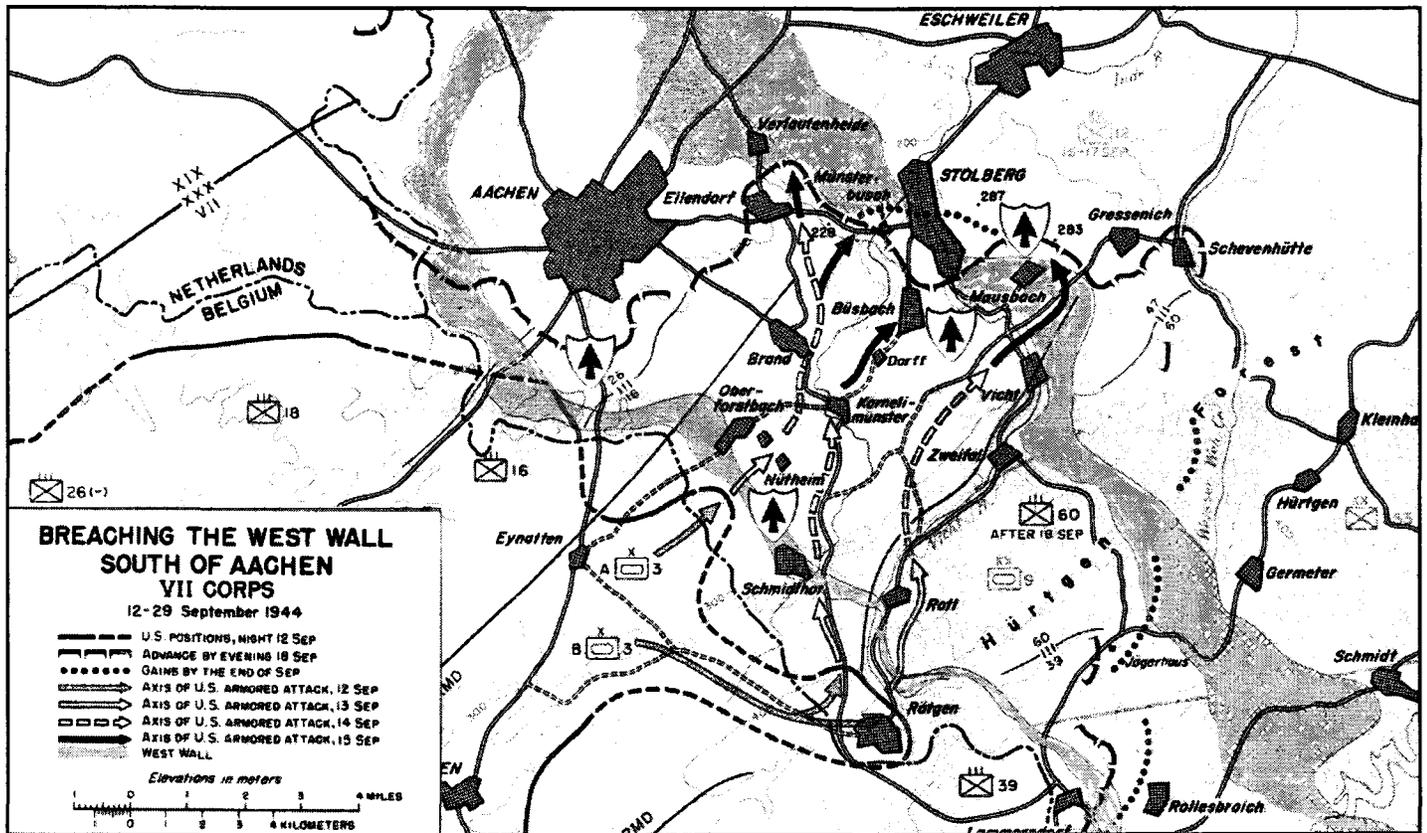




AACHEN



Before 1940, Aachen had been a city of some 165,000, but in October, 1944 the city lay in ruins from repeated bombardment, and less than 20,000 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.

The 1st Division, leading the VII Corps' northern (left) axis in its pursuit toward the German frontier, penetrated the West Wall defenses of Aachen — called by Americans the Siegfried Line — on September 12, 1944, the same day that the 3d Armored Division crashed into the West Wall 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's Task Force Hogan, 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 north toward Ellendorf and Verlautenheide in the main belt of fortifications standing between VII Corps and the Roer River.

But German resistance was unexpectedly stubborn. It took nearly one month to cut off Aachen (see map, back cover), for Aachen had been the capital of the First Reich, the Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne that had endured for 1000 years, a city venerated by Adolf Hitler's Third Reich. Nonetheless, on 10 October the 26th Infantry delivered an ultimatum to the German garrison of the city stating that its encirclement was complete, and that if the city were not "promptly and completely surrendered unconditionally, the American Army Ground and Air Forces will proceed ruthlessly with air and artillery bombardment to reduce it to submission."

This narrative of the subsequent battle draws on three official sources: the U.S. Army history by Charles B. MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign* (Office, Chief of Military History, Washington, 1963), and two reports prepared in June 1945 by the 2d and 3d Battalions, respectively, of the 26th Infantry Regiment, elicited by a directive from Headquarters, 1st Division, that each infantry battalion describe for the record the attack of which it was most proud [the latter documents were provided by the First Division Museum, address on inside back cover].

AACHEN

Military Operations in Urban Terrain

**26th Infantry Regimental Combat Team
8-20 October 1944**



U.S. Army Photograph

This account of the battle for Aachen is drawn mainly from the writings of participants, and from contemporary records of the 26th Infantry Regiment. It also quotes the official U.S. Army history. Editorial comments such as these are boxed in the text [or bracketed]. **Descriptions of combat highlighted with grey are extracts from regimental citations.** Unpublished source materials were provided by the First Division Museum (see inside back cover). Unless otherwise noted, maps and photographs are from the Museum or from the U.S. National Archives. Excerpts from the following sources are initiated in the text with an underlined, bold face entry as follows:

Mason: Stanhope Brasfield Mason, Major General, USA (Ret) . Reminiscences and Anecdotes of World War II. Unpublished typescript, Birmingham, AL, 1988. In 1944, Colonel Mason was Chief of Staff of the 1st Infantry Division. After the war he commanded the 26th Infantry Regiment.

Daniel: Report of Darrel M. Daniel, Commander, 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment. Chapter XXXV, 1st Division WWII Outstanding Combat Achievements. Hq, 1st Infantry Division, 1945. This paper, written in June 1945, was elicited by a directive from Headquarters, 1st Division, that each infantry battalion describe for the record the attack of which it was most proud.

Corley: Report of John T. Corley, Commander, 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment. Chapter XXXVI, 1st Division Outstanding Combat Achievements. Hq, 1st Infantry Division, 1945. A paper written in response to the same directive of June 1945.

G-2. Selected Intelligence Reports. Office of the ACofS G-2, First United States Infantry Division, Germany, 6 December 1944. Volume I. Exceptionally well-written reports of operations with emphasis on enemy activity.

MacDonald: MacDonald, Charles B. The Siegfried Line Campaign. U.S. Army in World War II. European Theater of Operations. Chief of Military History, Pub. 7-7. Washington, DC, 1963, 1990. The Army's formal record, written by a historian who had been during World War II an infantry company commander.

Epilogue: Colonel John T. Corley. First Division Battlefields In and Around Aachen. Un-published paper in the library of the U.S. Army Infantry School dated 24 June 1957.

Mason. Pre-Hitler Aachen was a sizeable German city, just inside the border where Belgium and Holland touch Germany. Post-Hitler it was a shambles. Dead people, dead animals and the rubbish of blasted buildings made it one of the worst beat-up cities in all Germany. By chance, it happened to be in the zone of the 1st Infantry Division. Left behind was the rapid pursuit tactics employed against a disorganized and demoralized German army. Immediately in our front was a defended border protected by an elaborately designed line of prepared fortifications and anchored on a large city. It fell to the lot of the 1st Division to capture the city of Aachen.

The time is mid-September 1944. The 1st Division had moved rapidly across Belgium from Mons (where a four day fight had bagged thousands of German prisoners) to the western border of Germany. On 10 September, we came up against the prepared Siegfried Line.

We faced the large city of Aachen, the ragged end of our supply line, which stretched all the way back to Normandy, and a beginning of rainy, cold fall weather. A frantic German military was exerting every possible effort to defend its own people and territory. Since moving eastward from Liege in Belgium, I had sensed an increasing resistance on the part of the Germans. Partly that was due to experience, but an increasingly sullen rather than holiday spirited populace through which we moved added a sense of foreboding. While our forward elements were simply "feeling-out" the German posi-

tions within the bounds of the Siegfried Line, the major portion of the Division was actually in Belgium and supposedly among a friendly population. The Belgian border near Aachen, as with many international borders, gets tied in economically with the nearest city, in this case German, and so the civilians in the area were mixed Belgian and German, with sympathies understandably conforming.

In any event, we began to take more positive measures for our own security among which was my more careful selection of a location for the operating or advance echelon of the Division Headquarters. I located it in a small factory town named Hauset, about a thousand yards from Germany proper, and due to the bending of the border there, we were due south of Aachen, whose southern outskirts were about four thousand yards to the north of us.

The topography, or shape of the ground surface, is always of critical importance to ground troops. Briefly, Aachen is in a saucer-like depression, with hills or ridges surrounding it on all sides. These heights were generally three to five hundred feet higher than the city itself. The western city limits come right up to the Belgian-German border. Holland's national border comes down to make contact with Belgium on the western city limits of Aachen, thus making it a big German city right on Germany's border with both Belgium and Holland. The 1st Division, for its battle for Aachen was spread out over the traditional native soil of three sovereign nations – Belgium, Holland and Germany – with part of a rear echelon still in France.

Pre-WW II France had built its Maginot Line, and Hitler, as he shifted toward European domination, had built and highly propagandized his West Wall, or Siegfried Line. This was along the western border of Germany, thus incorporating the defenses of exposed Aachen in the Siegfried Line. In accomplishing this, the Line -- consisting of concrete pill boxes, tank traps, heavy gun platforms and rows of two to four feet high concrete pillars called Dragon's Teeth -- divided north of Aachen, surrounded it on all sides, then came back together a couple of miles south of the city. This is what we saw, and which we had to breach in order to capture Aachen. If heavily manned and supplied, the tactical problem of our taking Aachen would be bitter and costly. It was therefore to our advantage to get on with the job as quickly as possible before the disorganized and retreating German forces could get into position and man all its defenses.

Let's take a brief excursion into medieval history as we look at Aachen through binoculars from the hills surrounding the city on its western and southern sides. Though its founding is lost in antiquity, as early as 765 AD King Pippin III had a palace there, and Charlemagne, the most illustrious of the Carolingian dynasty, actually set up his capital of the Holy Roman Empire in the city. It was then known as Aix, later as Aix-la-Chapelle, which name it still bears on many current maps. Charlemagne built the church of St. Mary, now known as the very famous Aachen Cathedral or sometimes as the Munster Cathedral. Across the square and on the site of the earlier Pippin palace, Charlemagne built a Rathaus (city hall) which was used for a thousand years for coronation ceremonies. The city was surrounded by a wall, remnants of two gates being extant in September 1944. Over the centuries the Aachen Cathedral has housed relics such as Charlemagne's sarcophagus, his bones, and a 12th century chandelier given by Frederick Barbarosa. As might be expected subsequent rulers, notably Kaiser William II of Germany, had certain relics removed to such places as Berlin. Little of this can be seen through binoculars from surrounding hills. Instead one sees a large city, reasonably modern looking, with factories, streets, large and small buildings, and all evidence of its being, in fact, a normal German city with a population of some 165,000 people.

The military desirability of making haste toward capture of city was one of our first frustrations. North of us, Field Marshal Montgomery's abortive thrust into Germany, now widely known as "A Bridge Too Far," and then code-named Market-Garden, was showing signs of failure. Already mentioned was that our front positions were too far from our base of supplies, actually back on the

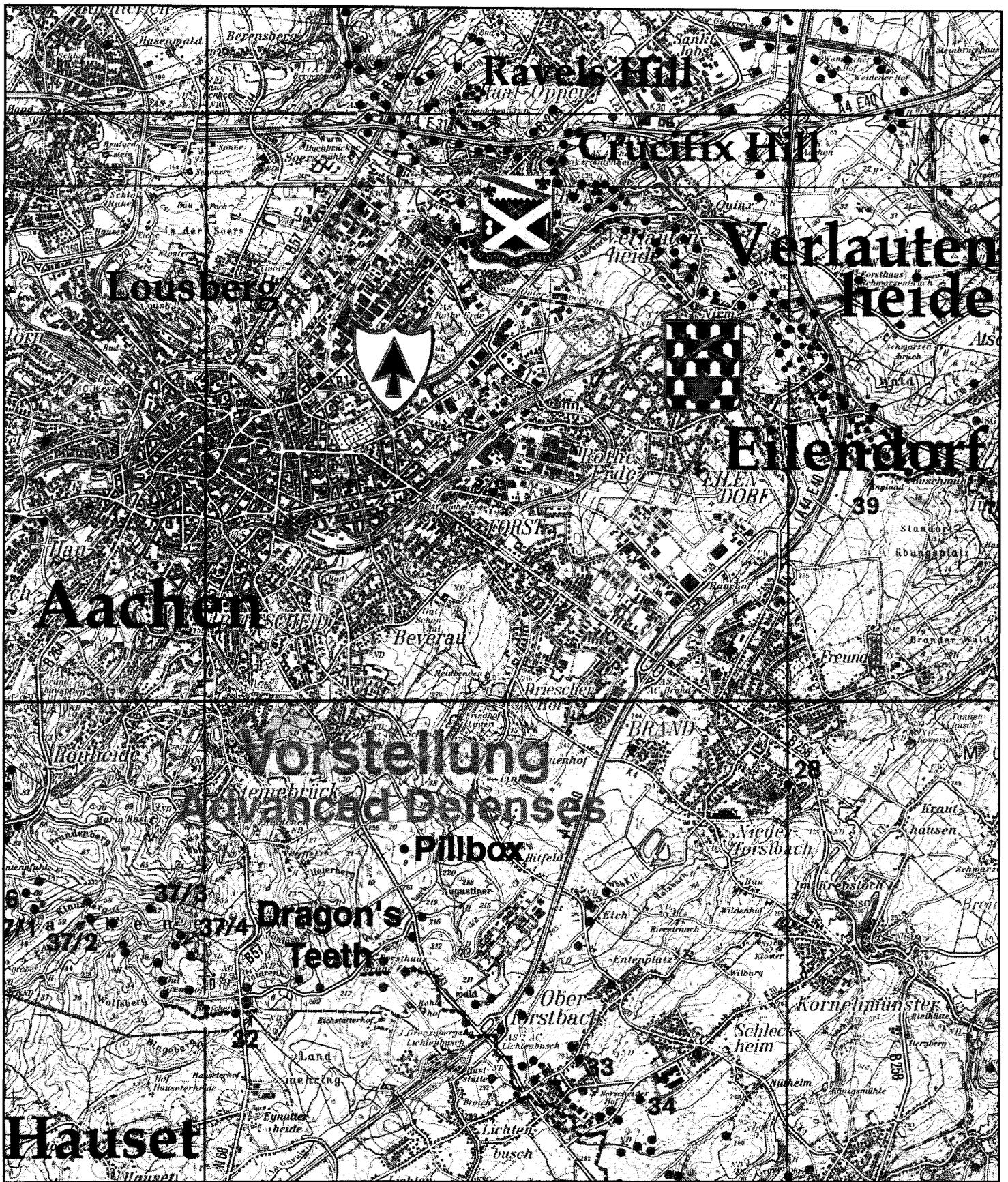
Normandy beachhead. We were running short of such items as ammunition and gasoline. The Red Ball Express (assembled army trucks grouped for distance over-the-road hauling) was keeping us going, but at a slower pace daily, and that, remember, when we weren't using much heavy artillery ammunition. To most people it usually comes as a shocking surprise to learn that a reinforced infantry division (roughly 14,000 men) requires 600 tons, yes tons, per day of supplies of all types to keep it fed, mobile and fighting. Available supply capabilities had been switched to Montgomery's air-borne show, and American army commanders — Bradley, Patton, Hodges — were bitterly resentful. Anyhow, we didn't have the necessary regrouped cohesion after a long pursuit, nor the logistic support, to put on a coordinated major attack on the Siegfried Line. So all units, 1st Division included, were sending "reconnaissance in force" units of about battalion size into the forward Siegfried Line defenses. Some were singularly successful and achieved a breakthrough in parts of the Line simply because the German forces had not had time to man all the pillboxes. But these penetrations could not be exploited, so on a large scale view all the American forces were having to watch, day by day, a German build-up of a strong defensive position in front of us. With this additional personnel, the Germans brought in tanks and artillery, so for the first time in weeks we were being subjected to artillery fire plus an increasing capability of a tank supported counter attack. Rainy, cold weather didn't help matters much.

In the little town of Hauset I had chosen a solidly built dwelling, small but three story, for our advance command post. The selection had in mind some protection from the hill on the Aachen side of us and a stone structure for some protection from German artillery and fighter bombers. The owner of the house, a sort of chubby German-looking hausfrau of about thirty-five years, had another slightly older woman with her and one small child. They were moved to the third floor while we used the two lower floors. What must have been the parlor, Gen. Huebner [Major General Clarence R. Huebner, commander of the 1st Division] and I used for our office, the remaining staff being in other rooms. In the parlor, and one or two other rooms, we had small iron pot-belly stoves for heat which we needed. In the surrounding hundred yards, we had the rest of the forward echelon, mess, MPs, etc., so our only problem was getting on with the job of taking Aachen.

Here it might be helpful to clarify a "zone of operation". This was simply a couple of lines on a map marking the left and right boundaries of the Division's area of action. In this zone, Aachen was in the left or north half. Along our left (north) boundary, the same map line represented the left boundary of our Corps (the VII commanded by Lt. Gen. "Lightning" Joe Collins) and the left boundary of Gen. Courtney Hodges' First U.S. Army. It is mentioned here simply to point out that along any unit boundary coordination between adjacent units is complicated, infinitely more so when boundaries involve many higher headquarters. On 11 September 1944, Gen. Collins gave us an attack order for a two battalion "reconnaissance in force" with a limited objective, and early the next morning two battalions jumped off in attack. Both met resistance, much more on the left, but the battalion on the right managed to get through the western branch of the Siegfried Line by nightfall.

We had an Engineer Battalion in the Division [1st Engineer Combat Battalion] which was one of the most efficient units I've ever encountered. Its commander was Lt. Col. Bill Gara, personable, industrious, efficient and with a steel trap mind. He could absorb what he was being told at least one word ahead of the teller. Also he had a sense of humor.

On the west side of Aachen, when we first hit the town, we found two streetcars in our possession. They had been abandoned at the western end of the tracks and on the hillside some three hundred feet above the city level. Gara came to me with this news and recalled for me some front line reports that the German defense forces had some very small tanks, more or less toys, as they were only about three feet long and fifteen inches high. They had been designed as a robot vehicle to carry a TNT charge which could be fused. The robot tank was then headed toward American positions to explode among American troops. Not one of them ever worked. Some ran part of the distance across what might be



On a map of present-day Aachen: the 1944 sectors of the 1st Division's infantry regimental combat teams, the location of the division command post (Hauset), and extant pillboxes and dragon's teeth of the Siegfried Line. The grid squares are 6 km on the side. From Hauset to the foot of Ravels Hill, where the 18th was to meet the 119th RCT of the 30th Division to seal the ring around Aachen, the distance was 11.5 km, or 7.1 miles. The 1st Division was in an extraordinary configuration: the 16th RCT on the right was oriented northeast, defending the Eilendorf-Verlautenheide ridge. The 18th RCT, center, attacked north to seize Crucifix and Ravels Hills, and to defend against counterattacks from that direction. The 26th RCT attacked northwest into Aachen.

Map with permission Rheinisches Amt für Bodendenkmalpflege

called No Man's Land, some lost direction and even, on one occasion, made it back to the German position before exploding. The Americans enjoyed a game with these little vehicles, nicknamed by the Germans "Goliath's." They made nice targets for all small weapons. When hit by machine gun fire, that's where it exploded. Gara wanted to improve on the idea. He had discovered a German ammunition dump and had lots of German Teller mines and other explosives. His proposition was to load a streetcar with a couple of tons of the explosives, attach a time fuse, and set the streetcar in motion rolling down hill into Aachen. He had no trouble getting my enthusiastic and cooperative approval.

Shortly thereafter, he called to tell me that all was ready if I wanted to sneak up to an observation post and watch the fun. When all was set, the engineers gave the streetcar its initial push with a bulldozer. One bit of scientific data we did not have, so Gara had to calculate it -- the rate or speed of the streetcar and the resulting timing of the fuse. Down hill went the streetcar but obviously not rolling as fast as expected. By the time it passed our front lines both Gara and I were sweating, fearing that it might detonate before clearing our own positions. About that time some Germans saw it coming and we could see that they were shooting at it with rifles. About half way between our lines and the Germans' it let go with a bang, less than we had hoped, but with a blast none the less respectable. We never learned whether the timer set it off or some lucky German bullet hit a piece of TNT.

Not dismayed, Gara said we'd try it again with the remaining streetcar. But first we'd have to put out a patrol to check any damage to the tracks. A couple of days later we repeated the venture, again in daylight so we could watch it, and with a recalculated time fuse based on timed rate of travel.

This time the Germans were less surprised. The streetcar drew more rifle fire but sailed on unconcernedly. It went through the German forward positions, apparently hit a track-switch, and followed a track encircling the south part of town. After what seemed an eternity, it let go with a tremendous bang. This time it was carrying more explosives so all we could see was dust and smoke. It wasn't until after Aachen was taken and prisoners interrogated that we learned that they had correctly divined what we were doing and had made sure that the car would be switched into an area already devastated by bombing. At the same time they devised a system to alert their troops along the track so that no matter where it exploded, no great harm would be done. I've always been disappointed that we didn't get better results from this ingenious scheme. Furthermore, it would appear that the size of a "Goliath" is no measure of its efficiency.

Col. Bill Gara was innovative in other ways. Our front line troops were fighting in, among, and for pill boxes. On any counterattack (always with a limited objective) German soldiers would reoccupy a lost pill box requiring it to be taken again. These fortifications were made of heavily reinforced concrete and normal artillery did them no damage. That wasn't a satisfactory solution because it took a tremendous amount of TNT to demolish a pill box and our supply situation precluded our having any such quantity of explosives. Gara gave it some thought, then tested his engineering calculations and came up with the answer... He thought that if we stuffed mattresses in the pill box firing ports buildup of pressure from even a small charge would shatter the concrete. Tests proved him right. Orders went out to commandeer all the mattresses in the villages and we soon had plenty. From then on, every time we captured a pill box mattresses were stuffed in all the embrasures and a charge set off inside. The pill box would simply disintegrate and was no further trouble to us.

MacDonald: General Huebner's primary concern in planning his part in the encirclement maneuver had been to reduce his long defensive frontage -- more than twelve miles along a semicircle -- west, south, and east of Aachen -- and thereby free at least one regiment to make the attack. Since the 9th Division was committed in the Huertgen Forest, and the 3d Armored Division at Stolberg, his corps commander, General Collins, was unable to provide much help. He exercised the only possibility, to put a corps engineer unit, the 1106th Engineer Combat group (Col. Thomas DeF. Rogers), into the line

south of Aachen, thus to release two battalions of the 18th Infantry to join the rest of the regiment for the first blow north toward Verlautenheide. Another regiment, the 16th, could not participate in the offensive because of the necessity to defend the division's northeast wing from a point near Eilendorf to a boundary with the 3d Armored Division at Stolberg. The third regiment, the 26th Infantry, also held a defensive line; yet the positions faced Aachen from the southeast so that the 26th Infantry might assault the city itself after the 18th Infantry had taken Verlautenheide and linked with XIX Corps....General Huebner naturally desired a quick reduction of Aachen, yet he saw no point in a Pyrrhic victory. Even had he desired a bold thrust, he could permit only a cautious advance because the gap at Wuerselen [between the 1st and the 30th Divisions] still was open, and from Stolberg to Ravels Hill [Verlautenheide] his defenses were dangerously thin. He told the 26th Infantry commander, Col. J.F.R. Seitz, not to get inextricably involved in Aachen. The regiment would have to attack, as the 26th Infantry S-3 [Lt. Col. "Red" Clisson] put it, "with one eye over their right shoulder." Yet in striking from the east defenses that until recently had been sited against assault from the west and south, the regiment held a distinct advantage. [As] the 18th Infantry was driving north...the 26th had been eating away at Aachen's eastern suburb of Rothe Erde and otherwise getting into position for an assault on the city. To reduce frontage, Colonel Seitz put a provisional company into the line on his left wing to face Aachen from the southeast. This company tied in with the 1106th Engineers south of the city. Although the engineers were to pivot their wing from time to time to maintain contact as the 26th Infantry advanced into the city, they were not equipped to make a full-blooded attack...

Daniel: The 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Derrill M. Daniel, after engaging the enemy in the Battle of the Mons Pocket, pursued remnants of the fleeing Wehrmacht to the German frontier in the vicinity of Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle). On the 14th and 15th of September 1944 the battalion advanced to the southeastern outskirts of Aachen, overcoming light opposition from enemy outposts covering road blocks at the frontier. Orders were then received to consolidate defensively the ground taken, thus protecting the left flank of the 16th Infantry which, at this time, was breaching the main defenses of the Siegfried Line [vicinity Eilendorf]. The 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry, was destined to remain static for almost a month in this position until the time came to clear the city of Aachen proper. The 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry, was in position on our left; and, after certain readjustments, the 3d Battalion, 18th Infantry, which was attached to the 16th Infantry, was on our right.

Excellent observation posts [in the 2d Battalion's zone] enabled constant surveillance of a large portion of the city of Aachen, making it possible to zero in mortar and artillery batteries, and also providing opportunity for reconnaissance for future operations. While in position there, the battalion patrolled to the railroad tracks which formed a definite barrier encircling the city, and also instigated several dawn raids for the purpose of capturing prisoners. It was found that the surest way of taking prisoners was to send out a platoon of riflemen supported by three or four tanks. As the days passed, enemy artillery fire increased in intensity, but considerable shelter was provided by buildings in the battalion zone. The longer we remained static, the more closely knit became the enemy's defensive line, so that daytime patrols could not progress very far beyond our lines without being fired on by machine guns and snipers, or being shelled by mortar fire. The general plan for the reduction of Aachen was to complete its encirclement first, and then to deliver an ultimatum to the garrison commander to the effect that if he did not surrender within twenty-four hours, the town would be subjected to intense artillery fire and bombing. Elements of the 30th Division were given the mission of linking up with the 18th Infantry Regiment to completely surround the town... [See map, back cover]

Mason: At the Division Command Post (CP) we now had a better idea of how to go about reducing a city of this size, so we worked out a plan whereby we would encircle Aachen on the west and south sides, then try to swing the encirclement northward on the east side and isolate the city from further supply or reinforcement. Then we would go into the city, block by block, from east to west, on the assumption that the German defenses would largely be looking toward the west and south. Once around the city on three sides however, we would have the problem of the whole north side being open

unless it was closed by units coordinating with us across our complicated zone boundary. That plan didn't change throughout the fight but execution took a long time...

Day by day we were making small gains in the endeavor to complete the encirclement on the eastern side of Aachen. At times the fighting was severe, The Germans had been given an "eyes of Germany are upon you" order by Hitler himself, and told to defend their sacred Fatherland to the last man. Each day also saw a lessening of the previous German army disorganization. Artillery and troops were being moved into the Aachen area and on an occasional clear day they would send over fighter bombers to bomb and strafe us. On several occasions I had a chance to see some dramatic dog fights high -up over the area when our own fighters, who had complete supremacy of the air, would take on these German planes. By then we had learned that German Gen. von Schwerin who commanded the *116th Panzer Division* (Wehrmacht) was in command on the German side. We had encountered him briefly back in France when on Mortain position. There Hitler had put von Schwerin in a coiled position with orders to attack the American forces and make a break through to Avranches. If accomplished, this not only would have been a miracle of German capability, but also would have been a bad blow to the American advance then moving rapidly from the beachhead area against disrupted opposition. Our Division Artillery discovered this concentrated Panzer division and when they got through pounding it, aided by called-in fighter bombers, the *116th Panzer Division* wasn't capable of making any attack at all. Prisoners we had taken from the *116th* seemed to be highly respectful of Gen. von Schwerin and considered him a good soldier with lots of common sense. In this case, he must have known that his orders to slice through at Avranches was another of Hitler's pipe dreams, but he had no choice. So finding him in Aachen, we knew we had a good soldier as an opponent, but one who might see the futility of fighting to the last man, the last round of ammunition, the last building in the city. Leaflets were air dropped into the city demanding surrender with threats of dire consequences if refused. Within twenty-four hours our observation posts reported countless windows displaying white sheets, but no move was made to "parley". The next day the sheets were no longer in evidence. We later learned that misfortune again attended Gen. von Schwerin's reasonableness. He recommended to his higher headquarters that the city be surrendered, thus saving what was left of it and its civilian population. His recommendation had been turned down by the German High Command and von Schwerin was summarily relieved of his Aachen duties and sent to some out of the way place in the Balkans. He survived the war but I was never able to meet him, though I think I would have liked him, professionally and as an individual.

Another commander was sent to take his place, a Lt. Col. [Maximilian] Leyherr who was doing all right with the defense of Aachen until we sent in an ultimatum on October 10th which though turned down by the Germans, somehow triggered the relief of Col. Leyherr. He in turn, was succeeded by Col. Gerhard Wilck who remained in command until he was forced to surrender the city on the 21st of October. All three of these German officers had the military acumen to see the futility of defending Aachen, as well as the common sense to understand the inherent property loss to civilians by a protracted siege. But all were good enough soldiers to obey orders, regardless of their attitude toward Hitler and his Nazi Party's fanaticism. With such pressure from on high, German defenders of Aachen fought hard and were killed in quantity. Nevertheless, they contested our attacks bitterly and punished attempts to close the encirclement. They would counter attack, day and night, artillery and tanks, and accepted heavy losses. On the corner of the line, that is, where the aforementioned straight line of the question mark joined the curved portion, the counter attacks were especially vicious. On our side that corner was held by a rifle company commanded by Capt. Joe Dawson. By anybody's standards Joe was a fabulous guy. A native of Texas, tall and lanky, well educated, a natural leader, completely fearless, and a good companion on a party, Dawson was well known to me and I had used his capable services as a personal and official assistant in the U. S., in England and in North Africa. He was, and is, a close friend.

Recalling that the weather was very disagreeable in late September and that supply was alarmingly inadequate, Dawson had requested through proper military channels that his company be issued overcoats and there was no question as to the need. Joe made more than one telephone call over the Division field telephone net to various friends there in the Command Post, pressing his urgent need. But Division hadn't been able to get them in spite of urgency. One evening, after Joe had been counter attacked several times during the day, and when his company had just achieved a startling military success, he thought that would be a good time to call me about the overcoats. His startling accomplishment had been that in a late afternoon German counter attack, which he finally beat off, they counted two hundred and fifty dead soldiers in front of his position, more than he had in his own company. Such deeds of valor always pleased Gen. Huebner immensely, so when I heard Joe's voice on the field phone, I waved a hand signal across the room to Gen. Huebner to listen in on the conversation. His phone and mine were paired for convenience more than anything else. Sometimes he wanted me to listen in on his conversation, sometimes, but more rarely, vice versa, because people could talk to me about things not supposed to go to the commanding general.

On the phone, Joe was exhibiting a bit of "hot-under-the collar" about not yet having overcoats. At about the time Gen. Huebner picked up the conversation, Joe was telling me that if that damned Santa Claus of a commanding general who had promised him the overcoats didn't get off his duff and do something about it, he (Joe) was going to march his whole company right back off the front lines and leave a hole big enough for the whole German army to come through. Naturally, Joe didn't know that Gen. Huebner was listening and I was sorry I had put him on the line. But I could see a twinkle in the general's eye. He never let on that he had heard the conversation. But it was sheer delight to listen to him talking to higher headquarters the next morning when he made Joe's complaint sound amateurish. Ammunition was replaced by overcoats when our trucks brought in supplies later that day.

In one sense of the word, we dawdled along, making small gains at the lowest cost possible, sweating out counter attacks, absorbing an ever increasing artillery shelling, hoping the JU-88s overhead at night wouldn't hit us. With every small advance we were lengthening our front or contact lines to such an extent we had to put rear area and support type people in the fox holes. We were on the fly line of the V-1 robot bombs that Hitler was firing toward London and Antwerp nightly and we listened to their put-put sound as they went overhead at some five thousand feet. As long as one hears the put-put, all was well. But when the bomb had mechanical flaws which threw them off course or, worse, cut out the engine, or when that sound suddenly stopped, it meant duck quickly. They let go a very destructive bang. Evenings when a temporary lull came along, I devoted my time to more study of maps of the area for at least two reasons. There is no way for a division headquarters to see the ground in enemy hands, and when attacking a thorough knowledge of the topography is essential for good planning. Secondly, I had become quite experienced in designating on a map the next site for our own headquarters, and so used this experience to "guesstimate" where German echelons would likely have their own command posts. With the connivance of our Division Artillery Commander, I would randomly lob a few artillery shells into these spots intermittently during the night. It didn't require much ammunition, and I certainly had an intimate feel for the disrupting effects of shells coming into a command post. In prisoner interrogations G-2 would see what my guess accuracy had been. And it wasn't too bad.

Gen. Patton, with his Third Army was just south of us, and he was foaming at the mouth over an imposed delay due to no gasoline and no ammunition. He preferred to lay the major blame on Montgomery who was not one of his favorite people. One day he showed up at our Hauset CP, way out of his zone, presumably to blow off some steam and energy. There was no reason for him to be there except maybe a convenient courtesy visit to Gen. Huebner. Patton was his usual self, friendly and informal to all of us as we had been under his command in Sicily. But he turned the air blue over Ike letting Montgomery make his Market-Garden fiasco, As an aside Ike (Eisenhower) had more than

approved this Montgomery venture, as had some others of the U.S. High Command. We enjoyed Patton and agreed with his anti-Montgomery diatribe. Perhaps to change the General's soap box rage into more pleasant conversation, Gen. Huebner picked up a copy of the daily Stars and Stripes and pointed out the latest Bill Mauldin cartoon of "Joe and Willie." Huebner thought them funny, which they were and that they accurately pictured the "dog-face" GI infantry soldier. To our amazement, Patton took an opposite view and went off into another rage over Higher Headquarters letting into print such sloppy and unsoldierly characters as Joe and Willie. Patton vowed to get Sgt. Mauldin court-martialed and the cartoons stopped. Fortunately he got nowhere with such a project and those Mauldin cartoons are a classic today.

A few days later, after the 1st Division had burrowed in at Hauset, we sensed a tightening tactical situation. Our Corps Commander, Lt. Gen. "Lightening Joe" Collins ordered his corps command post to move up closer to the front troops. The idea was right, but I always felt that Gen. Collins, for whom I have the very highest regard, professionally and personally, lacked a "feel" of what the enemy was doing and how it would affect him. His staff reflected this attitude. The VII Corps Headquarters Commandant came to our CP to get some recommendations for a good location as coordination of signal communications were a customary necessity. He was given our "feel" of the tightening military-situation together with a recommendation for one of several villages somewhat to our rear. In due course I learned the VII Corps CP was moving into a village named Kornelimunster which was some distance in front of us but off to the flank [see map, inside front cover]. Obviously our recommendation had been disregarded, their prerogative certainly, but the German name of the village was evidence of its being close, even inside, the German border. Actually it was part of the Siegfried Line we had breached on that first attack. The village itself was exposed to German observation from a still held German heights east of Aachen, and to make matters worse the VII Corps people had chosen a large and prominent brick building on high ground and broadside to German positions. A few days later when Gen. Huebner took me along with him on a business visit to Corps Headquarters, I felt rather odd going forward to a normally rear area headquarters. Gen. Huebner and I arrived by jeep after a short trip and pulled up in front of the building which was protected by an M.P. We were saluted and directed to a secondary entrance. A few artillery and or mortar shells were coming in intermittently, about normal for that area. When we were inside we didn't see anybody. That seemed strange. Tables and makeshift desks were around, strewn with papers and maps. On one wall, the side toward the German lines, hung a couple of GI blankets. My normal assumption was that the blankets covered the operation maps, but such secrecy under those conditions seemed odd. By that time someone came along at a fast pace and told us that G-3 (operations, which we wanted to see) was in the basement. Downstairs, all the staff was crowded and busy. The crash of a couple of close incoming artillery rounds greeted us next. But we proceeded to confer with Corps G-3 people on tactical matters of interest to Gen. Huebner and in ten minutes or so were ready to leave. My own thoughts turned to hoping we'd not be greeted outside by shellfire, and in parting I asked the G-3 what was the purpose of the blankets upstairs. He said he would show me as he escorted us up to the entrance. In passing he went over to a blanket and pulled it aside. Back of it was a hole in the wall as big as both blankets. That answered all my questions at once and did not postpone our departure from VII Corps' advance echelon command post. Amazingly, at least to me, they continued to operate from that location all the way to the end, constantly being harassed by shell fire. This situation really didn't improve until our 1st Division attacks had moved well up to the high ground northeast of Aachen. A Corps Command Post, with its sizeable staff, simply cannot do its work efficiently when constantly harassed by enemy shelling. But that location was their own choice, or, at least, the choice of some of them. Who was I to criticize the tactical acumen of my higher headquarters?

Some three weeks had thus far been spent subduing Aachen, with, as already mentioned, insufficient logistical support to make possible a more powerful effort to complete the task. At the lower echelons — the combat troops — the effort had consistently been maximum. By 7 October the 1st Divi-

sion had thrown a tight cordon around Aachen on its west and south sides. It was daily hacking away at closing off its east side while still maintaining its positions against incessant counter attacks in the captured portion of the main Siegfried Line extending southward from Aachen. Finishing the job had simply reached a point beyond the capability of any single infantry division. This being thoroughly understood by all our higher headquarters, their efforts to solve the problem through their greater control of the resources, reached fruition when Gen. Collins, VII Corps Commander, issued orders and provided additional means for a coordinated 1st Division attack on 8th October.

In three weeks of severe fighting, the 1st Division had closed in on Aachen on its west and south sides and had more than half way completed closure on the eastern side. To accomplish this, action was directed northward, all the while holding the southern sector where the Siegfried Line had been breached. This left a northern gap open to the Germans for reinforcement.

For the attack on 8 October Gen. Collins had succeeded in getting more troops assigned to the 1st Division to take over most of our western and southwestern defensive positions. This freed an appreciable segment of our own people for our employment in the attack. Importantly, Collins had somehow managed to get from the [Ninth] army to our north a strong attacking force which, coordinated with our push east of the city, would meet us on the zone boundary and thus seal off or isolate Aachen. Thereafter we would attack from east to west (180 degrees backward so to speak), and block by block complete the subjugation and/or destruction of the city.

Our attack jumped off in the wee hours of the 8th. Some small units achieved surprise and were soon on their objectives. Others had more trouble but by midnight of 9 October, all 1st Division units had taken their objectives, which means that the eastern side of the city was now closed all the way to the zonal border. The German reaction was immediate and vicious. They counter attacked continually to reopen their corridor into the city, but in the end were not successful. No such good luck attended the coordinated attack of the regiment from the north side of the zone. In actual fact they did not effect a firm juncture with the 1st Division elements at the boundary until the 19th. Our combined action did, however, accomplish one important result: that of closing all roads out of Aachen to the north and east, either by physically blocking the road or having it under artillery fire. Therefore, on 10th October, the 1st Division could turn its attention to penetrating the city.

G-2: The basis of the enemy's planning, it appeared was negative rather than positive: his aim was not to remove the threat to the city entirely but to prevent that threat from being carried out by a complete encirclement. In any case his plan came apart at the seams because on 8 October the 18th Infantry jumped off to seize HAAREN and VERLAUTENHEIDE and the commanding ridge northeast of [that town]. In the initial assault, shortly after 0400, the *453d Replacement Battalion* was overrun and VERLAUTENHEIDE taken. The advance along the ridge toward Crucifix Hill was difficult; the reserve company of the *352d Regiment*, composed of picked men from each company of the regiment and recently arrived from WEIDEN, had moved into pillboxes on the hill and had to be driven out almost individually. On the east flank of AACHEN the 26th Infantry pressed forward...against the *365th Replacement Battalion*, which had moved into the area two days before. This battalion was another jerry--built outfit which had originally had furnished men for a division on the northern Russian front; 350 men had been siphoned from the original battalion and sent to the west. After being trampled in HOLLAND, the remnants were sent to LINNISH and brought up to strength by a happy combination of anti-aircraft men, navy personnel and stragglers. In any case the division attack was successful: the VERLAUTENHEIDE ridge was held, and the AACHEN JULICH road was taken under fire. It was the last main escape route from the city. Earlier during the day the 30th U.S. Infantry Division had cut the AACHEN-LINNISH road to the north in two places.

Daniel: The regimental plan of action was to use the 2d and 3d Battalions to clear the town. [1st Battal-

ion had been attached to 3d Armored Division during September, and, sorely depleted by action in the Stolberg vicinity, had been assigned as division reserve while it re-equipped and trained replacements.] The 2d Battalion was to move northwest from its defensive position, clean up [the vicinity of] Rothe Erde [railroad station], and then continue its assault through the southern section of the town. In the meantime, the 3d Battalion, less one company, would pass to the rear of the 2d Battalion, clean up the factory district in the northern sector of Aachen, and then push on to seize ...commanding features of ground... It was also planned that diversionary attacks, with limited objectives, would be staged by both the 2d and 3d Battalions prior to the assault on the city and concurrent with the assault by the 18th Infantry on Crucifix Hill [overlooking Verlautenheide] which was a commanding observation post in the Siegfried Line to the east of Aachen.

The battalion plan of action was as follows: one platoon of Company "F", with a light machine gun section, would stage the initial diversionary attack. It would be supported by two tanks and two tank destroyers, who were instructed to shoot at all or any suspected targets. Observation posts had been manned on a slag pile to support the advance with 81 mm mortar fire. A communication team would follow the platoon in its attack, stringing wire as it moved, and a [SCR] 300 radio would accompany the platoon leader so that he could call for artillery fire. The platoon leader was given an overlay with check points marked on it, so that he could call for supporting fire with speed and accuracy. The objective designated was a small section of the factory area to the southeast of the railroad tracks. Once the objective was taken, the tanks would revert back to a reserve position, but the tank destroyers would remain with the platoon to bolster its defensive line. The platoon action was to be the first step taken by the battalion to reduce the town of Aachen.

It was further planned that subsequent to the platoon attack, the remainder of our zone of action between the existing lines and the railroad tracks would be cleared by Companies "F" and "G," who would execute a flanking attack, jumping off abreast of each other through the area secured by the Company "F" platoon, and then sweeping through on a southwesterly direction across the Trierer Strasse. The right flank of Company "F" was to be on the railroad tracks. One platoon of Company "G," however, would advance frontally from positions it held on line, secure the area in the vicinity of the Hitler Jugend House, and then make contact with the 3d Battalion elements to the southwest of us. The result of this action would be to bring [the 2d Battalion] front solidly up to the railroad tracks.

Preparatory fire by medium artillery was to be planned by the artillery liaison officer. Mortar observers would accompany each company, stringing wire in the advance. Wire teams would string communications lines behind each company command post group; this became standing operating procedure during the Aachen operation.

Tanks and tank destroyers were assigned to each company. Cannon Company and artillery observers were to move their observation posts forward as soon as ground was secured by the advancing rifle companies, meanwhile maintaining liaison with the rifle company commanders. One heavy machine gun platoon from Company "H" would support the advance of each attacking rifle company. As subsequent plans developed, the platoons remained with Companies "F" and "G" until the capture of the city was completed.

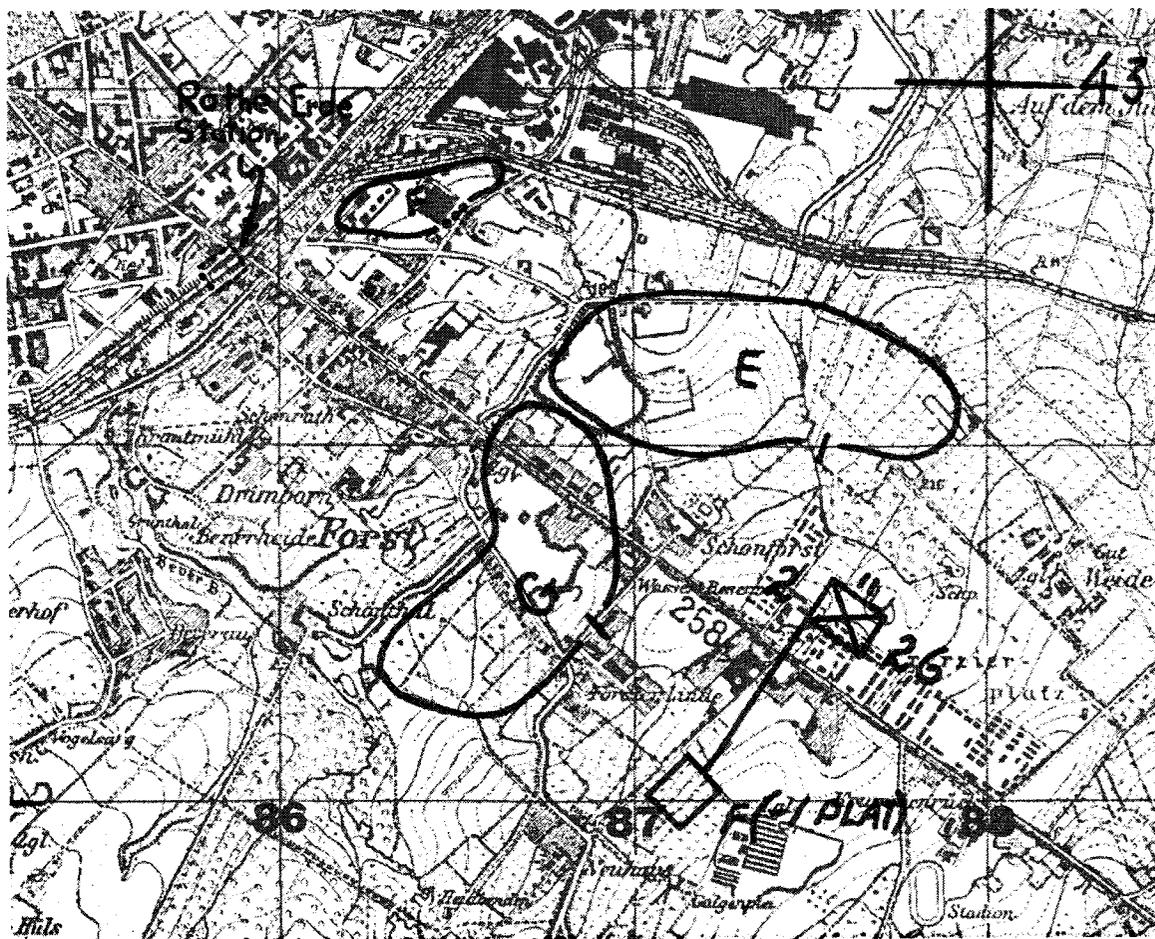
The railroad tracks formed a formidable barrier around the city, since they were elevated to a height of about forty feet and made a natural barrier. Unless the tanks found a point where the tracks could be overrun, the only means of ingress was through an underpass at the Rothe Erde Station; this would have to be secured by infantry and cleared of obstructions by engineers before the armor could pass through. One advantage of this railroad barrier, however, was that preparatory mortar and artillery fire could be zeroed in very close to our front lines as long as the shells cleared the railroad tracks.

A general plan had by this time been developed for the advance of the battalion through the city proper. The three rifle companies would attack in line, "G" on the left flank, "F" on the right flank, "E" in the middle; all companies to advance west through the southern sector of the city proper. The existing armored attachments consisted of two platoons of Sherman tanks and two platoons of tank destroyers; however, maintenance difficulties, and losses were such that each company had about two tanks and two tank destroyers available for support. Certain infantrymen were given definite missions of protecting the attached armor.

The heavy weapons company attachments were made; it was decided to retain one heavy machine gun platoon with each of the two flank companies, "G" and "F." One 81 mm mortar section would support each rifle company, an observer to maintain liaison with the Company Commander. It was decided to have fifteen-minute artillery and mortar preparation prior to H hour, the mortar fire to fall just beyond the railroad tracks, the artillery to fall in a zone deeper in the city. Bombing targets had been assigned the Air Corps. A squad of engineers from a platoon of the 1st Engineer Battalion was to accompany each assault company. The squad would be equipped with flame-throwers and dynamite charges for the reduction of pillboxes. A platoon from the regimental anti-tank company had been attached to the 2d Battalion; in conjunction with the battalion anti-tank platoon, a plan for defense against enemy armor had been evolved. Each platoon had been given a sector of responsibility in the battalion zone of operation, and would advance their guns behind the skirmishing riflemen.

Initially, when the battalion forced a crossing of the railroad tracks, each platoon would supply six rocket launcher teams (two men each) who would maintain anti-tank defense until the half-tracks could bring the guns forward across the railroad tracks. A definite sector of the city was allotted each company. A plentiful supply of maps was available; every intersection and prominent building had been given a check point number to facilitate verbal orders, progress reports, and requests for supporting fire.

On the 8th of October, the reinforced platoon of Company "F" made its limited attack. The operation took place in the afternoon and went as planned; the terrain over which the platoon advanced was pocked by quite a few bomb craters. One tank destroyer came to grief when it overturned in one of the craters. Some mortar and artillery fire was encountered, but the major resistance was from sniper fire. By dark the platoon had





Positions of the 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry, dusk, 9 October 1944

occupied its position; on several occasions during the night the platoon leader called for defensive artillery fire since there was much enemy activity to his front. Patrols were sent out to contact the unit of the 18th Infantry Regiment which had moved on our right.

On the following day, October 9th, Companies "F" and "G" pushed off at 0900 hours to clear the buildings on the southeast side of the railroad tracks. The two companies met stubborn opposition from snipers, and it was only by using direct fire by the tanks that progress was made. One tank destroyer was knocked out by a Panzerfaust. [German anti-tank rocket]. The bulldozer tank hit a mine which blew the scoop off. Certain areas were thickly sown with anti-personnel mines, and anti-tank mines were planted on the roads. By 1700 hours, the objective had been completely cleared. That night aggressive enemy patrols entered the Company "F" area, but were driven off by hand grenades and artillery fire. (See overlay, above) On the 10th of October, the German commander in Aachen was delivered an ultimatum to the effect that if he did not surrender within twenty-four hours, the town would be pulverized by artillery and air strikes. It was estimated that the garrison of Aachen consisted of approximately 5000 troops ... It was believed that these troops would fight with determination from well-fortified positions, but would surrender upon being isolated.

On 9 October 1944, the task facing the battalion was the clearing of a sector below the tracks, and the stubborn resistance encountered proved a guide to what lay ahead of the attacking force. "F" Company thrust west towards the tracks, and "G" Company moved north. Both companies advanced under heavy machine gun and small arms fire, and attacked the houses harboring the enemy. Thick walls defied rocket-gun fire, and placed the

burden of the assault upon the riflemen. Clearing the houses on one side of the street, the companies then crossed the street and fought to drive the enemy out of the opposite row of buildings. In cellars, each room of the house, and attics, the enemy fought until overpowered. In slow, gruelling fighting from block to block below the tracks, the companies were halted only by the ultimatum giving the Germans 24 hours to surrender... (Headquarters, 26th Infantry, Citation of Unit, 30 March 1945)

G-2: 1. On orders of the Commanding General, VII Corps, an ultimatum was presented to the military and civil leaders and the people of AACHEN. The ultimatum was delivered at 1050 A to the Adjutant of *2d Battalion, 352d Infantry Regiment*, by 1st Lieutenant C.A. Lafley of the 26th Infantry. The ultimatum gives the enemy forces in AACHEN until 111050 A October to surrender the city to spare the city from useless destruction. 210 rounds of pamphlets giving the details of the ultimatum were fired into the city during the afternoon. Two public address systems were used to broadcast the terms of the ultimatum to the front-line troops. The LUXEMBOURG radio broadcast the terms of the ultimatum to the German people.

2. The text of the ultimatum is as follows:

The city of AACHEN is now completely surrounded by American forces who are sufficiently equipped with both air power and artillery to destroy the city, if necessary. We shall take the city either by receiving its immediate unconditional surrender or by attacking and destroying it.

While unconditional surrender will require the surrender of all armed bodies, the cessation of all hostile acts of every character, the removal of mines and prepared demolitions, it is not intended to molest the civil population or needlessly sacrifice human lives. But if the city is not promptly and completely surrendered unconditionally, the American Army Ground and Air Forces will proceed ruthlessly with air and artillery bombardment to reduce it to submission.

In other words, there is no middle course. You will either unconditionally surrender the city with everthing now in it, thus avoiding needless loss of German blood and property, or you may refuse and await its complete destruction. The choice and the responsibility are yours.

Your answer must be delivered within 24 hours at the location specified by the bearer of this paper.

3. The reports of 1st Lieutenant C. A. Lafley, 26th Infantry, who delivered the ultimatum is of considerable interest:

"At 101020 A October 1944, Lieutenant William Boehme, Private First Class Ken Kading, and I left the Company command post of F- Company, 26th Infantry, to deliver an ultimatum to the Military Commander and Civil Leader of AACHEN. Our detachment, with Private First Class Kading bearing a white flag, proceeded down Trier Strasse towards an underpass on the southeastern side of the city. No shots were being exchanged at this time and none were exchanged during the following hour and a half. About 50 yards from the underpass 2 or 3 enemy soldiers appeared waving and saying "Come here" in German. We asked if we were going right, and they came out and conducted us through the mass of wreckage at the pass.

On the other side of the underpass a short discussion was held as to what was to be done with us. After a few minutes we were blindfolded and led up the street to an apartment. Here we were taken to an officer. We told the officer, a lieutenant, that we wished to give the ultimatum to the military commander of AACHEN or to his commander. Our blindfolds, our own handkerchiefs, were again put in place and we proceeded to what we believe is a battalion command post (probably *2d Battalion, 352d Regiment*). We walked for about a half hour before reaching the place.

In the basement room of the meeting place we were presented to two lieutenants, one of whom identified himself as the Battalion Adjutant. Giving him the ultimatum, we received a signed and stamped receipt. Upon our expressing a wish that the envelopes be delivered to the battalion commander as soon as possible, we were told he was not present and that he, the adjutant, had suitable authority to accept the ultimatum. No comment was made on the terms nor was there any reply. We informed the adjutant of the method by which a reply could be delivered. We exchanged cigarettes and during the brief lull we overheard the battalion adjutant say rather cryptically to the other lieutenant, "They are evidently unit commanders".

The three guides who had brought us were then summoned and a pass was made out for them by the adjutant. Responding to a quick salute we again put on our blindfolds and were led back to the outpost. On the way back our guides stopped briefly beside some comrades to take a nip from a bottle. They would have liked to strike up a conversation with us but due to previous instructions they only spoke when necessary. At the outpost we were taken through the underpass and our blindfolds taken off. The soldiers who had been our guides came out quite a distance from the underpass. It was necessary to stop and tell them to go back while we proceeded on to our lines. No rifle shots were exchanged during the whole time but artillery could be heard on our right and left. We returned to our front line Company command post at 1157 A.

The receipt had been signed at 1050 A and so our mission was completed. The adjutant signed with the name "KELLER" confirming the fact that it was the command post of *2d Battalion, 352 Infantry Regiment*. He wore the Iron Cross, a war decoration and a combat badge. He also wore the Russian Campaign Ribbon."

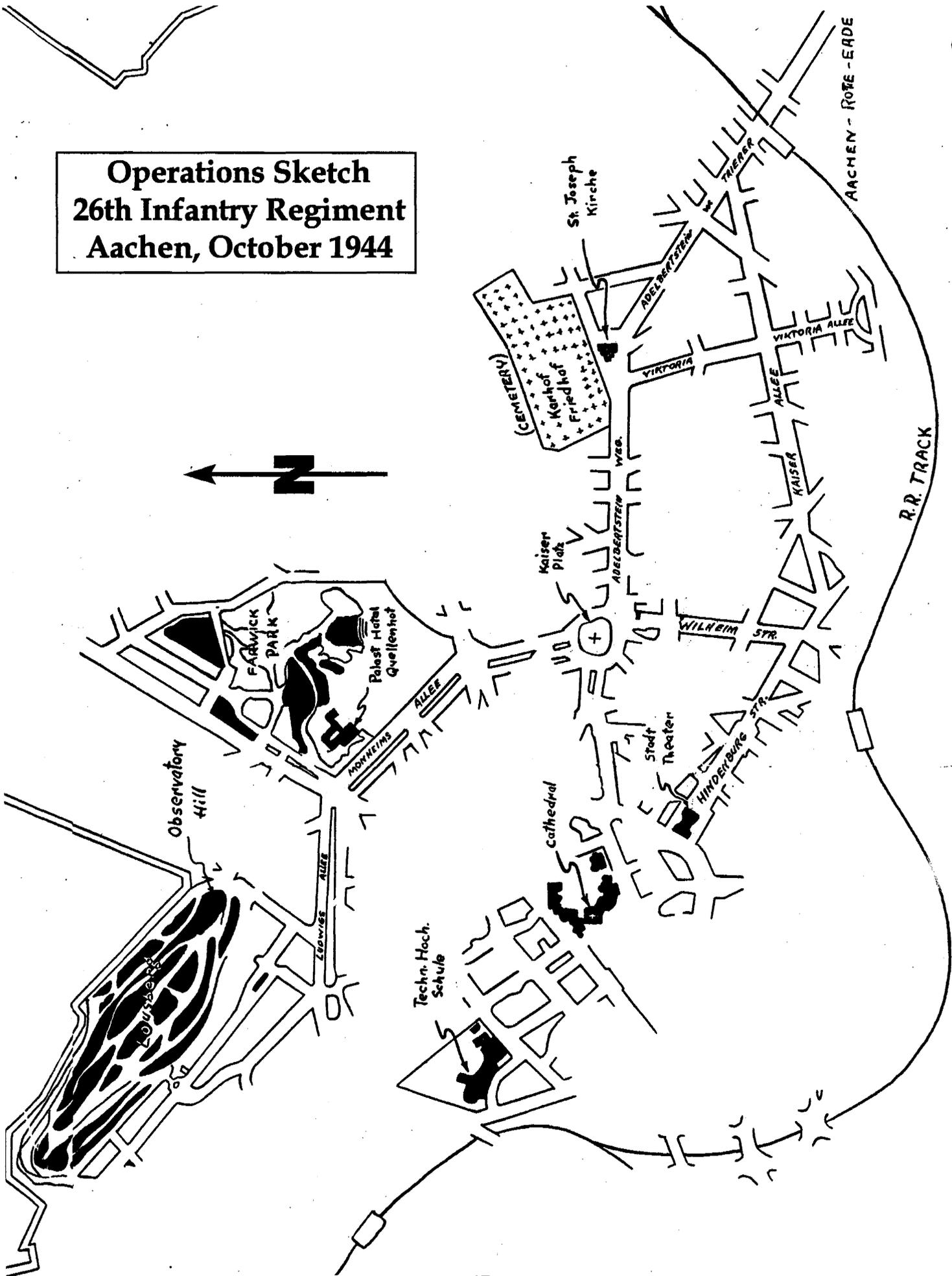
4. Two prisoners of war from the *1043d Battalion* surrendered to the 1106 Engineer Group late in the day of 10 October. They stated that they had heard the terms of the ultimatum from the public address systems and had decided to give up at once. Others of their group wished to follow them, but were afraid to take the final step.

MacDonald: Within the inner defenses of Aachen, [the German commander] had roughly 5000 men. [outnumbering the 26th RCT by more than 3:1; American firepower, not manpower, would be the make-weight for the 1st Division.] Colonel Seitz pressed his 2d Battalion...up to the Aachen-Cologne railroad tracks at Rothe Erde and prepared to send the battalion westward through the heart of Aachen. His remaining battalion, the 3d, under Lt. Col. John T. Corley, moved to jump-off positions north of Rothe Erde (between Rothe Erde and Haaren). From there Corley was to strike northwestward against a wilderness of factories lying between Aachen proper and Haaren and thence westward to seize three hills that dominate Aachen from the city's northern fringes [the adjoining Lousberg, Salvatorberg, and Wingertberg; the latter was fashioned into "Farwick Park."]

The bulk of this hill mass, developed as a big public park, is known as the Lousberg. It rises to a height of 862 feet and casts a shadow over almost the entire city. The Americans were to know it as Observatory Hill after an observation tower on the crest. A lower knob on the southeastern slopes of the hill, crowned by a cathedral, is known as Salvatorberg. Farther down the southeastern slopes in Farwick Park stands the elaborate Palast-Hotel Quellenhof and a municipal Kurhaus where, in happier days, patrons took the medicinal waters.

Soon after the surrender deadline expired on 11 October, four groups of IX Tactical Air Command P-38's and P-47's (about 300 planes) opened the assault. On targets primarily on the perimeter of the city, selected by the infantry and marked with red smoke by the artillery, the planes loosed more than sixty-two tons of bombs. In a deafening cacophony, twelve battalions of VII Corps and 1st Division

**Operations Sketch
26th Infantry Regiment
Aachen, October 1944**



artillery took up the bombardment. Division artillery hurled some 2,500 rounds into the city while corps artillery contributed 2,371 rounds, a total of 169 tons. Though both air and ground observers deemed the bombing and shelling accurate, patrols that tested the defenses in the early evening found no appreciable lessening of German fire.

After daylight the next morning, 12 October, three groups of fighter-bombers returned to drop ninety-nine tons of bombs. Thereafter Aachen became a secondary target. Except on the third day (13 October), when two groups dropped eleven and a half tons of bombs, airmen made no other sizeable contribution to the assault. [In its post-war analysis of the contribution of airpower to the defeat of Germany, USAF in Europe noted that "the final capture of Aachen was not materially speeded by bombing..."] Artillery likewise resumed the attack on 12 October. Corps and division artillery expended 5,000 rounds on that date.

Even as the air and artillery bombardment continued on 12 October, Colonel Corley's 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry, attacked to clear the factories lying between Aachen and Haaren, a preliminary to the main attack set to begin the next day. Despite the urban nature of the battlefield, the battalion methodically cleared the objective, and by nightfall was poised for the main assault. Early on 13 October Colonel Corley's battalion was to push northwest toward Observatory Hill, while Colonel Daniel's battalion began a painstaking sweep through the heart of the city.

In moving through the center of Aachen, Colonel Daniel's men not only had to plow through the maze of rubble and damaged buildings in their path but also to maintain contact with Colonel Corley's main effort against the northern hills. His left (south) flank resting on the railroad, Colonel Daniel had an attack frontage of about 2,000 yards, no minor assignment in view of the density of the buildings. Of necessity, his advance would be slow and plodding.

Following the German commander's refusal to accept unconditional surrender, all companies of the [2d] battalion vigorously pushed patrols into the main sector of Aachen, and reported that enemy defenses had not been damaged by air bombing and artillery barrages directed into the city. The aggressive, alert patrolling established the enemy line of defenses extending north to the city cemetery [Friedhof]. (Headquarters, 26th Infantry, Citation of Unit, 30 March 1945)

Daniel: At 0930 hours, 13 October, there being no indication that the ultimatum had been accepted, the leading elements of the rifle companies crossed the tracks to embark on the subjection of the town. The preparatory mortar and artillery fire was very effective in eliminating opposition in the block of houses just beyond the railroad tracks. There were some uneasy moments as the tanks negotiated the steep descent of the railroad embankment; but the crossing was made successfully. Much credit is due to the tank platoon leader for the aggressive leadership of his armor on this occasion. Then began the slow mopping up of the buildings in the succeeding blocks. The infantry had been instructed to avoid the open streets, and to work through the cellars with liberal expenditure of concussion grenades. The process was necessarily slow and methodical; it was found that in many blocks all cellars were connected, thus making it possible to clear the entire block without emerging on the streets.

Pillboxes, trenches, anti-tank ditches, apartment houses containing 20mm and 75mm anti-tank guns barred the way to the 2d Battalion's assault north of the tracks. Under heavy artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire, "E" Company attacked the enemy defenses and cleared those along the railroad banks. Company "F," as it came under heavy fire, moved to its left and pushed north. Three hours of heavy fighting saw "F" Company at the edge of the cemetery, where the enemy elected to make a stand. (Headquarters, 26th Infantry, Citation of Unit, 30 March 1945)

As "E" and "F" advanced in their sector, it was apparent that "F" was having trouble on its

exposed flank. Until a junction was made with the 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry, this flank would cause difficulties. Company "F" skirmished bitterly in the Friedhof (cemetery) as snipers fired from its walls and down its lanes. While deploying his forces to eliminate this opposition, the company commander of Company "F" was mortally wounded.

As the reinforced battalion drove north, "G" Company held positions along the railroad tracks, and "C" Company was pulled out of the 1st Battalion to clear the area parallel to the rails, and ward off enemy attempts against the southern flank of the battalion. South of "C" Company, a Composite Company formed from the Regimental Headquarters and headquarters Company and the Anti-tank Company protected its assigned sector so skillfully that the enemy forces were misled as to its numbers, and not once attempted a thrust at the thinly held line. (Headquarters, 26th Infantry, Citation of Unit, 30 March 1945)

Company "G", as soon as "E" and "F" had cleared the tracks, threw one platoon across to secure the underpass at Rothe Erde station. In the late afternoon an archway was cleared, and the remainder of Company "G", with armor attachments, entered the city. Companies "E" and "F" had reached their objectives at 1700 hours, and secured their positions for the night. Company "G", having secured the approach to the town on Adalbertstein Weg, also buttoned up. That night aggressive enemy patrols attacked Company "F" outposts, but were driven off. For the next eight days which were required to clear the town, the type of resistance encountered was stubborn, necessitating the search of each cellar and building.



POW and Civilians being evacuated from the zone of 2d Battalion 15 October

Moving in an area so vast that the entire battalion could easily have been engulfed in one of the huge buildings in the sector, companies were assigned objectives ordinarily handled by higher units, and platoons were pitted against defenses demanding larger attacking forces. "E" Company working to the left of "F" Company, which was still clearing the remnant of enemy opposition in the cemetery, committed one platoon to storm a building defended by four machine guns and two machine pistols,



An infantry-tank team attacking in the rain, 15 October 1944

and protected by German foot troops with rocket-guns and small arms. Anti-tank fire proved futile against the concrete and steel reinforced structure, and riflemen infiltrated under intense enemy fire that took its toll, and stormed the building, killing and wounding the entire German group of defenders. (Headquarters, 26th Infantry, Citation of Unit, 30 March 1945)

As each day passed, the plan of action (given out each night), was designed to bring companies on line and make certain that solid contact existed throughout the battalion front. As the battalion advanced, all civilians were evacuated to the rear so that the town became deserted except at the front lines, which as each day passed included more and more of the city. The area was being constantly visited by reporters who found it quite safe to wander at will within the limits of the battalion zone as



Machine gun supporting the attack, 15 October. Note tell-tale dust long as they read their maps correctly and practiced a certain amount of discretion in approaching the front lines.

"F" Company's drive east of the cemetery was blocked by a pillbox two stories high, controlling the approaches to a strongpoint. The entire company came under heavy fire as all three platoons were committed to take the pillbox. Moving closer to the enemy positions, the company leveled rocket-gun and rifle-grenade fire at the apertures, and succeeded in silencing several of the enemy weapons within the pillbox. One platoon then stormed it. Machine-guns and machine-pistols laid down heavy fire which failed to hold back the rush of the assault squads. Hand grenades were used by both sides... At 1230 hours, all three companies began a concerted push. Company "F" which had, at considerable cost,



An infantry-tank destroyer team, 15 October

abreast of those of the other two rifle companies. At 1230 hours, all three companies began a concerted push. Company "F" which had, at considerable cost, cleared Friedhof (cemetery) the previous day, pushed on over the high cemetery wall, suffering casualties from snipers and panzerfaust. Company "E" advanced through the buildings to the southwest of Adalbertstein Weg, blasting every building with tank fire, moving systematically through the cellars, and searching each separate room. The German defenders were quick to shoot at anyone in an exposed position.

Company "G" at this point had its first experience with one of the air raid shelters (bunkers) which were a feature of the town of Aachen. These shelters were huge, square structures designed for protection of civilians from air attack, and were so strongly built that direct fire by tank destroyers produced only a slight splintering effect on the gray, concrete walls. Since they possessed no embrasures for mounting machine guns, they were unsuitable for protection against attack by land. The best method of inducing the defenders to surrender was by means of smoke grenades or flame throwers. Some seventy-five German soldiers and about three thousand civilians surrendered to Company "G" from this bunker. All had been living like animals for several weeks; the ventilation and lighting facilities were inadequate, so that, if one entered without a torch, one was soon lost in the stench-filled corridors. Company "E" overran [another such] bunker which was being used as a hospital.

A coordinated attack by all companies was launched at 1520 hours, 15 October 1944, with artillery preparation; pouring rain made the stubborn house-to-house fighting even more difficult. The



Heavy machine gun of Company H, 15 October

pattern of the struggle was unchanged; all companies progressed several blocks westward. Company "F" was still having difficulties with its northern flank. Two hundred prisoners were taken from a bunker which surrendered to an American officer bearing a white flag. An enemy anti-tank gun firing from Kaiser Platz east down Adalbertstein Weg made communication between Companies "F" and "E" difficult and also rendered the road risky for armor. The personnel manning the gun were finally driven off on a subsequent day when the infantry overran its position.

Company "G" continued its advance down Kaiser Allee, making use of its attached heavy machine guns to spray suspected sniper and machine gun locations. It was discovered that the positions of the guns had to be chosen carefully, for tell-tale clouds of dust were apt to rise from the rubble of wrecked buildings when the guns were fired. As it advanced, Company "G" discovered some supplies (Waldorf cigarettes and mortar ammunition) which had been parachuted from enemy planes the previous evening. All companies pushed on again at 0840 hours, 16 October 1944. Company "F" still encountered much sniper and panzerfaust fire and some mortar fire. The mortars were believed to be emplaced in the vicinity of Lousberg. Evening found a German tank within fifty yards of a Company "F" position; it was driven off by mortar fire.

Company "E" pushed on as far as Kaiser Platz, where the opposing forces sniped at each other from opposite sides of the broad square. Company "G", fighting up-hill against heavy resistance, reached Wilhelmstrasse, where a tank-supported attack by enemy infantry developed. The counterattack was repulsed after bitter fighting and mounting casualties. During the night, when the vigilance of infantrymen on guard was neutralized by the pitch darkness, German grenadiers knocked out one of



Company G attacking 17 October

our tank destroyers. By this time, definite contact had been established between Company "F" and elements of the 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry.

MacDonald: The fighting in Colonel Daniel's sector quickly fell into a pattern. Dividing his resources into small assault teams, Colonel Daniel sent each infantry platoon a tank or tank destroyer. These would keep each building under fire until the riflemen moved in to assault; thereupon the armor would shift fire to the next house. Augmented by the battalion's light and heavy machine guns firing up the streets, this shelling usually drove the Germans into the cellars where the infantry stormed them behind a barrage of hand grenades. Whenever the enemy proved particularly tenacious, the riflemen used other weapons at their disposal, including demolitions and flame throwers employed by two-man teams attached to each company headquarters.

The men did not wait for targets to appear; each building, they assumed, was a nest of resistance until proved otherwise. Light artillery and mortar fire swept forward block by block several streets ahead of the infantry while heavier artillery pounded German communications farther to the rear.

To maintain contact between units, Colonel Daniel designated a series of check points based on street intersections and more prominent buildings. No unit advanced beyond a check point until after establishing contact with the adjacent unit. Each rifle company was assigned a specific zone of advance;

company commanders in turn generally designated a street to each platoon. After a few bitter experiences in which Germans bypassed in cellars and storm sewers emerged in the rear of the attackers, the riflemen soon learned that speed was less important than pertinacity. The sewers posed a special problem; each manhole had to be located and thoroughly blocked and covered. Another special problem stemmed from glass and other litter that punctured tires on jeeps used for evacuating wounded. Medics found a solution in weasels (M-29) tracked, lightly armored cargo carriers.

On 17 October 1944, a "G" Company platoon braved intense enemy machine-gun fire to cross a wide bomb-leveled area in order to attack some machine-guns dug-in among the ruins of houses. While the platoon was in the assault, two enemy tanks backed up the German machine-gun nests with 88mm fire. Though it suffered heavy casualties, the rifle platoon still pressed the attack. Summoned up, a machine-gun section carried the fight to the tanks. Though the tank fire was crumpling the walls about the machine-gun positions, and forced the German tanks to button up and later withdraw. The riflemen throughout this action had closed in on the machine-gun nests, and in stiff fighting cleared out the enemy. (Headquarters, 26th Infantry, Citation of Unit, 30 March 1945)

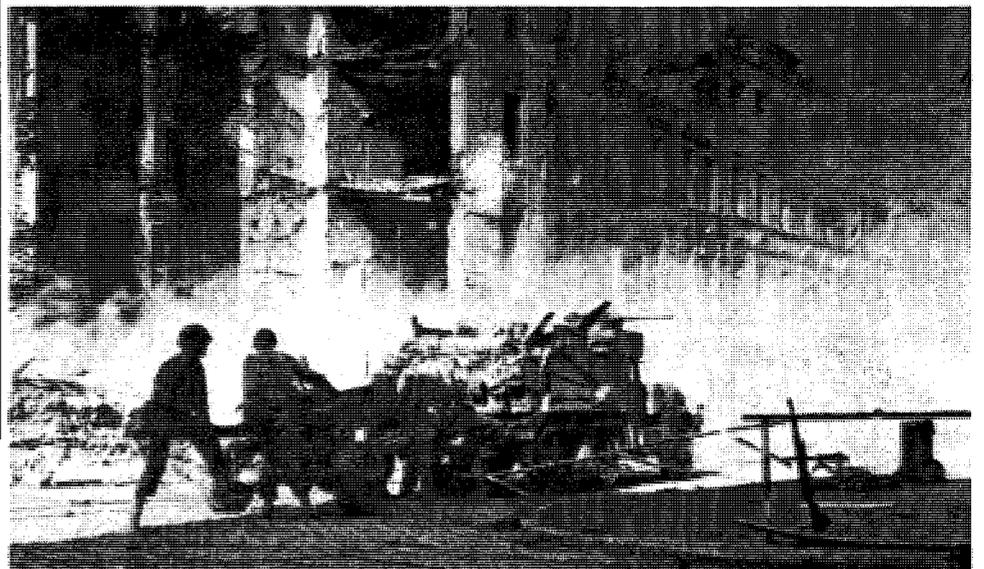
Daniel: Company "F" held fast on 17 October, while units to the north, which were having a difficult struggle around Observatory Hill, came abreast. Company



The 26th fought light

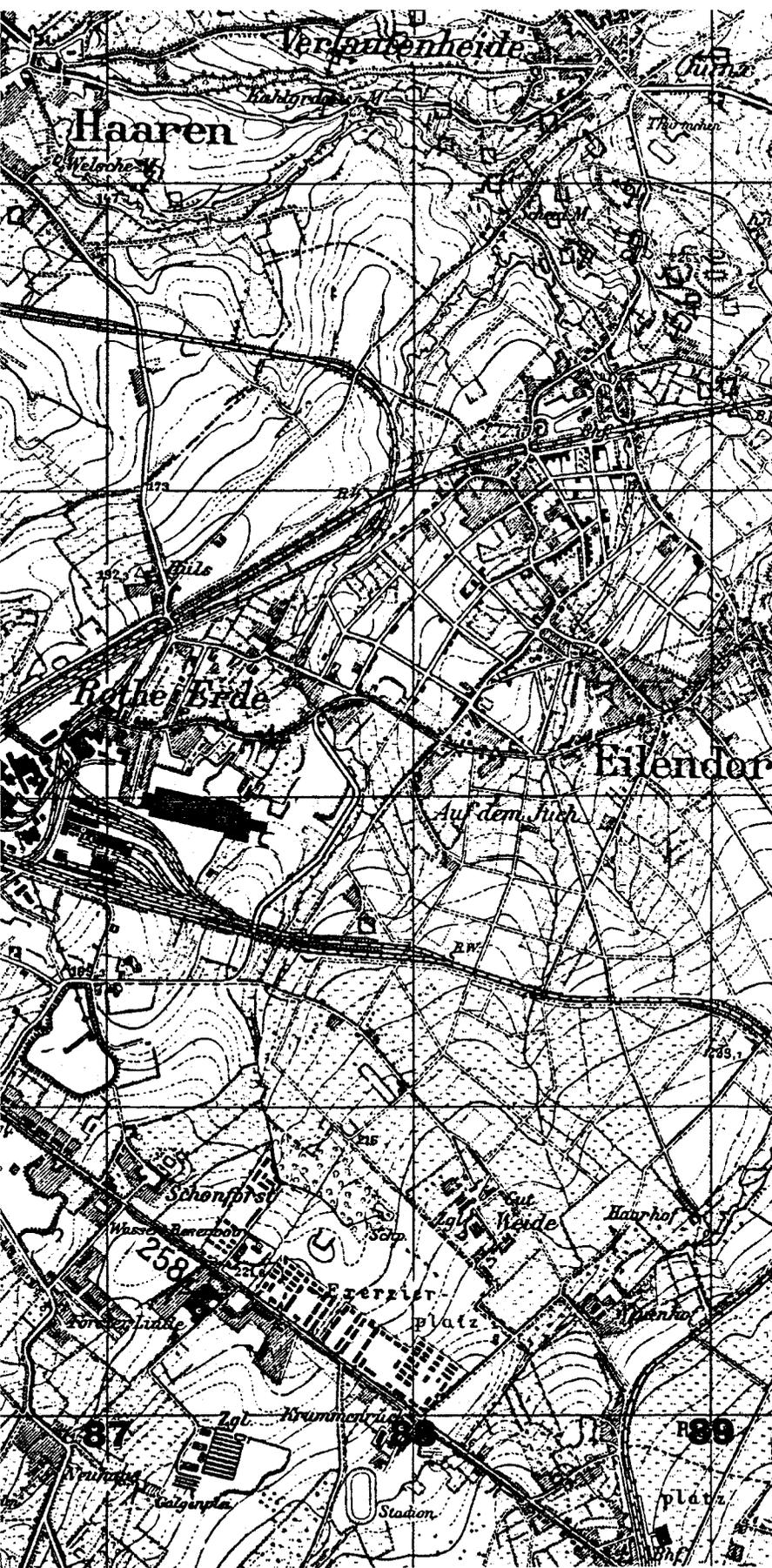


Used plenty of firepower



And exploited tracked vehicles





The Battlefield

This is a German military map, circa 1944; the grid is 1000 meters. As the map of smaller scale on the inside front cover illustrates, the border defenses encircled Aachen: the "Vorstellung" along the frontier west and south of the city, with dragon's teeth, tank ditches, and covering concrete bunkers or "pillboxes," and the "Limes-stellung" west and north of the city, a more formidable array of such fortifications. The U.S VII Corps easily penetrated the former – the speed of its advance foreclosed the German's manning most of those defenses. But the latter was another matter: there the Germans were able to use the fortifications as they had been designed – to delay, to weaken, and to canalize an attacker, and to cover powerful mounted counterattacks, such as that of *I SS Panzer Corps*, diagrammed on the rear cover.

In grid square 8844 icons depict the pillboxes on the ridge between Eilendorf (8943) and Velautenheide(880455): the 16th and 18th Infantry RCTs of the 1st Infantry Division wrested these fortifications from the Germans, and successfully defended their sites on high ground against determined attacks from the east and north. Behind the shield so established, the 26th Infantry RCT attacked west-northwest into Aachen on the axis ROTHE ERDE (870433) – LOUSBERG (835444), "looking over their right shoulder" as German counterattacks raged to their rear. The roads running northward out of Aachen beyond Haaren (868454) were critical: on these the Germans depended to support the garrison in Aachen. The 1st Division closed these first by fire, and then by juncture with the U.S. 30th Division attacking southeast.

Outnumbered, with no special training for operations in urban terrain, undeterred by Army doctrine that viewed use of armor as inappropriate in cities, the 26th RCT succeeded because it employed, as its commander, Colonel Seitz, put it: "common sense, normal tactical principles, and maximum firepower."

"F" was having trouble with anti-tank guns which were firing down the main approaches to the company front. Companies "E" and "G" pushed off at 0800 hours to cross one of the town's main streets — Wilhelmstrasse. Casualties were being experienced from falling brickwork. The Aachen buildings were in such a precarious condition from shelling and bombing that only tottering walls stood in many sections. Whether with intention or not, the Germans sometimes fired their anti-tank guns high at the facades of buildings with the result that the precarious walls collapsed on the attackers.

All companies resumed their attack at 0730 hours, 18 October 1944, working toward the cathedral area and the State Theater. Resistance was, as usual, bitter. The enemy was, apparently, using the burnt-out shell of the State Theater as a strong point for machine gun and anti-tank gun positions. It was decided to blast this structure with a self-propelled 155 mm gun which had been attached to the battalion. The gun was placed in position at the corner of Wilhelmstrasse and Hindenburgstrasse, and about seven rounds fired, with considerable effect.

Company "G", in the course of the fighting, captured another air raid bunker.

At 2400 hours, 18 October, Company "C" [1st Battalion, 26th Infantry] was attached to the 2d Battalion and assigned a sector just to the south of LOUSBERG. A battalion of the 110th Infantry of the 28th Division was assigned the job of covering the southern flank of the 26th Infantry.

On the morning of 19 October 1944 all companies advanced toward the western fringes of the city, clearing beyond the cathedral area.

At this time, nightly efforts were made to burn the buildings to our front by firing white phosphorous shells from the 81 mm mortars. Unfortunately, the buildings were, for the most part, built of stone and so demolished by bombing that white phosphorous shells had little effect.

All companies made a coordinated attack at 0730 hours, 20 October 1944, beyond the cathedral area, the objective to be the railroad tracks, encircling the city on its western approaches. Company "F" encountered bitter resistance at the Technical High School, which had become a fortified strong point...

The key defensive feature which the Germans relied upon to make a prolonged stand was the Technical School. Into this the headquarters of the 404th Regiment poured the young, determined Germans who were ordered to hold to the end. The defenses the German garrison had planned to hold for weeks, and has stocked with ample supplies of food and ammunition, were reduced by "F" Company's furious assault in five hours. Driving hard against the outpost buildings before the school, four squads worked from roof to roof clearing the machine gun nests which were sited to crossfire upon the approaches to the school. Anti-tank, machine-gun, and small arms fire pinned down the first assault platoon, and the second which tried to work to the left. The third platoon moved to the right, and finding an opening guarded by a machine-gun crew blasted aside resistance with rifle grenades and rocket-gun fire. As the first squad poured into the breach, the enemy forces within hurried to seal the squad off, and violent fighting raged before the second squad poured in and wrested one corner of the building. In a desperate attempt, the enemy moved an anti-tank gun into position to fire at the corner holding the advance squads of the 3d assault platoon. A rocket-gun team killed the German crew, and badly damaged the weapon, which blocked the corridor. In the intense close fighting that ensued, the whole of "F" Company was committed, and after five hours of fighting, the survivors of the enemy garrison surrendered. (Headquarters, 26th Infantry, Citation of Unit, 30 March 1945)

By dusk on 21 October 1944 all companies had cleared their assigned areas, and were ready to evacuate Aachen, which had become a ghost city.....



Advance of the 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry

This map plots the front line trace at dusk of Col. Daniel's battalion. It traversed some 3 km. on a front of 1500 to 2000 meters; over the eight days depicted, it advanced 350-400 meters per day. Typically the battalion fought by day, and used darkness to resupply and to prepare for the resumption of the attack at daybreak, burning the buildings immediately in front of them with incendiary munitions. Part of the battle was fought in darkness underground, in the cellars and tunnels. Casualties among leaders were high: Company F lost two company commanders and all its platoon sergeants. Corporals led platoons, and often privates replaced squad leaders. Colonel Daniels characterized the fighting as "heavy, sustained, and without quarter...the young German soldiers defended each position to the death." He estimated that his soldiers killed some 1000 and took 1600 PW. Over 7000 noncombatants were evacuated. Casualties of 2d Battalion, 26th Infantry, were 206, of whom 35 were killed and 8 missing.



3d Battalion in the factory district, 13 October

On the northern outskirts of the city lay the factory district, with its foundry and rolling mills, factories and pillboxes strengthened by road-blocks and wire barricades. Here lay the first test. Under intense anti-tank, mortar, machine-gun and small-arms fire, Company "K" attacked the foundry. Stout walls, reinforced by sheets of steel which were to serve as German tank parts, defied direct cannon fire. The rifle platoons deployed under the punishing fire, and, clearing paths through the barricades and wire obstacles, stormed the buildings of the foundry. Enemy forces launched an endless series of counterattacks to regain the lost sections of the foundry. In hand-to-hand fighting, the company tenaciously withstood the savage assaults, and then inched forward. War was waged on three levels, when entrance to a building had been forced and the ground floor secured, hostile groups had to be cleared first from each floor, then from the cellars, tunnels, catacombs and air-raid shelters, then from the sewer system which linked the underground system of tunnels. Fighting a foe that knew his ground thoroughly, the companies attacking the foundry and the buildings to the right of it skillfully probed each section and carried the fight to the enemy...In the heavy, prolonged fighting through the morning and afternoon, few prisoners were taken as the young German defenders chose to hold their posts to the last. (Headquarters, 26th Infantry, Citation of Unit, 30 March 1945)

MacDonald: In the other half of the attack, Colonel Corley's battalion, which was driving west toward the high ground marked by Lousberg (Observatory Hill), the Salvatorberg, and Farwick Park, found the route blocked on the first day 13 October, by stoutly defended apartment houses. The men measured their gains in buildings, floors, and even rooms. Someone said it was "from attic to attic and from sewer to sewer."

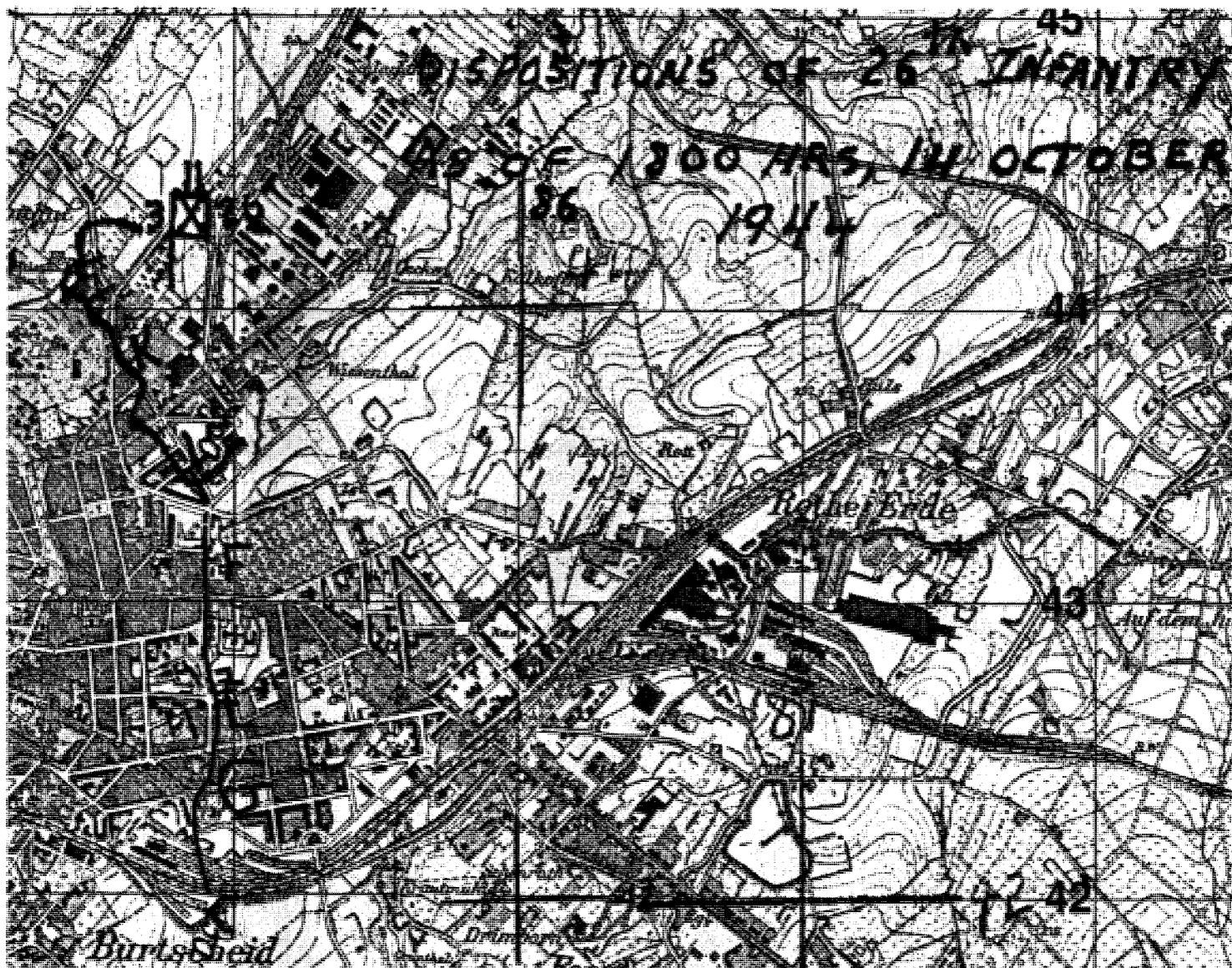
As riflemen of Company K advanced down Juelicher Strasse, 20-mm. cannon fire from a side street drove them back. Two accompanying tanks remained exposed to lethal panzerfausts. The Germans quickly knocked them out. One went up in flames. Disregarding enemy fire, a Company K squad leader, Sgt. Alvin R. Wise, rushed to the other tank to evacuate the wounded crew. The tank, he decided, might be recovered. Climbing inside, he began to spray adjacent German-held buildings with fire from the tank's machine guns. Under this covering fire, two privates from Sgt. Wise's squad joined him in the tank. Though none of the three had ever been inside a tank before, they somehow managed to start the motor, turn the tank around, and drive it down the street to safety. [Sgt. Wise was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross.]

Having discovered on the first day that some apartment buildings and air raid shelters could withstand the fire of tanks and tank destroyers, Colonel Corley called for a self-propelled 155-mm. rifle. Early the next morning the big weapon proved its worth in the first test when with one shot it practically leveled one of the sturdy buildings. Impressed, the regimental commander, Colonel [John F.R.] Seitz, sent one of the big rifles to support his other battalion as well.

By nightfall of the first day [13 October] Colonel Corley's battalion had reached the base of the high ground. Early on 14 October, when two companies combined to overrun a strongpoint at St. Elizabeth's Church, the momentum of the attack carried one of the companies a few hundred yards past the church and into Farwick Park, the big park surrounding the Kurhaus and Palast-Hotel Quellenhof. Yet this company's hold was tenuous at best, for the rest of the battalion was still occupied on the approaches to the park. The Germans still held the buildings in Farwick Park: the hotel, the Kurhaus, a greenhouse (Orangerie), and several gardening buildings. As early as 13 October, the drive toward the high ground had prompted the enemy commander, Colonel Wilck, to appeal for reinforcements. By nightfall, in response to this plea, the Germans on Observatory Hill were strengthened with about 159 men who were all that remained of Wilck's own *404th Regiment*. Although Kampfgruppe Diefenthal's SS Battalion Rink also tried to reach the hill, that battalion was sidetracked... Colonel Wilck radioed his corps commander...that American tanks had surrounded his command post in Hotel Quellenhof.

In response to this startling message, the corps commander, General Koechling, tried throughout 14 October to disengage *SS-Battalion Rink*, reinforce the SS troops with a convoy of assault guns, and send them to Wilck's relief. Eight assault guns made it [through the Wuerselen gap] by early evening of 14 October, but not until the next day was *SS-Battalion Rink* to arrive...

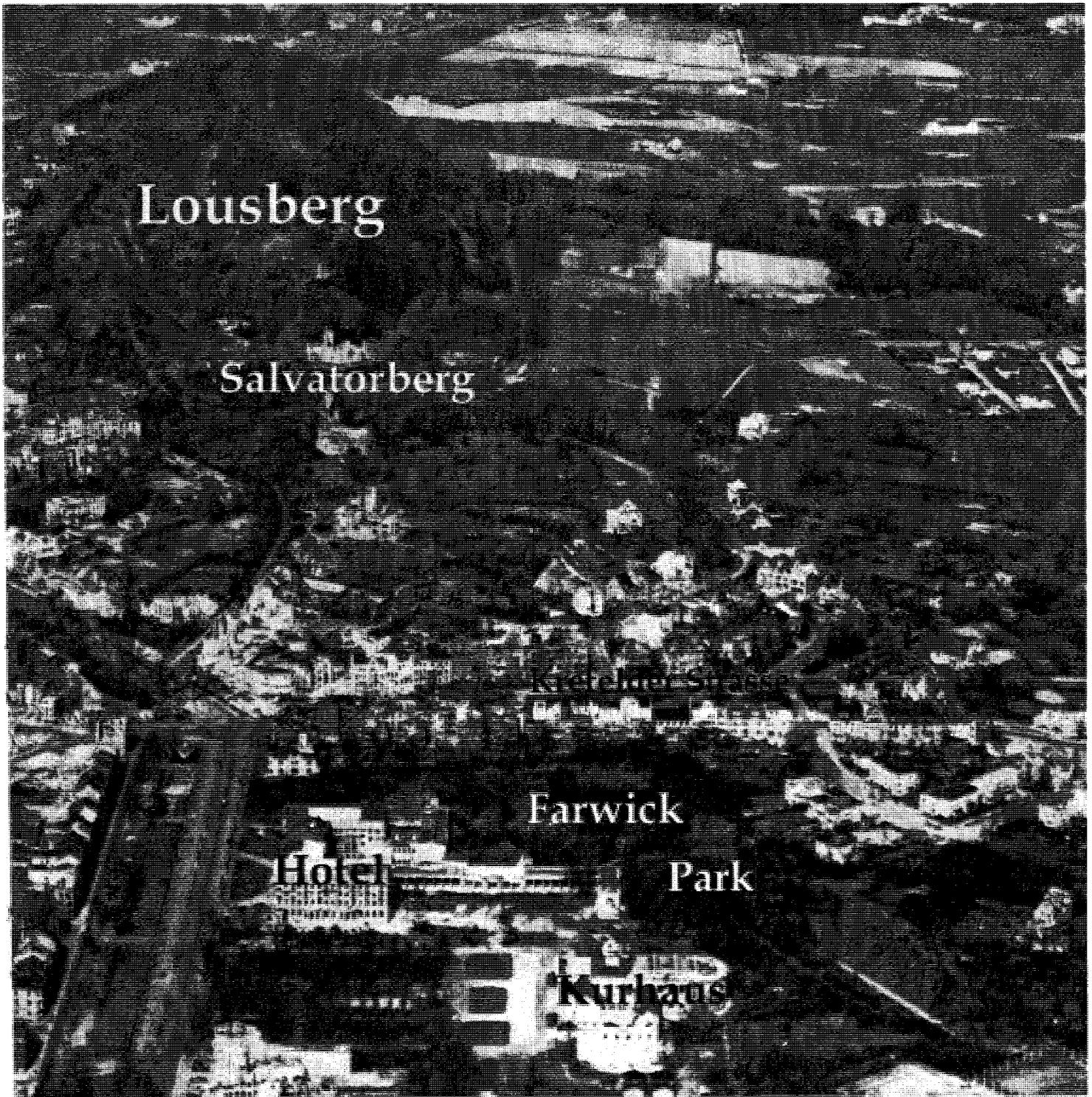
To forge the upper claw to a pincer movement aimed at eliminating enemy strongpoints in and about the cemetery, "L" Company drove north [sic] to meet the upward thrust of ["F" Company] at the other end of the cemetery. The German forces dug-in and covering the flat approaches to the cemetery swept the area with machine-gun and machine-pistol fire. Paced by leaders who headed the assaults upon the trenches and bunker defenses, ["L"] company cleared the area in heavy fighting that saw the three platoons and weapons section employ every ounce of fire-power at their command. Under the return crossfire, "L" Company riflemen fell, but the assault was pushed with relentlessness that would brook no deniance [sic]. The cemetery defenses were overrun, and the enemy groups caught between the two forces converging on the cemetery were compelled to surrender. In the meantime, "I" Company had run into stone-wall enemy defenses at the road junction at the base of Observatory Hill, and "K" Company moved forward to make a joint attack on the hostile positions. Artillery and mortar fire ranged in upon the attacking companies, but the intensity of the enemy fire again failed to halt the forward movement of the assault platoons which reduced the defenses and barricades in a series of vicious thrusts. Undeterred, the German force launched a counterattack which was repulsed after the sternest kind of close fighting. (Headquarters, 26th Infantry, Citation of Unit, 30 March 1945)



Colonel Corley renewed the attack on Farwick Park on 15 October with the assistance of close support from chemical mortars. By midday his men had wrested gardening buildings, greenhouse, and the Kurhaus from the Germans, but the enemy would not budge from behind the sturdy walls of Hotel Quellenhof. Colonel Corley was sending forward his 155-mm rifle to blast the building and readying his reserve company to flank it when the Germans launched a sharp counterattack. ...For about an hour the American company on the north edge of Farwick Park parried the blows, but at last the company had to fall back. Supported by assault guns, the Germans swept forward to hit the next company. Although forced to relinquish the Kurhaus, the company held fast in the park surrounding it. Refusing to leave his post, a mortar observer called down shellfire on his own position. By 1700...Colonel Corley could report that his men would not only hold their own, but soon would resume the advance.

The battalion did hold, but in light of the bludgeoning blows which the *3d Panzer Grenadier Division* had begun to direct against the 16th Infantry's linear defense near Eilendorf, General Huebner directed postponement of further offensive moves [by Corley's battalion]. He told Colonel Seitz to hold in place until the situation on the division's east wing could be stabilized.

By 16 October the 16th Infantry had repulsed the best the *3d Panzer Division* could offer. The long awaited juncture between the 1st and 30th Division troops to close the Wuerselen gap in the Aachen encirclement further allayed General Huebner's concern. Yet General Huebner still was to hold [Corley] in check for another day while awaiting arrival of reinforcements promised...by the corps commander, General Collins.



Corley: The Farwick Park area consisted of a dominating hill feature with a four story observatory building on top of the hill, a large building called the Kurhaus, and another called the Palace Hotel [Palast Hotel Quellenhof]. A strip of houses bordered the southwest side along Monheims Allee. Odd shaped blocks of houses bordered the northwest side of the park running south from Roland Circle to Monheims Allee.

The Park terrain was extremely difficult to visualize. The Park was originally a hill. It had been gouged out to build gardens, an artificial lake, walks, tennis courts, and the two main buildings, the Kurhaus and the Palace Hotel. The forward slope of Observatory Hill was an abrupt slope covered with heavy underbrush. The ground next to the Palace Hotel was a rapid rising slope covered with scattered trees and slight underbrush.

enemy lines, south of the Tennis Courts. This incident gave the battalion commander a hasty picture of the ground to the immediate front. It did not disclose the steepness of the ground on Observatory Hill or the ground to the west of the Palace Hotel. Coupled with the information gathered during the occupation of the area, it made a fairly accurate picture of the ground and of the enemy dispositions. As all forward elements were in close contact with the enemy, it was undesirable to send out patrols.

It was felt that control of the park area rested not in Observatory Hill — which had to be denied to the enemy — but in the occupation of Kurhaus and the Palace Hotel. Later developments proved this correct. Kurhaus was a company command post, and the Palace Hotel a battalion command post.

Daylight was about 0645 hours. Advantage was taken of the poor dawn light to place our forces in position prior to daylight. This movement caught the enemy by surprise and completely demoralized the forces occupying fixed positions in the center of the line.

No preparatory fires were laid on for 18 October. On the afternoon of 17 October, the area south of the tennis courts was thoroughly worked over with 81mm mortars and 4.2 chemical mortars. Interdictory fire was laid along Ludwig Allee and Kupfer Street on 18 October to deter the movement of



Pvt. William Zukerbow shooting at a sniper from cover of a destroyed 47mm antitank gun, 19 October



3d Battalion infantry-armor team, 15 October (note PW, right)

reserves to the Park area.

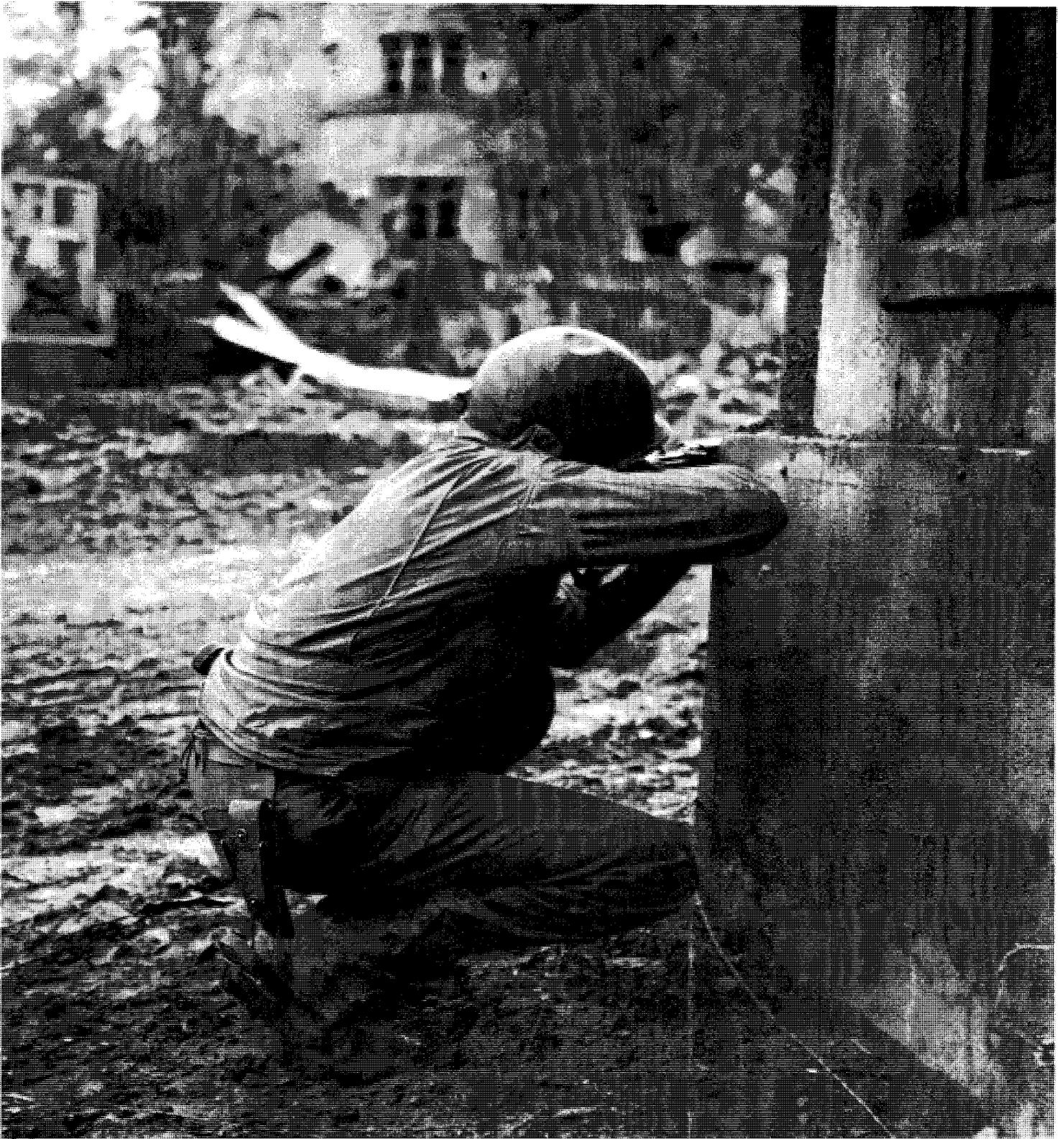
With minor exceptions the attack proceeded according to plan....This was the only time in 13 months of combat in which a written order was put out while engaged in a battle.

The movement of a platoon of Company "L" in the pre-dawn light into the main line of the enemy south of the tennis courts caught the enemy by surprise. This attack completely opened the enemy's center and it spread confusion throughout his positions.

Company "I"'s attack went smoothly following the devastating fire of fifteen rounds of 155mm rifle fire into the buildings south of Roland Circle from a position on the corner of Roland Street and Margarten Street. The attack slowed down as it approached Pipin Street.

Company "K" failed to vigorously push the attack. As a result Company "L"'s platoon attack started to slow down.

About that time (0655 hours) the 155mm self-propelled rifle arrived in the Company "L" sector. Under direction of the battalion commander it was immediately emplaced under cover of the reinforced platoon of Company "L" in the open area south of the tennis courts. It drew some automatic fire, but as soon as it got off the first round it had no more trouble. A total of thirty rounds were fired into the



Telephone was the primary means of communication.
Wiremen had to fight to keep lines intact

Kurhaus and the Palace Hotel. This fire with the fire from the tank destroyers and tanks completely neutralized these important objectives. It forced the abandonment of a 20mm gun installed in a upper story of the Palace Hotel. It weakened all resistance to our front.

The 155mm self-propelled rifle was later used from Roland and Pas Streets to neutralize the church on Salvador Hill, being used as an enemy observation post. By 1030 hours organized resistance to our front had ceased.

It was then a case of mopping up, gaining contact with each other, and consolidating our position. By 1430 hours all elements of the battalion were buttoned up on their objectives...The platoon of engineers were detached as of 1200 hours, 18 October.

Surprise, maximum use of fire power, the terrific devastating and demoralizing effect of direct 155mm self-propelled rifle fire at close ranges, and a well coordinated attack based on a sound detailed plan so that no element could misunderstand its mission, were the basis for this highly successful attack.

Mason: Our Division Commander, Gen. Huebner had been assigned to troop training staff duties at the Pentagon in the early stages of the war. As he was to some extent a "gadgeteer" his interest in military weapons was not standard, but only in the sense of weapons not normally in use. His thinking was always along lines of using a specially designed weapon at times for a special mission. He had earlier, in the Aachen area, twice put this penchant into practice. The first was a magazine for the carbine usually carried by combat officers rather than the M1 rifle. The issued magazine held fifteen rounds of ammunition. Gen. Huebner had our ordinance officer weld three magazines together in tandem so that there were forty-five rounds available without reloading. He then called in each of the nine infantry battalion commanders and presented each with this redesigned carbine. It really didn't make much difference but did promote a friendly and personal touch. One of these battalion commanders was Lt. Col. John Corley, a real veteran, a most capable commander, winner of a chest full of combat decorations and therefore a sort of "teacher's pet" of Gen. Huebner. During the first phase of the Aachen fight, Gen. Huebner, in a conversation with Corley, jokingly took him to task for not using the new carbine.

Corley too had a sense of humor, grim though I thought it was. Word was sent to Gen Huebner that at his convenience, please come up to Corley's battalion where there was something to show the General. That intrigued Huebner and shortly afterward he visited Corley. Huebner's aide told me when they returned that Corley had some dead Germans which he had personally shot with the new carbine and he wanted the General to see them as proof of Corley's use of the weapon. The three officers Corley, the General and the Aide started walking to a front line position, Corley leading. As they passed the main line of foxholes and continued farther out to the outpost positions, Huebner told his aide to wait there. Still Corley went forward. Finally, Huebner said to Corley that they were certainly in a lonesome area. Where are the dead Germans? Where is your front line? Corley replied that they were just about far enough to see the corpses; then he pointed back to the front lines. Corley was jokingly playing a game of "chicken" with the Division Commander, and admiringly lost. Fortunately they did see the dead Germans and got back without being shot. As soon as I learned of this, I had a fatherly talk with John Corley (an admired friend of mine too) about the stupidity of risking our Commanding General's life as well as his own on just a trivial matter, that we had all learned what Gen. Huebner wanted, how to get along under his command, his relative superiority over all other two star generals, and that we did not want a new commander. At least nothing like that happened again.

Gen. Huebner's other "special weapon" was a self-propelled gun firing an 8 inch shell. While in Washington he had had the War Department procure a dozen or so of them, some of which he knew had been shipped to Europe. When we hit the pill boxes of the Siegfried Line he thought of these powerful guns and asked the rear area to send him three, which they did. The General called in one battalion commander from each of three regiments, assigned a self-propelled gun to each of them and ordered that they were to be used right up in the front lines. Then he ordered that an entire rifle company be given the task of protecting the gun when used in an exposed position. Corley was one of the recipients of the guns. Our smaller artillery and mortars didn't do much damage to the pill boxes but these eight inch guns would go through concrete structures with considerable ease. Furthermore they proved to be so accurate that at a distance of up to a thousand yards it was fairly easy to hit the gun

embrasure of one of these fortifications. The guns proved their worth through all this Siegfried Line pill box fighting.

As we turned westward inside the city of Aachen these guns again provided a new method of capturing a large city. Streets were straight and provided the defenders with deadly lanes of fire for their machine guns. With solid blocks of buildings comprising most of the city, there wasn't any easy way to get at the Germans in the buildings. The eight inch guns solved the problem. Beginning on the eastern outskirts the gun would plow a round into the side of a built up block of buildings at about ground level. One shell would usually open an entrance into the first tier of floors, i.e. the first building. Then several more shells were fired through the first hole. Thus a tunnel would be rapidly made all the way to the next cross street. Soldiers could then rush the newly formed entrance, clear all the upper floors with hand grenades and rifles and then move on to the next building to repeat the process. When a block or square, was thus completely cleared of Germans -- soldiers, skulkers, or even snipers -- the next square was treated in the same way, working forward square by square, right and left, thereby avoiding nearly all exposure in the streets. It was most effective, brought us very few casualties and was disconcerting to the defenders. It was a relatively slow method but there was no need for greater speed.

MacDonald: From the time [American units northeast of the city] first closed the Aachen Gap late on 16 October, even the most fanatic of German defenders inside the city must have seen the end toward which they were headed. On that day Colonel Wilck had a total of 4,392 "combat effectives," plus 11 surgeons and 34 medics.

As a result of a decision by the U.S. corps commander, General Collins, American strength in Aachen increased in a ratio greater than the decrease in German strength. General Collins had decided to reinforce the two battalions of the 26th Infantry with the two battalions of tanks and armored infantry of the 3d Armored Division that had been alerted to counterattack any penetration near Eilendorf, but had not been needed there. Labeled Task Force Hogan, these two units were to join the fight on the north flank of Colonel Corley's battalion to fling a right hook against the Lousberg. The armor also was to occupy the village of Laurensberg, two miles northwest of Aachen, key to that part of the West Wall which remnants of the [German] 49th Division still held north and northwest of the city.

As an additional reinforcement, General Collins, through the auspices of the First Army, attached to the 1st Division a battalion of the 110th Infantry, brought north from Camp d'Elsenborn in the V Corps sector, where the 28th Division was holding a relatively inactive front. General Huebner was to use this battalion only in a defensive role, to cover a growing gap between Colonel Daniel's battalion of the 26th Infantry in Aachen and the 1106th Engineers south of the city. On 18 October as these new units moved into position, General Huebner authorized the 26th Infantry to renew the assault.

In Farwick Park, Colonel Corley's battalion set out to regain the ground lost there three days before, pass on to the Salvatorberg, and assist Task Force Hogan's drive on the Lousberg. One platoon rapidly recaptured the Kurhaus. While the enemy cowered in the basement of Hotel Quellenhof to escape American shelling, another platoon under 2d Lt. William D. Ratchford stormed into the hotel lobby. Hand grenade duels developed at every entrance to the basement. By the time Lieutenant Ratchford had procured machine guns to fire into the basement, the Germans had had enough. Twenty-five of the enemy had died in the fighting. A search of the hotel revealed large caches of food and ammunition and on the second floor a 20-mm. antiaircraft gun which the Germans had carted upstairs piece by piece, reassembled, and sited to fire into the park.

Farwick Park and its buildings firmly in hand and Colonel Daniel's battalion continuing a methodical advance through the center of Aachen, fall of the city now could be only a question of time.

The next day (19 October) Colonel Corley's men seized the Salvatorberg against a modicum of resistance.

Attacking before dawn on 19 October 1944, a reinforced platoon gained control of the road junction at the eastern end of Lousberg Hill. "I" Company, despite determined enemy opposition moved to the southern end of Salvador [Salvatorberg] and secured the flank of "L" Company moving to high ground east of Lousberg. The enemy, holding bunkers and positions in tunnels, fought bitterly to prevent the breaching of the last formidable defenses left in their hands. Machine-gun fire from caves sought to halt the companies. The caves were sealed off by details which crawled under the machine-gun fire and blew in the mouths of the caves. The tunnel defenses were attacked, and the enemy resistance crushed. In a final effort to hold the heights, 300 SS troops of Combat Team Rink [SS Battalion Rink] attacked "L" Company positions. Against a force nearly four times its own strength, the company gamely held its ground. Mortar crews worked at top speed, and poured in a tremendous number of rounds in a few minutes. This mortar fire checked the assault, and Company "L" counterattacked, driving the SS troops before it.

At the same time Task Force Hogan was overrunning the awe-inspiring but ineffectively defended heights of the Lousberg. Because 30th Division troops already had occupied the village of Laurensberg, General Huebner changed the task force's second mission to cutting the Aachen-Laurensberg highway a short distance south of the village. By nightfall of 19 October, a part of the task force had occupied a chateau within 200 yards of this highway. In the chateau the men found stacks of ammunition of various types and, to their chagrin, whiskey bottles – all empty – scattered about the grounds.

Reduction of the Salvatorberg and the Lousberg coincided with the enemy decision to abandon attempts to break the encirclement of Aachen. Within the city, Colonel Wilck during the afternoon of 19 October issued an order of the day:

"The defenders of Aachen will prepare for their last battle. Constricted to the smallest possible space, we shall fight to the last man, the last shell, the last bullet, in accordance with the Fuehrer's orders. In the face of the contemptible, despicable treason committed certain individuals, I expect each and every defender of the venerable Imperial City of Aachen to do his duty to the end., in fulfillment of our oath to the Flag. I expect courage and determination to hold out. Long live the Fuehrer and our beloved Fatherland !"

Exhortations actually would do little to forestall the end. On 19 and 20 October resistance rapidly crumbled. Even though the battalion of the 110th Infantry was committed officially only to a defensive role, the unit joined Colonel Daniel's battalion in eviscerating the city. Already Colonel Daniel's men had seized the main railroad station and were nearing a railway leading north to Laurensberg and Geilenkirchen and separating the main part of Aachen from western residential sectors. After collapse of a strongpoint in the Technical University in the northwestern corner of the city, the battalion reached the western railroad tracks as night came on 20 October. The few Germans remaining were corralled in the western and southwestern suburbs.

On 21 October, Colonel Corley's battalion approached a big air-raid bunker at the northern end of Lousberg Strasse. Colonel Corley called for his attached 155mm. rifle. To the attackers, this was just another building that had to be reduced. They had no way of knowing that here was the cerebellum of the Aachen defense, the headquarters of Colonel Wilck. From this bunker, Colonel Wilck and his staff had been exercising their penchant for the melodramatic. "All forces are committed in the final struggle!... We shall fight on. Long live the Fuehrer!" Such was the tenor of Colonel Wilck's last messages to his superiors on the outside.



SS Battalion Rink attempted to exfiltrate its wounded in these armored vehicles



The 1st Division captured 3,473 POW within Aachen. Photo of 24 October.

As Colonel Corley called for his 155mm. rifle, Colonel Wilck, despite his exhortations, was ready to end the fight. But how to surrender? Two Germans who tried to leave the bunker under a white flag had been shot down in the confusion of battle...From[American] prisoners they solicited [two] volunteers to arrange the surrender... Bearing a white flag, the two men dashed into the middle of Lousberg Strasse. As they waved the flag frantically, the firing died down....A [U.S.] company commander returned with [the two]. Their luggage already packed, Colonel Wilck and his coterie were ready to depart....At Colonel Corley's headquarters, the assistant division commander, Brig. Gen. George A. Taylor, accepted the German surrender. At 1205 on 21 October, it was over.

G-2: 1. Colonel GERHARD WILCK, commander of the city of AACHEN, surrendered himself and his troops at 1200A hours on 21 October 1944. Two Americans, prisoners of war from the 1106th Engineer Group, were released by Colonel WILCK to make contact with the outposts of "I", Company, 3d Battalion, 26th Infantry before noon. Colonel WILCK with between 300 and 400 of his men marched into our lines shortly thereafter. The Colonel and his staff went to the Battalion command post where terms of surrender were discussed with Lt. Colonel JOHN CORLEY who spoke for the Regimental Commander in the name of the Division Commander. Upon the arrival of Brigadier General George TAYLOR, negotiations were concluded.

2. The surrender statement follows:

I, Colonel GERHARD WILCK, commander of the German garrison of AACHEN, Germany, hereby surrender as of this hour, all troops, arms, materiel, and fortifications under my command to the United States Army, it being agreed that all said troops will be treated as prisoners of war. Likewise the medical personnel, sick, and wounded are turned over for disposition in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1929. All these troops have been disarmed.

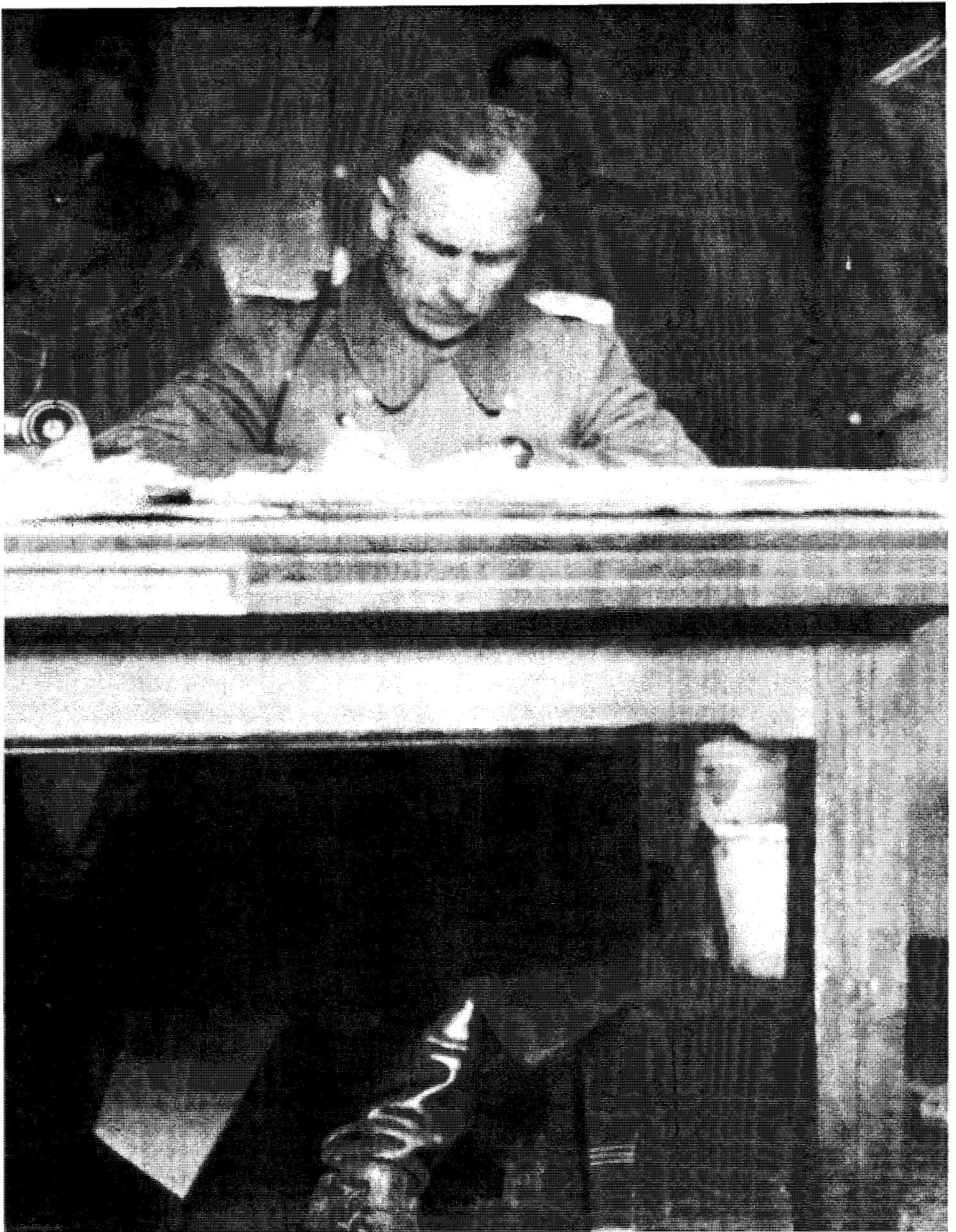
1200 Hours, 21st day of October, 1944, at AACHEN, Germany.

*signed/ GERHARD WILCK
Colonel*

3. Colonel WILCK then was granted permission to address his men. The text of his speech follows:
Dear German Soldiers:

This is a painful occasion on which I must speak to you. I have been forced to surrender, as ammunition, food, and water are exhausted. I have seen that further fighting would be useless. I have acted against my orders which direct that I would fight to the last man. At this time I wish to remind you that you are German soldiers and to ask that you will always behave as such. I wish you all the best of health and a quick return to our Fatherland when hostilities have ceased so that you may help in the rebuilding of Germany. The American commander has told me that I cannot give you the „Sieg Heil“ or „Heil Hitler“, but we can still do it in our hearts.

4. Colonel WILCK admitted that the American strategy of forcing the city from the east was very effective. Originally, when plans for the defense of AACHEN were discussed, it was assumed that the main assault would come from the south. As it was, the German dispositions were fixed, during the day at least, by constant air cover over the city. The chief shock to the defenders, Colonel WILCK said, came from the self-propelled 155s, and tanks. The Colonel spoke with considerable consternation of the 155mm self-propelled rifles. A shell from one of them, he said, pierced three houses completely before exploding and wrecking a fourth. In fact, the Colonel was pretty well dismayed at the vast amount and mechanical excellence of all American materiel. Identification of the American divisions closing on AACHEN had been made some time before the final assault began. He had no previous experience with the First Division but his adjutant, who had dealings with the Division in Africa, had assured him that it was a tough nut indeed and probably the best division in the American Army.



Courtesy of The National Infantry Museum, Fort Genning, GA



Colonel Wilck and staff enroute to captivity

Mason: One of our junior staff officers in the G2 was Lt. Robert Botsford whose civilian employment before WW 11 put him in uniform was with The New Yorker magazine, where he was a reporter, and editor, writing, many of the pieces carried in that magazine's opening short write-ups. He had a reporter's eye plus a facile command of the English language. As soon as Aachen surrendered he was sent to the city to write up a report of what he found for us. I, personally, had time for only a cursory look at the place, mainly the Cathedral and the Quellenhof Hotel, but having at hand a copy of Botsford's report, its incorporation here should be most enlightening.

1. The customary terms in figuring damage to a building - monetary value or a detailed inventory of the wreckage - cannot be applied even in extension to the city of AACHEN as it now stands after twelve days of assault by bombing and artillery. The city is as dead as a Roman ruin, but unlike a ruin it has none of the grace of gradual decay. The end of AACHEN came so suddenly and so completely that it is now of no historic interest except as an object lesson in the power and application of modern warfare. The products of more recent civilization have only increased the disaster. Burst sewers, broken gas mains and dead animals have raised an almost overpowering smell in many parts of the city. The streets are paved with shattered glass; telephone, electric light and trolley cables are dangling and netted together everywhere, and in many places wrecked cars, trucks, armored vehicles and guns litter the streets.

2. Most of the streets of AACHEN are impassable, except on foot; many of the narrower alleys are

impassable by any means at all. A few of the main thoroughfares are still open to vehicular traffic, chiefly because they are wide enough to permit passage around buildings which have sprawled into the street. Although it is true that some sections of the city have suffered less than others, comparison can only be set in terms of damaged or destroyed. In a tour through four-fifths of the city, not one building was observed which had been untouched by blast at least, and many sections, of course, had been piled into shapeless rubble by saturation bombing. It is hard to estimate how much of the damage now evident was caused by air raids before the land assault on the city began because many buildings which had been left, only shells were completely knocked over in the last ten days. A rough figure, however, would be about 60%. Oddly enough, several sections (the eastern end of Adelbertstein Way (for instance) which were untouched in the recent battering, were completely gutted by earlier raids. Grass is already sprouting up in the rubble inside the walls of these buildings. Much of the litter in the streets in this area was caused by the fact that the Germans had made somewhat listless efforts to repair earlier raid damage, or at least sweep it out of the way. Piles of debris have been shored up along the gutters without much method. In one place on the Adelbertstein Way an automobile has been buried under the rubble by a street clearing crew too harried to take time to remove it. Vegetation is already growing in the upholstery. In some cases the Germans attempted full-scale repairs on isolated buildings. A house in the vicinity of the Munster Cathedral is a case in point. Although only one wall is now standing, a three-sided scaffolding had been erected and piles of new bricks indicate that the work was well in progress when the last crusher came. These buildings in the center of town which were not hit directly have suffered from blast; they look- as though they had been picked up, shaken vigorously and slapped down into place again. In most cases the roofs have peeled off and the floors have caved in. In general, the buildings which have stood up best are those built in the weighty Victorian period like the Deutsches bank on Ursuliner Street and the newly erected state buildings like the town library and local courthouse. Nearly all of the older and "picturesque" part of the city has ceased to exist.

3. Destruction of historic and ecclesiastic monuments was inevitable. Only one church of the half dozen seen was in any shape at all, and that was possibly the ugliest church in AACHEN, St. Joseph's. Damage to the great Munster Cathedral on Munsterplatz, however, is probably more apparent than real. All the stained glass windows, of course, are shattered, but since these were only installed in the middle of the 19th Century, the loss is not irreparable. The vault over the main altar of the church appears to be firm, in spite of one direct artillery hit which pierced the groining. The main entrances to the church have been baffled by brick walls against blast damage; these appeared to have been effective for the interior of the Cathedral, although covered with dust and plaster from the ceiling, is in good shape. It is evident that the Cathedral was shaken by previous bombings; most of the main pillars supporting the arches have been reinforced. The central court and graveyard have been uprooted and taken over by a flock of chickens, all of which feel equally at home inside the church and hop through the broken casements at will. From discarded pieces of equipment and traces of food, it is apparent that German soldiers have been living in the Cathedral. Other old buildings in the near vicinity of the Cathedral have not fared so well. The town hall directly to the north has been hit repeatedly and the steel framework of its spire has collapsed and is hanging over the edge of the roof. This building is still slowly falling apart, and pieces of masonry give way every time a gun is fired nearby. Of St. Foillan's just west of the Cathedral there remains nothing but a spire and two walls.

4. If the damage to the church section of AACHEN is severe, it is nothing compared to the destruction evident in the palatial lay part of the city - along Mannheims Allee and the Quellenhof Hotel and Spa. This is the elegant residential section of the city and of imposing and heavy mansions which line the boulevard there is hardly one which has not been blown apart and collapsed. The strip of park between the two lanes of the boulevard has been pocked and cratered, trees have been snapped off at the trunk, and medics are still carrying off German dead laid on the beaten grass. The dead horse in front of the portecochere of the Quellenhof has very obviously been there for several days. The Quellenhof is a vast,

sprawling and luxurious building where a simple room and bath, with meals, cost the equivalent of \$16 a day, according to the price list still hanging on the bedroom doors. Adolf Hitler stayed at the hotel on his visits to AACHEN, and it was military headquarters for the AACHEN district-until the fighter-bombers arrived. The main lobby now is a maelstrom of discarded German clothing, weapons, food, and broken furniture. The red brocade wall hangings have been peeled off, either by blast or by Germans looking for blankets. Not one of the oil paintings of hunting scenes in the main reading room has fewer than a half dozen bullet holes in it. The gilt frescos on the pillars supporting the ceiling have been chipped off and several pillars have been snapped by fire which blew a gaping hole in the west wall of the building. Upstairs the curtains, valences and hangings of all the \$16 bedrooms have been torn and draped across the rooms; the piping for toilets, washbasins, baths and towel-warmers in the \$16 bathrooms has been broken and twisted. Many of the ceilings have collapsed, and only rarely does a patch of the basic thick red carpet in the halls appear through the pile of dust and plaster.

5. There is tacit evidence that the civilians who elected to remain in AACHEN during the final days of the assault made desperate efforts to get away from the terror. Ordinary air-raid shelters designed for a temporary stay until the "all-clear", were packed to overflowing by civilians who moved into them permanently, if the pile of personal belongings left behind can be believed. Most of them, however, rocked by the blast, leaked badly and are now a foot deep in water. In many places in town civilians erected temporary sheds in the streets out of the debris lying everywhere. These sheds were protection against nothing but the rain, but because of lack of roofs in the city, getting out of the rain at all was an achievement. The most imposing shelters were the air raid bunkers constructed by the government - four story buildings of solid cement with no windows and only limited ventilation through three-inch pipes. Civilians were packed into these, along with all their belongings until not another one could be squeezed in. Today the shelters show the appalling conditions under which the civilians lived during the siege. There



Aachen, 24 October, 1944: Franz Strasse, looking east

was no electricity, and since the walls were absolutely sealed-off to light, candles and lanterns were the only lights possible night or day. The water system collapsed early and any practical form of sanitation was impossible. The stench produced by the lack of sanitation, overcrowding and strictly limited ventilation is understandably nauseating.

6. There is no question that AACHEN, after the tottering buildings have been demolished by the engineers and after the rubble has been bulldozed off the main thoroughfares, will equal any of the destroyed towns and villages in Normandy.

Report of the Commander of the 1st Division after the war [Society of the First Division, Memorial Album]:

We reached the German border on September 12th, saw AACHEN from the surrounding hills and realized we had a "hard nut to crack." 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 around AACHEN 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.

Rather than attack directly into AACHEN, the Division plan of action called for an easterly encirclement of the defenses. A slow, grinding advance by the 16th Infantry against frequent counterattacks captured MUNSTERBUSCH and menaced STOLBERG.

The 26th Infantry got into AACHEN on the 12th of October and progress was slow but steady as bitter house-to-house fighting took its toll. During this time, strong counterattacks kept the 16th Infantry busy in the VERLAUTENHEIDE area. The 18th, generally north and east of AACHEN, had taken HAAREN, Crucifix Hill and Ravelsberg Hill. The high ground at LOUSBERG, last key to the entrances of the city was in the 26th's hands on the 20th. Thereafter, the city was cleared out by the 26th Infantry which received the surrender on October 21st.

It had been a long, slow, costly battle; but by moving around to the east and then north of the city, we had avoided the enemy's main prepared positions in the south. We had taken much punishment from artillery and strong counterattacks, but by forcing the enemy to give up his first major city, we had achieved a strong psychological advantage after the repeated vows of Hitler that the city would not be taken.



C. R. Huebner
Lt. General, USA

MacDonald: Militarily, the city of Aachen in October 1944 had little to recommend it. Lying in a saucerlike depression surrounded by hills, Aachen is no natural fortress, nor was it an artificial fortress, even though it lay within the two bands of the West Wall. The city's roads were relatively unimportant, since American drives both north and south of Aachen already had uncovered adequate avenues leading toward the Rhine. Not for a long time would the city's railroads be of use to anyone, so shattered were they already from Allied bombs. But in regard to Aachen the Germans had more to work with than usual military considerations. Nor was Hitler's insistence upon a fanatical, house-by-house defense of the city simply a superficial propagandism of the first major German city to be threatened with capture.

No shrine of National Socialism in the sense of Munich or Nuremberg, Aachen nevertheless embodied a heritage precious to National Socialist ideology. Aachen represented the Holy Roman Empire, the First Reich. Hitler had no need to remind his followers of Aachen's proud history, how at one time Aachen was capital of the Holy Roman Empire. The Germans would know that here, where the Romans had built thermal baths amid an alien wilderness, a Carolingian king had established his residence at Aquisgranum in the eighth century A.D. That here his son Charles was born — Charlemagne, first emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. That from Aachen Charlemagne had reigned over an empire destined to last, in one form or another, more than a thousand years. That in Aachen, between the years 813 and 1531, thirty-two emperors and kings had been anointed.

Hitler and his disciples were aware further how Aachen and the Holy Roman Empire were tied to National Socialism. After Napoleon has smashed the legalistic shell to which by the year 1806 the political reality of the Empire had been reduced, the romantic element in German nationalism soon had forgotten the jibes leveled at "the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation" and had identified itself with the ideological Empire, one of the eternal verities transcending temporal politics and nations, the secular counterpart of the universal Church. The romantic element in German nationalism in time had become the religion of National Socialism. Hitler himself often prophesied that his empire, like Charlemagne's, would last a thousand years. To strike at Aachen was to strike at a symbol of Nazi faith...

The battle for Aachen was over. Though the Germans had failed to prevent encirclement and had held out within the city only five days after encirclement, the true measure of the battle from their standpoint was that they had imposed a telling, though costly delay. The 30th Division listed 6,000 prisoners, and the 1st Division another 5,637, including 3,473 taken within the city.

On the American side, the 30th Division and attached troops...since 2 October had lost some 3,000 men. Indicative of 1st Division casualties was a figure of 498 incurred by the two battalions of the 26th Infantry. Of these, 75 were killed and 9 missing. A paradox of the battle, particularly in the sector of the 30th Division, was that it involved primarily infantry units yet it assumed the complexion of an armored duel. Both sides had tank support, and few units, German or American, had experienced much success unless supporting tanks were on hand. By their own count the Germans lost 45 tanks. In one two-day period (9-10 October) the 30th Division claimed 20 German tanks: 12 destroyed by 105-mm. howitzers, 5 by supporting tanks, and 3 by bazookas.

By way of an apologia for failure at Aachen, the Germans pointed to unchallenged American air superiority and to the ratio between American and German artillery in the Aachen sector. They estimated American batteries at 86 and reported opposing German batteries at 69. The average daily expenditure of rounds by U.S. artillery, they estimated, was 9,300; by German artillery, 4,500. The estimate of American batteries was no more than a slight exaggeration. Counting regimental cannon companies, organic artillery of the 1st and 30th Divisions totaled 30 batteries. Exclusive of tank and tank destroyer

pieces, the two divisions possessed 11 batteries of attached artillery. The two corps (VII and XIX) had at least 33 more batteries under direct corps control. Not counting artillery under control either of the First Army or of adjacent divisions, the Americans had a minimum of 74 batteries capable of firing upon Aachen and its environs...

The ironic truth of a prophecy which Hitler had made early in his career was nowhere more evident than on 21 October 1944 in Aachen, the first large German city lost in the war: *Give me five years and you will not recognize Germany again.* — Adolf Hitler



Epilogue. Thirteen years after we made the landing in France, I went back and visited the battlefields in and around Aachen.

I had my two young boys, John and James, along with me. Surprisingly enough, they weren't too impressed with the feat of arms that was accomplished on those battlefields. I approached the Aachen battlefields by way of Duren. On the way from Duren to Aachen, I drove past Merode where the 2d Battalion of the 26th Infantry Regiment put up such a heroic fight in November 1944.

From Merode I drove to Jungersdorf where the 3d Battalion of the 26th Infantry first busted out of the Hurtgen Forest. Both Merode and Jungersdorf were thorns in the flank of the German Army defending the front of Aachen. Both towns had to be taken by direct assault since they secured the main supply road of the German forces outside of Aachen. I saw a few scars of battle in and around the town.

I drove into Aachen through Eischweiler and Harren. My entry into town was along Julicher Strasse in the factory area northeast of town.

This was the same approach that I used with the Third Battalion of the 26th Infantry in October 1944. I was amazed at the distances we covered and how we were ever able to get into the town on the approach we took.

I drove directly to the Quellenhof Hotel which was the German CP during the fight for the town. The Quellenhof Hotel has been completely rebuilt, except for the fourth floor, and is one of the best hotels in West Germany. I was well received at the hotel, and given a corner room looking over the approach that was used in reducing the hotel. The Quellenhof sits in the middle of a park a short distance from the Kurhaus, dominated by a hill called Observatory Hill. A small pond, tennis courts, and gardens with many wooded areas are scattered throughout the park area. Actually, there is only one approach to the hotel, and that is between the pond and Observatory Hill. It was amazing to me that the park area was so well rehabilitated. I could see no scars of battle. The underbrush was thick and the hill precipitous

The service and food in the hotel were out of this world. I lapped it all up as waiters in tails hastened to wait upon me. My boys and I had the luxury of a swim in the mineral bath pool in the rear of the hotel. During the siege of Aachen, this part of the hotel was burned. It was destroyed in the attempt to eliminate the mortars that were firing from that side of the hotel.

After dinner I walked around the park in which we fought and up to Rolland Circle to the house where the surrender of Aachen was taken on 21 October 1944. The house looked about the same as in 1944. I was able to find signs of machine gun fire in various niches in the masonry around Rolland Circle.

The next day I walked around town after breakfast and, surprisingly enough, got lost. Again I was amazed that we were able to do as much as we did. It is difficult for me to realize that two battalions of the 26th Infantry were able to enter the town and reduce the major portion of it.

Later, I visited Ravels "B" [Hill] and the Verlautenheide Ridge where the 18th Infantry fought. The autobahn now runs clear across the center of the old positions on the east part of Aachen. The terrain is wide open and the ridge towards Ravel "B" dominates the approach to Aachen and cuts off any reinforcements from the northeast. Without the 18th Infantry holding this location, the 26th Infantry would never have been able to enter the town.

From Verlautenheide Ridge I drove over the back roads through Stolberg, Vicht, Zweifall, Rott, and

Rotgen along the trace of VII Corps front lines in October 1944.

I traveled the Bulge area through Monschau and Elsenborn. Elsenborn is now a firing range and training area of the Belgium Army.

From Elsenborn I followed the same approach we used in entering Butgenbach, and the same positions we took overlooking Bulligen. I was able to find the outlines of foxholes and shelters we had dug there. Most of them had caved in, but one could clearly see the impressions in the earth. There were rusted "C" Ration cans and ammunition boxes lying nearby.

In the center of the battleground outside Dom Butgenbach stands the First Division Monument with about nine hundred names on it. The ground surrounding the monument is well maintained, but the masonry and the names on it have to be retouched. I could not clearly read all the inscriptions on the monument. My old friend Seth Botts is the senior name on the monument. He was a great soldier who earned the DSC, three Silver Stars, and a number of Purple Hearts before he was killed by a mortar shell in January 1945. His last name is spelled B-0-0-T-S on the monument.

From Butgenbach, I drove out in front of the lines and then back through the town of Malmedy. From Malmedy I rode through Eupen to Aachen.

Throughout my wanderings over the battlefields, I was impressed with the fact that the First Division always held key terrain, and as a result was able to force the hand of attacking forces. Although it didn't appear so in December 1944, the Germans had to reveal their dispositions to reduce the ground held by the first Division. The First Division was able to hold up three or four German divisions as they attempted to push on to the west.

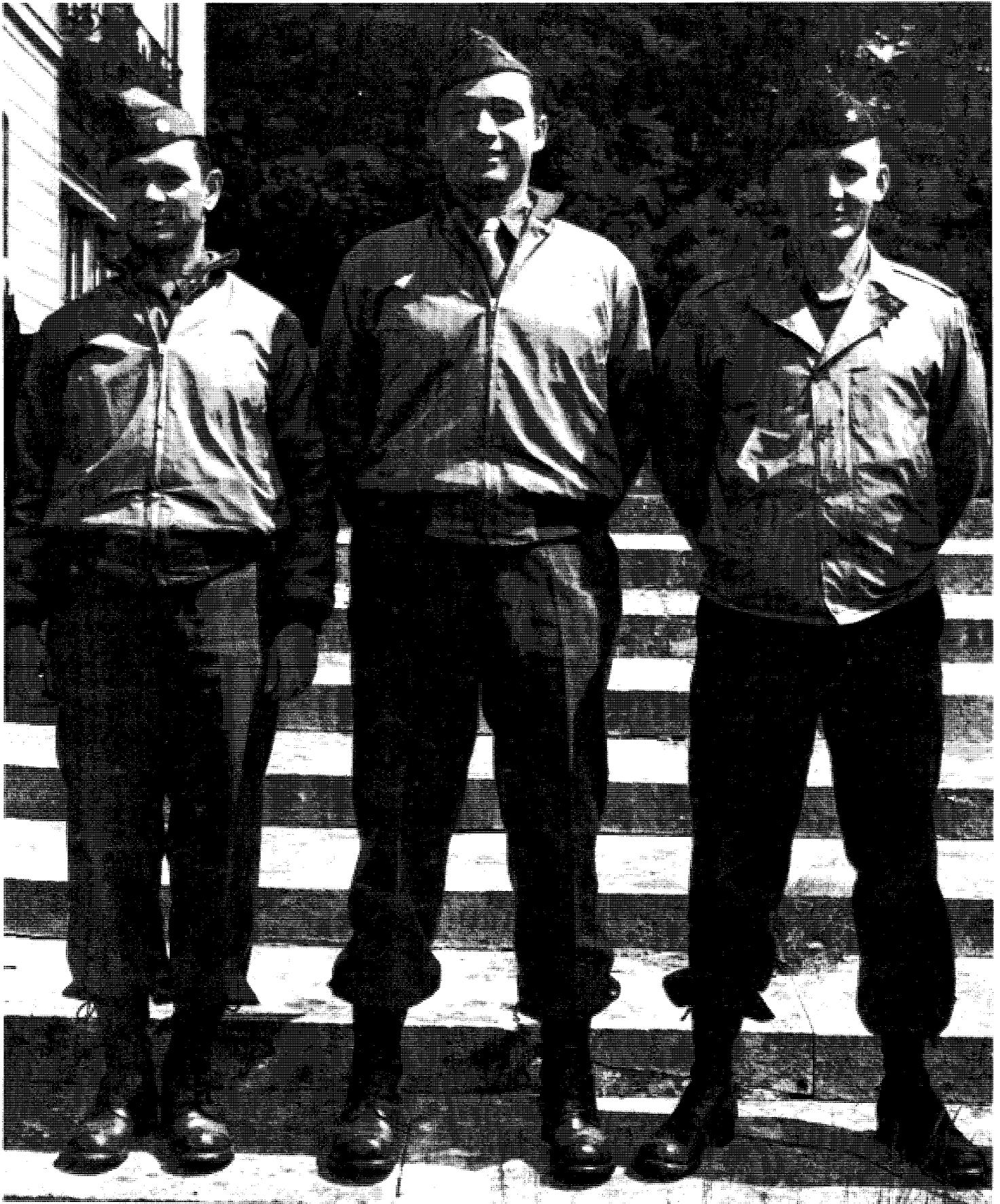
The following day I visited Henri-la-Chappelle Cemetery where some eight thousand American soldiers lie. It is a beautiful cemetery overlooking the entire countryside. There I paid my respects to many of my comrades. But for the Grace of God, I, too, would have been one of them.

I left Henri-la-Chappelle feeling very low. Outside of the town I found a First Division Monument with two thousand of the names upon it. The monument is well maintained by the Mayor of Henri-la-Chappelle, and looked in good shape; I could clearly read all the inscriptions on the monument. There is a small roadside restaurant alongside the monument.

The trip throughout the battlefields was most inspiring to me. Although the feat of arms did not impress my two sons, age 9 and 11, it drove home to me the fighting ability of the First Division in seizing key terrain and holding it against superior odds. As Terry Allen would express it, "Nothing in hell can stop the First Division!"

J.T. Corley
Colonel, Infantry

24 June 1957



Lt. Col. D.M. Daniel

Col. J.F.R. Seitz

Lt. Col. J.T. Corley

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:

Blue Spaders

First Division Museum
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 other monographs.

ENCIRCLEMENT OF AACHEN

7-20 October 1944



AXIS OF MAIN U.S. ATTACK



AMERICAN POSITION, NIGHT 20 OCT



GERMAN LINE, MORNING 7 OCT



GERMAN MLR, NIGHT 20 OCT

- ① LOUSBERG ② SALVATORBERG ③ FARWICK PARK

Elevations in meters

