise, resisted varyingly. [Lemcke]

Charles MacDonald, in The Siegfried Line Campaign [the official U.S. Army account] records that:

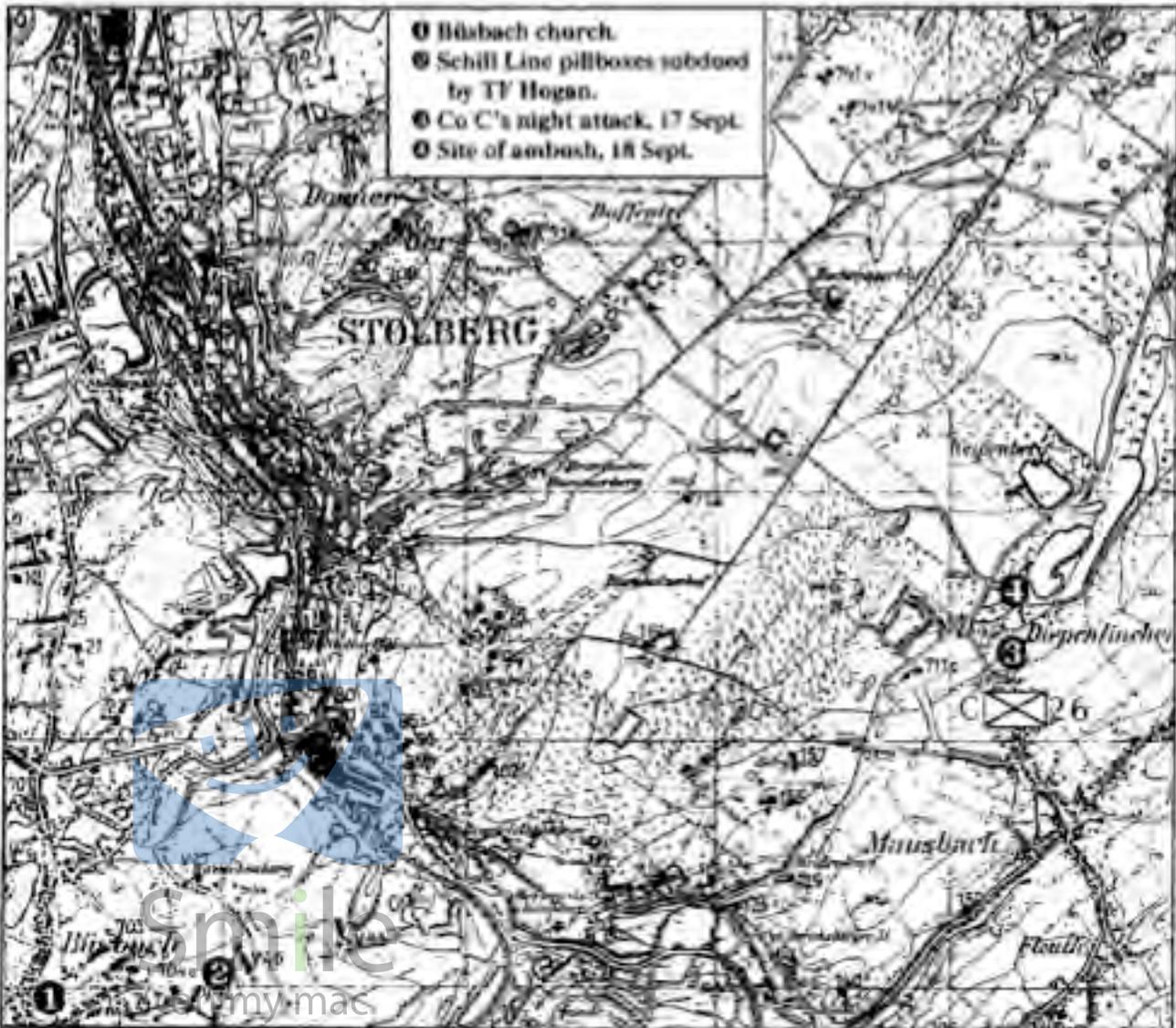
In the late afternoon [of 16 September] a platoon of the 16th Infantry patrolling north of Eilendorf reported the enemy approaching the village of Verlautenheide in a column of two "as far as the eye could see." That night almost every unit along the front noted the noise of heavy vehicular traffic, and the 47th Infantry [9th Infantry Division] at Schevenhütte captured a German colonel who had been reconnoitering, presumably for an attack...

The 12th Infantry Division was moving to attack, and Germans' situational awareness appeared to be superior to that of the Americans. The 89th and 48th Grenadier Regiments detrained on the morning of 17 September and were promptly committed to counterattack

CCB and the 47th Infantry to its east:

Although its 2nd battalion not yet had arrived, 89 GrenRegt had to attack at about midday already because of the fact that increasing artillery activity from the Kornelimünster area and assembling of troops supported by a few tanks south of Diepenlinchen were identified, which led to the assumption that the enemy was about to attack. The regiment took Werth, Weissenberg, and the Diepenlinchen slag pile after fierce fighting, but suffered serious losses. The attack had to be interrupted several times caused by the fact that the local population which had not been evacuated in time wandered around the mentioned area and often met the American as well as German lines of fire... forcing the local commanders to stop firing. This was at cost of time. There was no way to continue the attack. The regiment halted the line gained until the evening and dug in. [Lemcke]

At 1500 on 17 September 3d Armored Division – ostensibly unaware of the arrival of 12 ID and its intention to reoccupy the Westwall between Stolberg and Zweifall --but



German map, 1000 meter grid

alarmed by the vigorous counterattack CCB encountered at Weissenberg, ordered TF Hogan to send a rifle company to CCB at Diepenlinchen, 4000 meters to the northeast of Buisbach, some 600 meters northwest of Mausbach. Company C (Captain Allan B. Ferry commanding) mounted on trucks, and reported as ordered to Diepenlinchen about 1900.

Captain Ferry was briefed by Colonel John C. Welborn of CCB (commander of the 33d Armored Regiment) that Weissenberg and Hill 283 north of Diepenlinchen, harbored a cluster of infantry-defended antitank guns that was holding up the advance of its armor. Task Force Lovelady of CCB had attacked to seize the enemy strongpoint, but had been driven off by a determined enemy counterattack. Elements of the 36th Armored Infantry Regiment were believed to be still holding out on the hill. Capt. Ferry's mission was to attack through Diepenlinchen to envelop Weissenberg from the east, and to take the enemy positions there. Secondly, he was to re-establish contact with cut-off 36th Armored Infantry elements, evacuate their wounded, and recover U.S. weapons abandoned on position. It was by then dark and foggy. Ferry had no time for more than a cursory map reconnaissance.

Diepenlinchen and Weissenberg were part of an industrial complex that included, besides the usual dwellings and gardens, a number of deep, steep-sided excavations, and a jumble of piled rock and sand. There were also factory buildings, some of substantial brick construction.

At 2000 Company C started forward with a platoon of tanks attached, seeking to skirt the east side of Diepenlinchen. There was a brick wall on one side of the road, and one of the tanks accidentally crushed an infantryman against the wall. Immediate calls for medics apparently triggered a German ambush. There was a storm of deadly fire, in which the 2d Platoon, in the lead, was cut off from the company, and the platoon leader, Lt. Forest E. Wilson, captured.

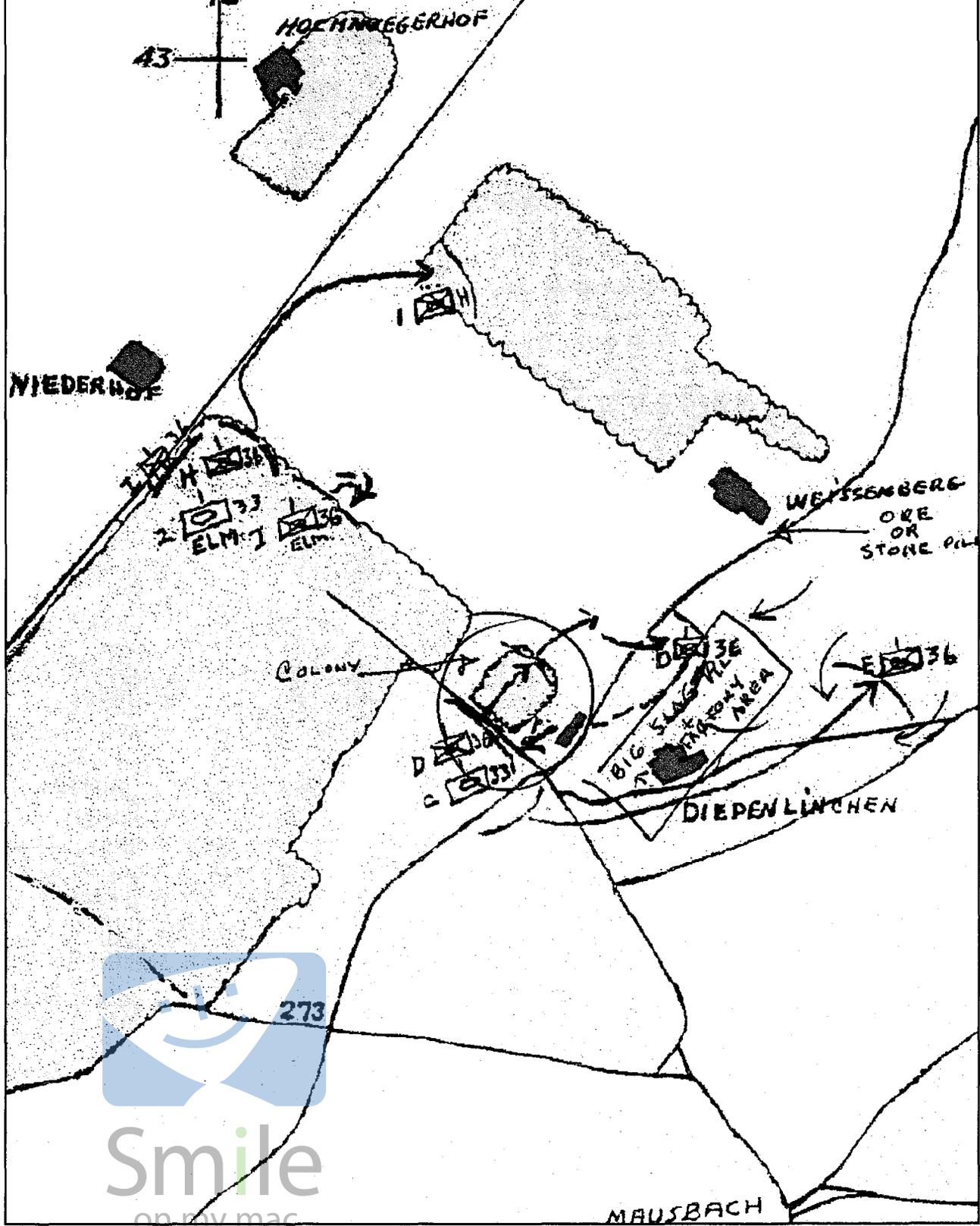
Captain Ferry decided that the best course was to withdraw to positions on the southwest edge of Diepenlinchen, and to await daybreak. There was further firing and confusion, but eventually the company quieted down. At that juncture Lt. Wilson, having eluded his captors in the dark, walked into the Command Post and asked for something to eat.

During the night Captain Ferry made a thorough map reconnaissance, and concluded that a stealthy approach was preferable. The company began to move at 0430 on 18 September. Dense fog cloaked the landscape. Ferry led his company around to the west of the factory area, leaving his tanks behind to avoid warning the enemy of his approach. Just as the column had worked its way through the rock piles to the slope immediately below Weissenberg, the fog lifted to reveal a company of enemy infantry coming down a trail from a high bluff some fifty feet above, moving directly toward the Americans.

Seeking to avoid a fire fight with an enemy advantaged by better observation and fields of fire, Captain Ferry decided to pull back, and directed his lead element to cover the withdrawal of the others. The company was retiring in good order when enemy automatic weapons opened up from the factory/mining complex on its right flank, and obviously

3d Armrd Division, CCB.
DIEPENLINGHEN.
Map: Special 1/10,000

17 Sept 1944
6 p.m.



The fight for Diepenlinchen and Weissenberg 17 September prior to arrival of Co C, 26 I.



Major F.W. Adams
 Captain Allan B. Ferry (right)
 England, 1944

pre-planned mortar and artillery fire began to fall on the Americans. Sgt. Rocco Moretto remembers that Ferry told him to pass the word "get out the best way you can." Enemy infantry appeared, trying to encircle the company from the east. Finally, Ferry told Moretto to "take off," but the captain stayed with his covering force. [Initially, they were reported as Missing in Action; subsequently the battalion learned that they had been captured.] One group from Company C tried to escape through Diepenlinchen itself, only to be captured among its buildings.

Major Adams, Sergeant Moretto, and other Blue Spaders assumed the Germans had sprung a trap, but it was more likely a meeting engagement with troops of the 89th and 48th Grenadier Regiments, probably as much a surprise to them as it was to the Americans. Colonel Lemcke, describing the 48th Grenadier Regiment's attack, wrote that:

...the advancing German force surprisingly encountered a scheduled US attack out of Mausbach which obviously was aimed against 89 GrenRegt in Weissenberg -Diepenlinchen -Hill 283.3 direction. The enemy who obviously was completely surprised by the until this moment

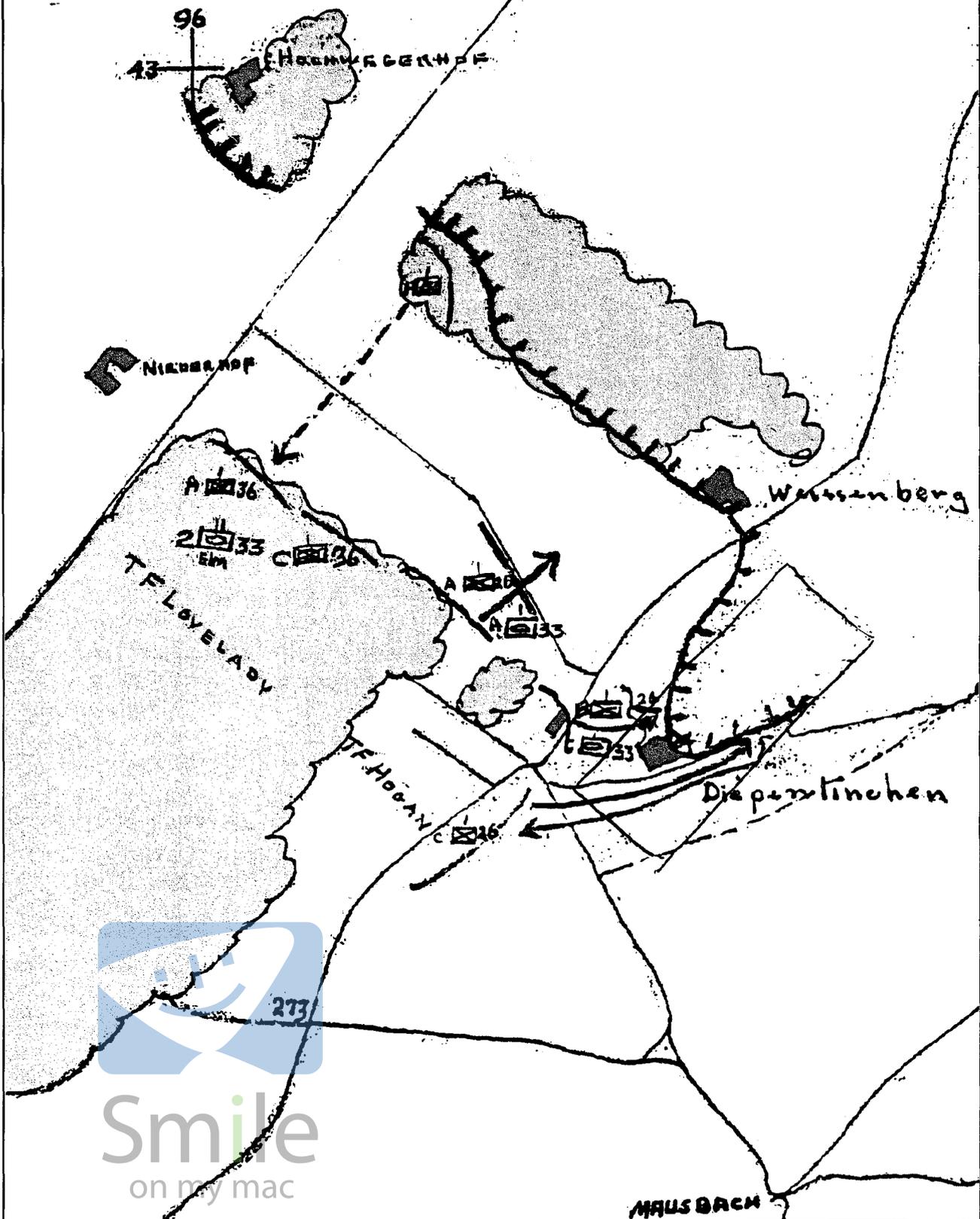
not identified attack from an unexpected direction compared to his own direction of advance, suffered from a push into his right flank and withdrew quickly. The regimental commander – as far as can be remembered of 26 Inf Regt of 1 Inf Div – was taken prisoner on the battlefield during an reconnaissance activity. At about noon 1st battalion of 48 Gren Regt penetrated Mausbach. At about 1400 hours the church area is taken and the village is in German hands. About 200 prisoners are taken.

Captain Ferry would have been amused at his promotion.

Task Force Hogan at Büsbach had been relieved on the morning of 18 September, moved back through Dorff, and ordered to prepare for an attack on Donnerberg, above Stolberg. At 1130 new orders were received to occupy an assembly area in the woods 1000 meters west of Mausbach and 1800 meters southwest of Diepenlinchen, there to prepare for an attack on Weissenberg. Upon reaching the assembly area, Lt. Col. Hogan and Major Adams learned that Company C had been attacked by a superior force, had sustained many casualties, and had not only failed to take Weissenberg, but had lost Diepenlinchen. However, elements of Company C were believed to be holding out in Diepenlinchen. The

3d Armrd Division, CCB.
DIEPENLINGHEN.
Map: Special 1/10,000

18 SEPT 1944



The attacks of TF Hogan at Diepenlingen, PM, 18 September 1944

two commanders promptly concerted a plan to retake Diepenlinchen: Company B would advance on foot to the northeast through the woods, while supporting tanks would move up the road on the right rear of the infantry. When Company B came abreast of Diepenlinchen, it would turn right to attack to the east, joining the tanks in a coordinated operation to clear the town from west to east. Company A would follow Company B until the latter turned to attack into the town, then continue to the edge of the woods facing Weissenberg, there to prepare for a frontal assault.

Around 1700 Company A (dismounted) attacked across the pasture south of Weissenberg, and after losing three tanks and 14 infantrymen, retired and dug in for the night.

Company B's attack, supported by mortars and artillery, had been more successful, if slow. The infantry had to fight from house to house, and it was dark before the town was cleared. Forty-nine German prisoners were taken, and the troops from Company C who had been captured in Diepenlinchen were liberated. During the day, Company D's 81mm mortar platoon, commanded by Lt. Steven B. Phillips, expended all its ammunition; urgent requests for resupply had to be submitted up the chain of command, eventuating in the arrival the next day of a truck load of mortar ammunition driven 200 miles direct from Paris.

Shortly after dark on 18 September an enemy counterattack developed from the woods around Weissenberg, apparently seeking to turn Company A's exposed left flank. The 1/26th Infantry Ammunition and Pioneer Platoon was thrown in to strengthen that flank, and the attack was beaten off.

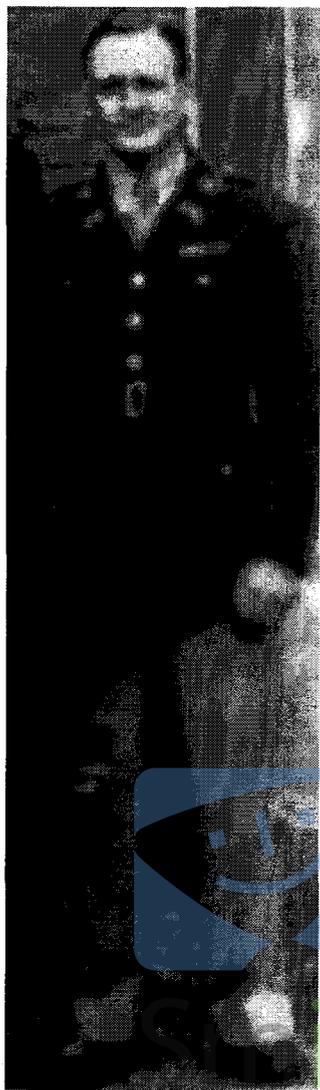
The following morning, 19 September, Companies B and C attacked into the factory area north of Diepenlinchen - a confusion of thick walls, rock piles, and other obstacles - but the enemy there defended tenaciously, and progress was slow and costly. One veteran of Company B, Bert H. Morphis, remembered what happened thus:

"We attacked an area around a cement plant...The resistance was very stiff, and we fought all day with little headway. For some reason the Germans had concentrated a lot of artillery and mortar fire in this area. All day long they plastered us, to the point that we finally had to dig in for protection. My platoon was in an area with a large pile of sand; so I simply scooped out a hole big enough to curl up in and lay down on my side with my knees pulled up to my chest. The incoming artillery was so intense all I could do was lie there and hope. I abandoned all hope when I heard what I identified as a 120 millimeter shell coming right at me. From long experience I could tell it was going to fall right on top of me. So I simply gave up and prepared to die. I don't even remember being scared. I simply was resigned to the inevitable. It seemed I heard the shell for an eternity before it exploded. Of course, it was actually only a few seconds. Anyway, the next thing I remembered was someone's hand grasping my helmet and pulling my head out of the sand. Many hands were digging me out of my self-made grave. Had it had not been for good buddies who risked their lives by getting out of their protective holes to dig me out, I would still be in European soil. It was a miracle I was alive. Apparently the shell landed right in the bend of my legs and buried in the sand before it exploded. In ordinary soil it would have exploded immediately, and they would not have found enough of me to bury. As it was, the sand cushioned the effect of the explosion enough to save my life. I was knocked unconscious, one ear drum was ruptured, the backs of both my legs were torn up, and I was filled with shrapnel (shell fragments) from knees to my waist..." [Morphis, B.H. Squad Leader. 26th Infantry Regimental Association. 1998.)

on my mac

At 1005 that morning of 19 September, Major Adams sent the following message to Colonel Seitz, commander of the 26th Infantry Regiment:

It is recommended that my Bn be returned to the unit so that I can get replacements and reequip. My unit has suffered hvy battle casualties and yesterday and today I am beginning to get men suffering from combat fatigue. As of this AM my fighting strength was as follows: A-99, B-91, C-62, D-96. Yesterday I suffered very heavy casualties as follows: 8-KIA, 50-WIA, 57-MIA. I am still attacking today against an objective that is very difficult to take. I shall undoubtedly suffer further hvy casualties today. At the present rate I am rapidly losing my combat effectiveness. I would like to return to the outfit so that I can get my Bn back in shape. Yesterday C Co was placed on an independent mission and was caught in a trap. The Co Cdr is MIA. Lt. Emory P. Jones is in command. He has one other officer. The company has 55 MIA's.



Lt. Emory P. Jones
England, 1944

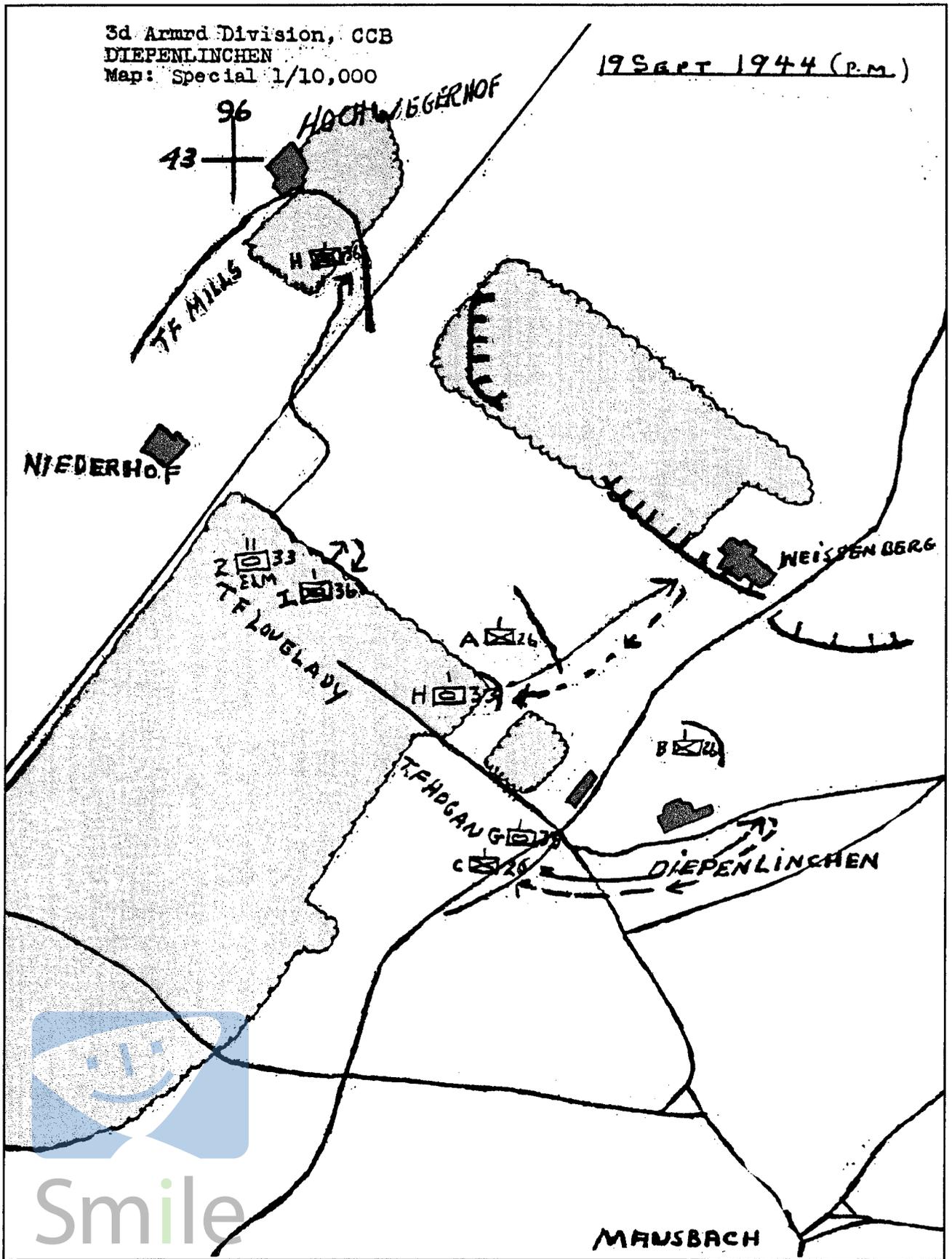
Despite its losses, Company C continued to play a prominent role in the battle for Weissenberg: in all it conducted five attacks in four days: three attempts to envelop Weissenberg, the attack into Diepenlinchen itself, and the final seizure of Weissenberg. On the 18th the company had reorganized, had attacked on the right flank of the Company B in its advance into Diepenlinchen, then had defended facing east that night. On the morning of the 19th it joined Company B in an attack north of Diepenlinchen that gained about three hundred meters, but was eventually beaten back.

Around noon on the 19th, Company A jumped off for Weissenberg again, this time with two rifle and two tank platoons abreast. However, as the platoons deployed into the 400 meters or so of open, level ground in front of Hill 283, they evoked a deluge of fire from German weapons of every caliber, including 20mm cannon. Lt. Col. Hogan stated after the war that "I have never seen such a concentration of German artillery before or since." Both the infantry and the tanks pulled back into the woods.

At 1430 on the 19th, Brigadier General Truman E. Boudinot, commanding CCB, ordered a general coordinated attack with three prongs: Task Force Lovelady was to attack across the open meadow in concert with Company A, 26th Infantry and Company H, 33d Armor, who were to seize a foothold in the woods west of Weissenberg, and then Weissenberg itself. In Task Force Hogan, Company B was to drive deeper into the rock piles west of the factory at Diepinlinchen. Company C, 26th Infantry, with tanks attached, was once again to try to envelop the enemy from the east. Lt. Col. Hogan pointed out that he had previously considered such an envelopment, but had rejected it because his personal reconnaissance had convinced him that the ground to the south-east and east of the factory area was boggy, unsuitable for tanks.

3d Armcd Division, CCB
DIEPENLINCHEN
Map: Special 1/10,000

19 SEPT 1944 (P.M.)



CCB attacks of PM, 19 September

General Boudinot nonetheless directed the attack. At about 1400 hours the remnant of Company C – at this time its fighting strength was 62 – with four tanks of Company G, 33d Armor attached, moved from position as TF Hogan reserve into the attack. As the team emerged into the open east of the town, it drew effective artillery, mortar, and antitank fire. Two tanks were hit and disabled, and the other two became mired in the soft ground. The infantry pulled back, and the tankers abandoned their vehicles [these were destroyed in place]. Company B gained several hundred meters, but Company A, facing the open ground before Weissenberg, was delayed waiting for coordination with Task Force Lovelady on its left. Momentum lost, the attack faltered.

Late in the afternoon of 19 September CCB decided to make another try at a frontal assault on the left, preceded by a 10 minute preparation by all VII Corps artillery within range, concluding with smoke to conceal the advancing infantry and tanks. Company A was forming on its line of departure – the edge of the woods opposite Weissenberg – when the preparation began. However, a number of rounds fell short, causing tree bursts in and near Company A; its soldiers promptly sought cover. A 30 minute delay was called to permit all forward observers to register on target. When the preparation resumed, however, bursts were again observed to be searching back toward the position of Company A, and tree bursts again drove the infantry to cover. The tanks (Company H, 33d Armor) jumped off on schedule, and succeeded in crossing the open area, but as they approached the woods before Weissenberg two were hit by cannon fire from the left flank, and a third was taken out from short-range by a shoulder-fired rocket. The remainder, without infantry protection, retired.

One 26th Infantry eye-witness thought that failures could be attributed to the absence of the usual 1st Division infantry-artillery team:

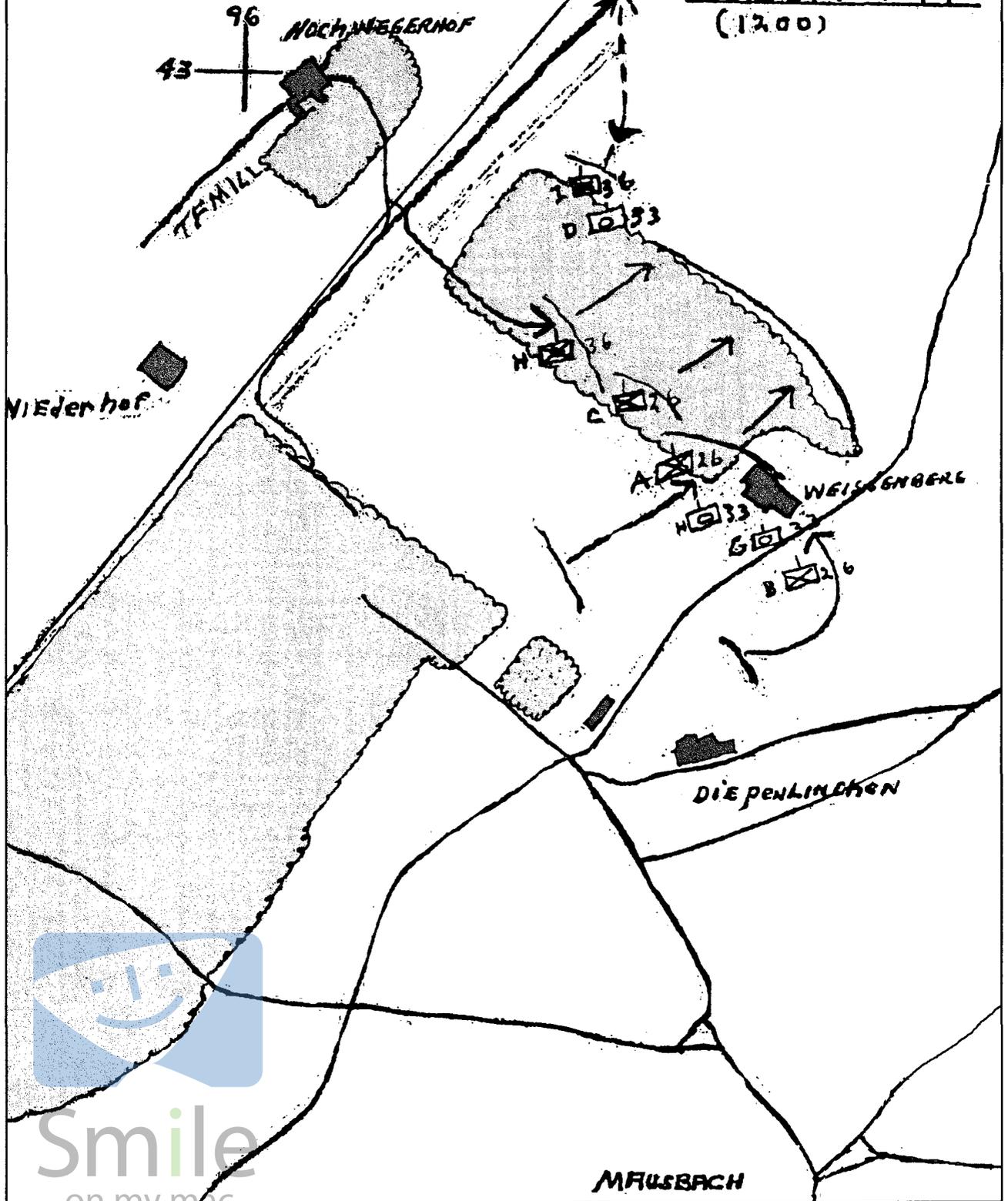
“The commitment of Company C at Diepenlinchen on a mission which had proved beyond the capability of a battalion earlier only resulted in further losses. The lack of its accustomed normal supporting fires on this mission materially reduced its fighting effectiveness.

“In this connection, Company A experienced similar difficulty with supporting artillery the following day when shell fire twice disorganized its attack at jump-off time. The supporting artillery consisted of 105-mm self-propelled howitzers. The artillery personnel believed the shelling received by Company A was enemy counter-fire, which sounds logical when it is recalled that the area involved had recently been occupied by an alert enemy. However, to an observer witnessing the concentration, it appeared that the shell bursts searched our own troops as the concentration developed. This could be understood when it is considered that the self-propelled guns were firing from muddy standing, causing the rear of the mount to sink in the mud with each round fired. Failure to adjust the piece after each round, under such circumstances, would result in each succeeding round dropping closer to our lines.” A. R. Levasseur, *Operations...*

Lt. Col. Hogan, confronting the situation on the evening of 19 September, considered a night attack. Based on reports from prisoners indicating another counterattack on the left flank that night, he adopted instead a plan to have his tanks, after nightfall, sally suddenly

3d Armrd Division, CCB.
DIEPENLINCHEN.
Map: Special 1/10,000

20 SEPT 1944
(1200)



The capture of Weissenberg and Hill 283, 20 September

into the open, there to cut loose with all guns at the woods concealing the German positions around Weissenberg, then to pull back before the German defensive fires could be called down. In the morning a deliberate tank-infantry attack, with Corps-wide artillery support, would be launched. Around midnight the tank foray was conducted, and the force withdrew without loss when the German defensive fires began.

At dawn on 20 September, fog covered the area. Al Levasseur, who was at the time the S-3, 1/26th Inf, recalls that the massed artillery fires had been set for 0700. All preparations for the attack having been completed, Al decided around 0630 that he would shave for the first time in several days:

While shaving, my mind was mulling over the events of the previous night, including periodic harassing fires by our tanks and artillery on the objective....and the dense fog existing at this time. I visualized the enemy in entrenched positions sleepless and exhausted from our previous day's attacks and frequent shellings during the night. I stopped in the middle of my shave to suggest to Major Adams and Col. Hogan that, under the circumstances, an attack by our infantry with fixed bayonets but without any supporting fires might be more effective by surprising the enemy asleep in his trenches. They both considered this briefly and agreed it just might work. Col. Hogan immediately requested cancellation of all scheduled supporting fires for 0700 hours. Shortly after 0700 hours A Co. reported it had taken the objective with complete surprise, catching the enemy asleep in their trenches and taking many prisoners.

Many of the 33 PW taken were asleep in their foxholes. A number stated that at midnight they had formed for an assault, but were attacked by American tanks, and suffered many casualties. The Germans reacted violently with fire, but there was no other counterattack.

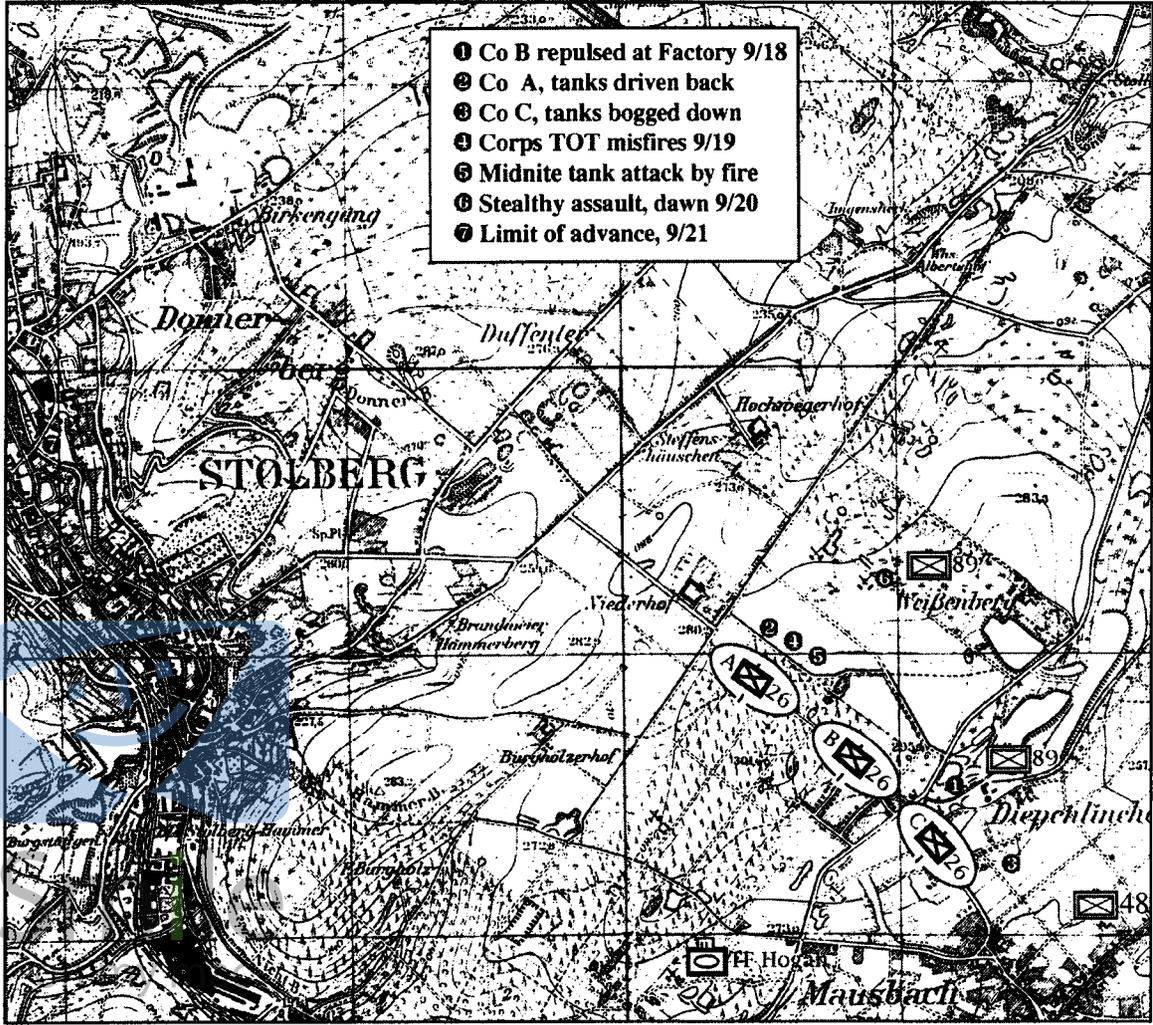
CCB ordered a general attack to seize Weissenberg, and to clear the woods to its west. Company B, 26th Infantry, joined Companies H and G, 33d Armor to take Weissenberg itself. Company C, 26th Infantry and Company H, 36th Armored Infantry attacked to clear the woods on the left (west) flank of Company A. Company D, 33 Armor and Company I, 36th Armored Infantry from the adjacent TF Mills conducted a foray to the left front, and then occupied the west end of the woods. CCB had secured Hill 283.

After dark on the evening of 20 September, a unit of the 9th Infantry Division relieved 1/26th Infantry. TF Hogan was ordered back to an assembly area west of Mausbach, where the troops were fed a hot meal, and allowed to sleep. The leaders prepared for an attack into Stolberg on the morning of 21 September.

Stolberg is a long, narrow town at the bottom of a meandering, steep-sided valley. The attack into the city encountered very strong enemy resistance, including heavy artillery and mortar fires. Nonetheless, the first day Task Force Hogan advanced four kilometers, fighting from building to building, traversing nearly half the town, and capturing 25 PWs. On 22 September, Companies A and B of the 26th Infantry, attacking parallel to the main street, were stopped at a cross street by intense indirect fires, and by tank and machine gun fires from the flanks. Supporting tanks – Lt. Col. Hogan then could then muster only about 12–

were slowed by mines hastily laid by the enemy on the street surface, but concealed by dirt and debris. Company C of the 26th was committed on the right, but even with all units on line, the Task Force could make little headway. [1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, was at that time 42% of TO&E strength]. TF Hogan had become embroiled in a larger fight, for higher stakes: 12 ID had established a defensive line that incorporated the Donnerberg, high ground on the east opposite midtown, and adjacent positions within Stolberg that they were then hotly contesting with CCB. At 1700 on 22 September the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry was relieved in place, and on the following day returned to the 1st Division. The battalion was designated division reserve, and ordered to reorganize, reequip, and train hundreds of replacements.

For their tenacity, Hitler renamed the defenders of Stolberg the 12th Volksgrenadier Division, one of only two serving divisions so honored. For its part, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry won the Presidential Unit Citation. That award, however, reached the battalion in the late spring of 1945, when most of the Blue Spaders who had earned it were more concerned with civilian pursuits than with battle honors. In September 1944 the accolade that mattered came from Major General C. L. Huebner, Commander of the 1st Infantry Division, who, when he was told that the Battalion had rejoined the 26th RCT, said simply "The 1st Battalion did a fine job over there and I am proud of them."



German map, 1000 meter grid

War Department General Order Number 42, 1945

Presidential Unit Citation (Army)

Streamer embroidered STOLBERG

As authorized by Executive Order 9306 (sec. I, WD Bul 22, 1943) superceding Executive Order 9075 (se. III, WD Bul. 11, 1942) citation of the following unit in General Orders 37, Headquarters 1st United States Infantry Division, 12 February 1945, as approved by the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations, is confirmed under the provisions of section IV, WD Circular 333, 1943 in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction. The citation reads as follows:

The *1st Battalion, 26th Infantry* is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action. On 13 September 1944, the *1st Battalion* was assigned the mission of supporting an armored task force in its drive to smash the outer defenses of the Siegfried Line and to seize commanding ground to the east of Aachen. Antitank obstacles retarded the progress of armored infantry and tanks, and the battalion was committed to overrun strongly fortified defensive positions in the vicinity of Nutheim. In two days of fierce fighting the *1st Battalion* succeed in over-powering enemy defenses to the left of Nutheim and between the village and the antitank barriers. This fighting force then attacked Busbach, a town held by an enemy battalion supported by heavy artillery and mortar batteries and reinforced with tanks and antitank fire. Vigorous hostile resistance was counterbalanced by an insuperable urge to close with and destroy the enemy. Undaunted by concerted hostile fire, this unit grimly pushed into the town, engaged in intense street fighting, captured or killed the enemy and took its objective. On 17 September 1944, after an armored infantry unit had failed to breach enemy defenses, the *1st Battalion* was given the vital mission of seizing Diepenlinchen and Weissenberg. Although totally outnumbered by the 89th German Infantry Regt. and constantly harassed by preregistered enemy artillery and mortar concentrations, this fighting force assaulted Dienpenlinchen. The men fought bravely and valiantly, but numerically superior forces compelled our infantry to retire to a position south of the town where preparations were made for a renewed attack on the following morning. Once again the enemy poured deadly fire into our ranks, inflicting severe losses on attackers. Strengthened with reinforcements and additional guns, the enemy fought savagely, tenaciously refusing to yield ground, but sheer dint of courage and magnificent fighting spirit of this infantry unit achieved another glorious victory. Despite enormous losses incurred in this offensive, the *1st Battalion*, allowing the enemy no respite, assaulted Stolberg at 0700 hours on 21 September 1944. Withering artillery fire from enemy batteries split the attacking forces; the infantry gained the outer reaches of the town, while the tanks suffered heavy losses. Elements of the 105 Panzer Grenadier Brigade, defending the town and offering defiant resistance, employed antitank, machine gun and mortar fire and fanatically held their positions until either killed or overpowered by our unrelenting pressure on the following day when assigned objectives in the town were secured. During the period 13-22 September 1944, the *1st Battalion* demonstrated unwavering courage and matchless aggressiveness in the face of tremendous odds in attaining every objective, fighting gallantly and bravely and displaying conspicuous combat skill and devotion to duty despite casualties which greatly depleted its ranks. The *1st Battalion's* losses in this sustained drive included 27 killed, 157 wounded and 41 missing. Over 300 prisoners were taken and twice as many enemy soldiers were killed or seriously wounded. The unconquerable spirit and extra-ordinary heroism displayed by the *1st Battalion, 26th Infantry*, in accomplishing all attack missions against five important German towns, paved the way for more deadly blows against the Germans, and rendered an invaluable contribution to the Allied cause.

Cantigny Military History Series
Blue Spaders



The 26th Infantry Regiment, 1917-1967



For an overview of battles in and around Aachen, the Bulge, Soissons, and Bong Trang too, read the book **Blue Spaders** (cover above). For more details, read the supplementary "battle booklets," like this one, and like **Ap Gu** (Vietnam, 1967). Contact one of the following:

First Division Museum

Ask for book "Blue Spaders"
1 S 151 Winfield Road
Wheaton, IL 60187-6097
Tel. (630) 668-5185
Research Center, Gift Shop

26th Infantry Regiment Association

R.H. Egersdorfer, Honorary Colonel
359 Partridge Drive
Lititz, PA 17543-1347
Tel. (717) 626-4521
Quarterly newsletter, annual reunions

Both the Museum and the Association can provide a list of monographs like this.

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