

BATTLE OF AACHEN

GL-117 (19)

634th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Company B, 1st platoon

Attached to 3d Battalion, 18th Inf Regt. 8 - 17 October 44.

Group interview:

Sgt. Richard (NMI) Lobin, platoon sergeant
Sgt. Wm. A Nickell, TD commander
Sgt. Leonard Risinger, TD commander
Sgt. John B. Guill, TD commander
Sgt. Wilfred E. Nowak, TD commander

Note: 1st Lt. Ira W. Blackwell, leader of the 1st platoon, was not available at the time of the interview. When contacted earlier he had said that Sgt. Lobin could give the information adequately.

Prepared by: T/4 Ridgely C. Dorsey, 2nd Info and Hist Serv, 1st U. S. Army

8 Oct 44 - About 0300 the four destroyers of the platoon left the vicinity of EILENDORF (891435) as ordered, and moved northeast to positions among houses just south of the railroad tracks from (880439) to (8840410). The destroyers were in continuous contact with elements of the 3d Bn 18th Inf Regt on left and right, and a platoon of K Co infantry operated with the destroyers, being assigned for that purpose. From the indicated positions, during the morning the TD's fired up to 10 rounds per hour on "dozens" of enemy pillboxes to their right and left fronts, that is, toward VERLAUTENHEIDE and HAAREN, at ranges up to 1,000 yards or more. They received no direct artillery fire in return, but some indirect.

About 1500 two destroyers crossed the RR tracks at the overpass (884442) and went up the ridge, vicinity (877441) where they had good observation to the north, and fired into HAAREN and on CRUCIFIX HILL (875457). Sgt. Lobin said the cross on CRUCIFIX HILL was still up at 1500, but went down before 1700. At about the latter hour the other section of two destroyers also came over the overpass on the RR tracks, and joined the two already on the ridge. They drew small arms fire from the pillboxes ahead, enemy infantry being dug in on the reverse slope, so that from the ridge the destroyers could blast

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some of them out at point blank ranges. Destroyer crews knew that "a hell of a fight" was going on in VERLAUTENHEIDE, and avoided firing on the village for fear of hitting friendly troops. A particular target during the afternoon was an enemy tank or some type of gun in HAAREN which the enemy was firing on American forces in VERLAUTENHEIDE.

9 Oct 44 - Enemy infantry attacked the ridge from the north in platoon strength at 0630; but the attack was broken up, largely Sgt. Lobin said, by Sgt. Nickell's 50 cal. fire. Three enemy were killed, and the rest, one officer and 24 enlisted men, were taken to the rear by the doughboys. The destroyers continued to receive heavy indirect artillery fire from three directions, including that of AACHEN to the west, but no direct artillery fire of any considerable consequence.

10 Oct 44 - Although the destroyers were in hull defilade, it was "a bare assed hill", and their right flank was somewhat exposed to both small arms and artillery, that is, when the TD's fired, giving away their positions.

In the afternoon the destroyers blasted a group of houses several hundred yards to their left front at (871443) from which some Jerries had been worrying the Americans with small arms fire. The doughboys got hold of one Jerry from the vicinity of the houses, and he was sent back, returning shortly with 23 more enemy, including one officer.

11 Oct 44 - In the afternoon two destroyers advanced with K Co into HAAREN, one TD with the point of the column and one covering from the rear. On the way two pillboxes, one at (86754495) on the left, and one at (8745) on the right, gave up without a struggle and yielded about 50 PsW, including 2 officers. Moving on northeast, up the road as indicated on the sketch, and turning left into HAAREN at RJ (865452), "the doughboys walked right on into town without any trouble".

The RR tracks on the southwestern edge of the town was the K Co objective

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in that direction. Across the RR tracks to the southwest some Jerries were "running around"

on JULICHER ST., and there was a lot

of enemy bazooka ammunition lying

around, so the destroyer near the

head of the column blasted some

buildings in that direction, but did

not proceed farther, as the bridge

just northeast of the RR tracks was

mined by the enemy. While holding up for

this, an enemy concrete and steel pillbox concealed under a coalpile on the left

(marked #1 on the sketch) was discovered. Some 50 cal. was laid on it by the

TD; and 12 PsW came out. But there was little or no enemy resistance. The

enemy pillbox on the right (marked #2 on the sketch) yielded only 2 or 3 civilians --

who cooked supper for the TD crew, consisting of an "enemy" chicken and some

GI spuds. The left flank of K Co remained along the RR tracks indicated for the

night. The other TD's of the 1st platoon came up to the vicinity.

Note: The preceding actions, described by Sgt. Lobin and the other non-coms as occurring on 11 Oct 44, are assigned to 10 Oct 44 in the Journal for 3d Bn, 18th Inf. See page 2 of enclosure with Lt. Condrion's account. Sgt. Lobin said L Co had moved into the northeastern part of HAAREN on 10 Oct., as it did; but he may have erred in thinking he came in with K Co the following day (11 Oct). Except as to the date, the information he gave corresponds with the battalion account.

12 Oct 44 - One section of two destroyers operating from HAAREN proceeded during

the afternoon with the 3d platoon of K Co northwest along the RR tracks, knocking

out a pillbox at (86104555), nine enemy being killed and 12 taken prisoners.

This was about 1600. Next a pillbox just east of the RR crossing (85954565)

was shot up, some enemy being killed but none captured. Crossing the RR tracks

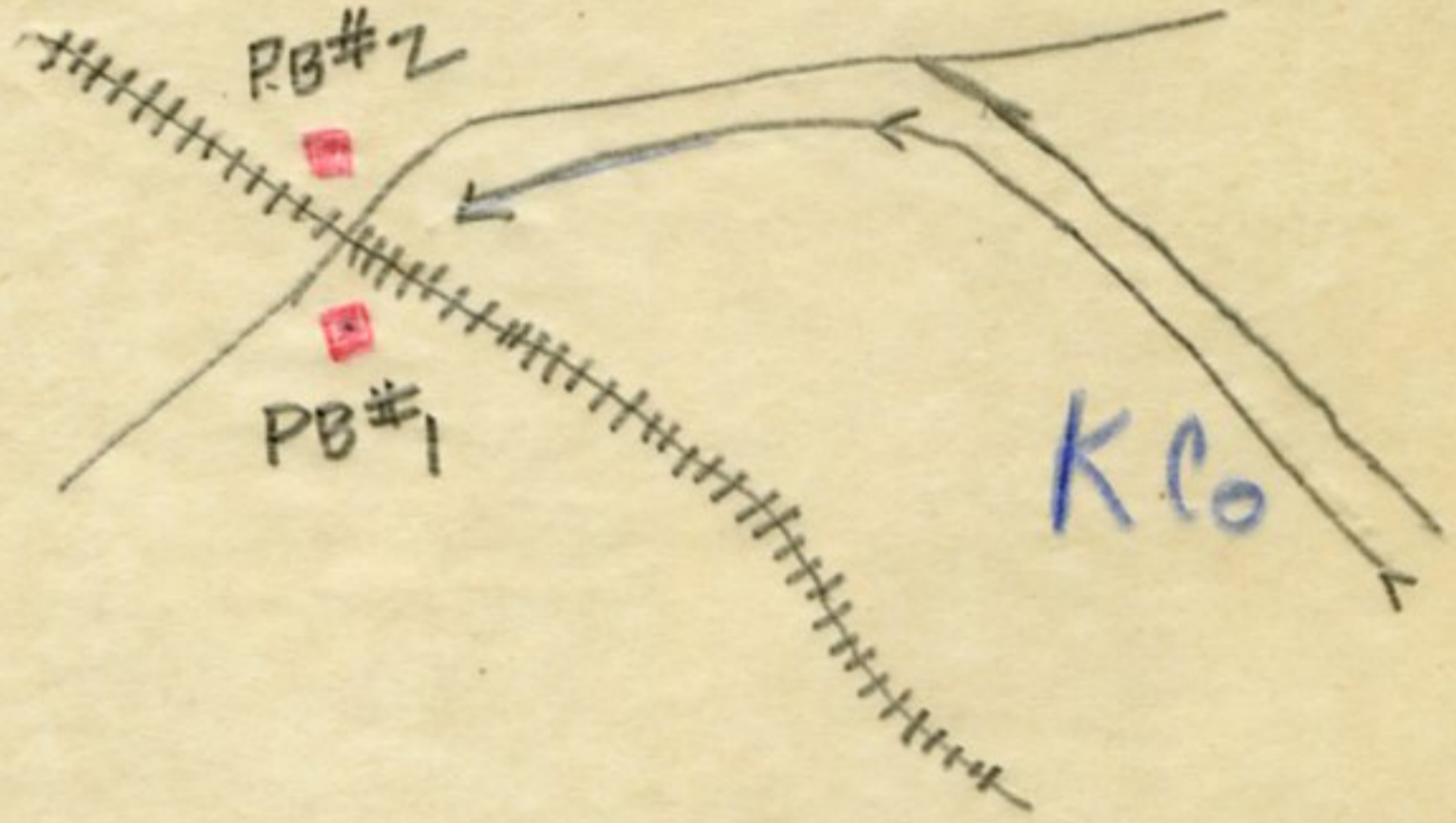
westward, and turning right (north), the TD's fired at a pillbox said by Sgt.

Lobin to have been the one indicated on the 1:25,000 map at (856461), from which

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the doughboys took about 15 PsW. However, a burp gun opened up from the rear, which the TD crew thought was from the pillbox already shot up at the RR crossing, so the emplacement was blasted again. Meanwhile, fire from about 1,000 yards north, apparently from an enemy AT gun, opened up on the two destroyers but missed, whereupon the latter shot into and burned a haystack in the vicinity of the enemy fire. The TD crew believed the haystack concealed the gun emplacement. The hostile fire ceased. The two destroyers returned to HAAREN for the night.

Meanwhile, at 0900 in the morning of the same day (12 Oct) the other two TD's of the 1st platoon left the K Co area with the mission of supporting I Co, and went northeast to the vicinity of the I Co CP, the chateau (867464) to the south of RAVELS B. Hill. Two other TD's (from the 2d TD platoon) were also near the chateau, having tried earlier in the morning to go up (north) on RAVELS B. Hill, but having found it too hot and returned. Sgt. Lobin of the 1st TD platoon now also went on foot up RAVELS B. Hill to the B Co area, but decided it was too risky to take his two vehicles up the hill in view of the heavy enemy artillery fire.

Note: At this point the writer is throwing in an otherwise fragmentary account obtained from Sgt. C. E. Tyrell, commander of one of the 2d TD platoon destroyers that went up RAVELS B. Hill on the morning of 12 Oct 44 before the 1st platoon TD's of Sgt. Lobin got to the I Co CP. The interview with Sgt. Tyrell was obtained separately, but fits in with the one with Sgt. Lobin.

Sgt. Tyrell: At about 1900 the previous evening (11 Oct) one section of two destroyers from the 2d TD platoon left VERLAUTENHEIDE and went to the vicinity of HAAREN to be with I Co which was being attacked by German tanks. B Co was up on RAVELS B. Hill, and I Co to the southeast of it. The two TD's went through HAAREN, pulling into the I Co CP vicinity, near the chateau and "just sat there until daylight." Sgt. Tyrell said the night was quiet.

At 0630 on 12 Oct Sgt. Tyrell with the commander of the other TD with him, Sgt. T. O. Romsey (not interviewed) went up the hill to pick positions for their

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vehicles, and to spot enemy tank fire which was hitting the doughboys directly. They saw a B Co runner who reported that eight enemy tanks were attacking B Co positions. The time was 0630 to 0700.

At that time both of the 2d TD platoon destroyers were pulled up on RAVELS B. Hill to the vicinity of the B Co CP (865466), while the two sergeants "went over the hill" (northwest) on foot, to make a further attempt to spot the enemy fire. Just then, however, very heavy enemy artillery started falling, so they "beat it" to a friendly pillbox about 100 yards (northwest of) the B Co CP. For 30 minutes the enemy artillery fire on B and I Co positions was so heavy, Sgt. Tyrell said, that they could not return to their destroyers. A friendly Sherman near the B Co CP was hit at this time, but not put out of action. Shortly after 0730 both of the 2d platoon TD's were withdrawn to the south, near the chateau of the I Co CP. Tyrell said he did not see any of the enemy tanks during the above action, but he understood some of them got within 35 yards of B Co positions. He also said P047's came over and "saved the day", after which "he stopped praying and started cussing."

Note: At this point the information from Sgt. Lobin and other 1st TD platoon crew members is continued.

At noon (12 Oct) when the two 1st platoon TD's had been positioned, near the chateau, permission was asked to blast a small number of enemy observed around a pillbox about 600 yards to the east at approximately (87354645); but this would have put the destroyers under observation and I Co did not want to attract enemy fire in their direction.

About 2000 that night when some engineers were laying mines to protect I Co positions, 22 mines (AT) were set off, apparently by a defective fuse, exploding within 10 yards of one of the TD's, but not damaging it. However, there were 33 casualties among the engineers, many of whom were killed or badly wounded; and the TD crews helped give first aid and carry the wounded into the chateau

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in pitch darkness, under artillery fire.

13 Oct 44 - The 1st section of the platoon remained in HAAREN, seeing no particular action during the day.

The second section continued near the I Co CP at the chateau south of RAVELS B. Hill. About 1500 one TD was hit directly by two artillery shells, one on which landed directly in the turret -- the crew was not inside -- and set the destroyer on fire. The blaze was extinguished by Sgt. Lobin, at great risk to himself the other crew members said, for which the sergeant was recommended for citation. The vehicle is now back in service (15 Nov). Two additional shells hit the sandbags banked on the destroyer's front, but did no damage -- and indication of the value of this additional protection to armored vehicles, the crew members said. The enemy fire was thought to come from the indicated enemy emplacement to the right front (87354645).

14 Oct 44 - Two destroyers of the platoon remained near the chateau south of RAVELS B. Hill; two in HAAREN. No particular action.

15 Oct 44 - Approximately same positions; some shift of vehicles for maintenance, repairs, etc.

16 Oct 44 - One of the two destroyers near the chateau had its radiator shot out by artillery fire, and one man badly wounded.

17 Oct 44 The two destroyers in HAAREN were ordered to RAVELS B. Hill to support L Co in closing the gap between the 3d Bn, 18th Inf Regt and the 30th Division to the northwest. From approximately 0900 to 1100 in the morning the two destroyers with at least one friendly tank cruised the area southwest of RAVELS B. Hill under direct enemy observation, and from the vicinity of (863463) blasted several pillboxes 300 - 500 yards to the west and northwest, from which the doughboys eventually took more than 100 PsW. The vehicles

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afterward returned to the L Co CP vicinity, and outposted the gap.

At 1700 two destroyers were sent to set up a road block at approximately (857455) to cover the main road out of AACHEN to WURSELEN. The TD's got to within 50 yards of 30th Div. positions on the other side (west) of the road, when they were told that 3 enemy tanks were approaching from the direction of WURSELEN -- about 1830 -- and were ordered back. As darkness came on, one destroyer struck a mine, breaking a track, and drawing fire from the northwest, apparently from a friendly 57 mm AT gun of the 30th Div. The crew left the vehicle and returned on foot to the ~~vicinity~~ vicinity of the L Co CP.

Note: the interview had to be ended at this point for lack of time. Apparently 1st TD platoon vehicles were not very actively employed for the next few days. Sgt. Lobin said that the net loss of vehicles in the fighting around HAAREN and RAVELS B. Hill was one destroyer.

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Interview with: Lt Emmett R. Duffy, leader 3d platoon ✓

Prepared by: T/4 Ridgely C. Dorsey, 2d Info and Hist Serv, 1st U. S. Army

8 Oct 44 - Ordered to support the 2d Bn, 18th Inf Regt, in its pre-dawn attack northward to VERLAUTENHEIDE, the 4 destroyers of the 3d TD platoon left the RR tracks north of EILENDORF at daylight, going through the RR underpass at (88754420), and followed by friendly tanks. The doughboys of E and F Co's had pushed off at 0400 and were already in VERLAUTENHEIDE by this time. Near the CR (888450) just south of the town the TD's "shot up" two enemy pillboxes and one machine gun nest, firing 14 rounds. Friendly infantry got some prisoners out of the pillboxes.

The Sherman nearest the TD's hit a mine at the indicated crossroads, and another was put out of action in the same vicinity. Lt. Buffy saw other medium tanks in difficulty. The four TD's held up, as did other armor, and remained near a house at approximately(89204485) from about 0700 to nearly 0900 when the area ahead had been swept for mines.

Arriving in VERLAUTENHEIDE around 0900 without much difficulty, there was not much small arms fire at the time, but increasingly heavy artillery fire. Two of the destroyers were placed in the vicinity of the E Co CP, the square-shaped group of buildings at (88454565), guarding the northern approaches to the town, and the other two to the south near the F Co CP, covering the QUINX road center, vicinity (88754430). It was a "quiet" night except for enemy artillery, which hit one of the destroyers in the south of the town, killing one crew member and wounding another, but not putting the vehicle out of action.

9 Oct 44 - At 0630 Lt. Duffy was notified that the enemy had attacked to the south, QUINX crossroads vicinity (887453), and penetrated between F and G Co's, threatening the Bn CP just west of the crossroads. He took one destroyer near the CP building; found that the enemy had penetrated up to the main northwest-southeast street in front of the CP; and were across the street to the south. Battalion told him "to shoot everything across the street." If any F Co doughboys were left on the east side of the street they were in cellars and pinned down. Enemy small arms and heavier fire was coming across the street. The destroyer "sprayed" the buildings on the other side (east) of the street, and blasted some with 76 mm fire. Meanwhile, friendly tanks on either side were also firing across the street. (See account of Sgt. Hajek and Cpl. Jacobs, 2d platoon, B Co, 745th TK Bn), and by 0830 the attack was broken. During the engagement an enemy shell fragment ripped the radiator of the destroyer engaged, and shortly afterward another was hit, leaving Lt. Duffy with 3 damaged TD's and one undamaged vehicle. All remained in action, however.

10 - 15 Oct 44 - For the next 5 days Lt. Duffy said his and other armor remained in VERLAUTENHEIDE undergoing continual artillery fire, so heavy that the men could scarcely leave their vehicles. The job of the TD's, the lieutenant said, was to keep the infantry positions in the town from being overrun in the repeated enemy thrusts. The enemy wanted the Americans to come out of the town, particularly the protective armor, where the enemy armor and artillery could destroy them; but the destroyers' job was to hold and safeguard; and that is what they did. Actually, Lt. Duffy said, the TD's could not have gotten out of the town if they had wanted to, friendly mines being laid so heavily and closely about.

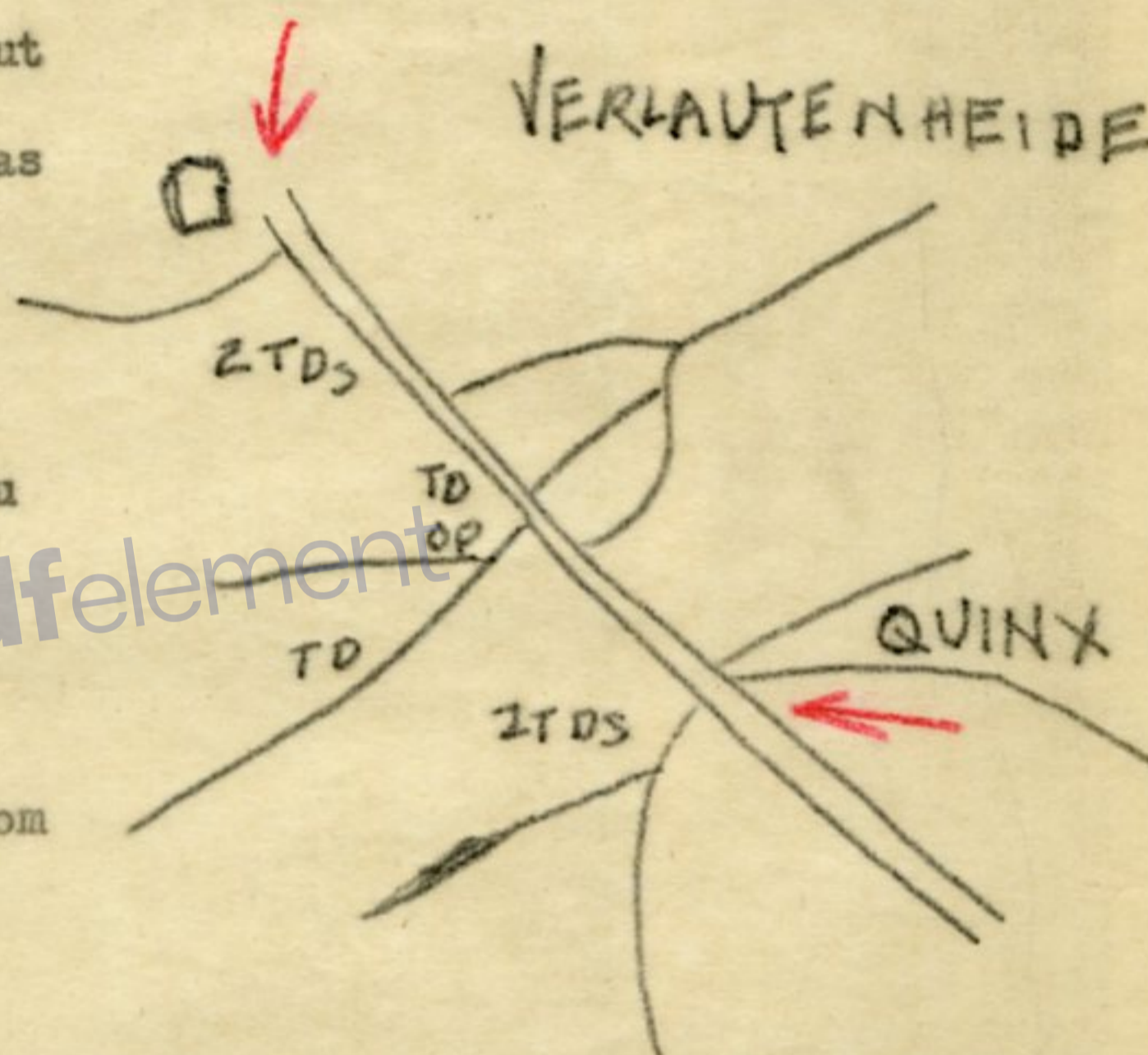
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he organized telephone communications, destroyer-to-destroyer. These were often shot out.

On 11 Oct 44 two destroyers of the 2d TD platoon were moved to the HAAREN vicinity, and Lt. Duffy had charge of the other two 2d platoon vehicles remaining in VERLAUTENHEIDE, as well as the four of his own platoon. He positioned the destroyers in the town, as shown on the sketch, to give all around protection, but particularly to the north and east. From these positions the vehicles were moved as needed to meet enemy threats, or to blast pillboxes, such as the one knocked out

at (893460) on about 11 Oct 44. It was believed that enemy infantry in the box, well beyond American lines, had a mortar. A destroyer put a shot thru the embrasure of the pillbox, and other shots blasted the roof off.

There was no more observable fire from the emplacement.



15 Oct 44 - Early in the morning enemy tanks were reported moving toward American positions in strength, from the north and east. The TD men knew that several enemy vehicles had infiltrated from the direction of WEIDEN (8948) to the RJ just north of VERLAUTENHEIDE, but had been unable to spot them because they were hidden behind the houses from (883461) to (88454585). In the morning of 15 Oct, however, the main enemy tank threat was from the east.

Around 0800 tanks were glimpsed over the folding ground 1,000 or more yards northeast toward WAMBACH (901468). A little later Lt. Duffy saw two tanks leave WAMBACH and head for the woods several hundred yards southeast, vicinity(906464). They made it to the woods before the TD nearest the OP could

get on them. Then two more, Mark VI's, tried it. But just as they showed their tails, turning to their right into the woods, the TD's shots went home; and both enemy tanks were knocked out, still in observation. Lt. Duffy said the destroyer's 76 mm fire would not have gotten the Mark VI's but for the fortunate hits on their rears. The TD also damaged an enemy SP gun in the indicated wooded area. None of the Jerry armor returned fire while making the dash for the woods, or when hit. "They were damn poor shots when they did fire back" that week, the lieutenant said.

On the same day, a Mark IV was also knocked out by 3d platoon destroyers just outside the woods to the east at (901455). The Jerry crew made off; but later (while communications between the destroyers' OP and the vehicles were shot out, and effective fire interrupted) another German tank pulled out of the woods and towed the crippled vehicle to cover.

Note: The following paragraph is supplemented by information supplied separately by Sgt. F. G. Yantis, driver of a 2d TD platoon destroyer involved in the action.

At about 1800, an enemy force of one company and two Mark V's attacked from the direction of QUINX, the enemy foot soldiers getting hold of F Co forward foxholes and the houses along the eastern edge of VERLAUTENHEIDE. (Sgt. Yantis said it was raining and the enemy pushed in because the doughboys had left the forward holes to get back to the houses out of the downpour.) Lt. Duffy moved two destroyers to stop the attack. One was a TD already in the southern part of the town, under Sgt. Nessa (not interviewed), who shot out one of the Mark V's, helping to stop the attack. The other destroyer, which had been out for repairs, had just been brought back to VERLAUTENHEIDE that afternoon, to RJ (886455), to help guard the northern approaches. It was the only 2d platoon TD in the town at the time, Sgt. Yantis driving. The vehicle was brought near the church and OP to meet the attack; but the commander of the vehicle was killed by artillery fire while he stood outside trying to get his gun on the other Mark

V, which otherwise, Lt. Duffy said, would not have gotten away. Sgt. Yantis, the driver of this vehicle, said a friendly Sherman just behind (north of) him was knocked out by the enemy tank. He also said friendly artillery was very effective in breaking up the enemy attack, and chasing the enemy tank in his vicinity.

16 Oct 44 -- In the morning a destroyer in the orchard near RJ (885456) spotted a Tiger tank about 300 to 400 yards north of the town, by the houses vicinity (884460), where enemy vehicles were known to be located. The TD fired 8 rounds at the Mark VI but the shots "bounced off" the enemy's thick front armor. A little later another destroyer in the same vicinity got within 100 yards of the Tiger and fired 5 rounds point blank, apparently without effect, for the Mark VI immediately returned fire, penetrating and knocking out the TD, and killing the gun sergeant and seriously wounding two others. The driver and assistant driver escaped.

However, one enemy Mark V was knocked out in this engagement; and during the same day a destroyer got another Mark V deployed on the edge of the woods 1200 yards to the east.

Thus, in two days of fighting, Lt. Duffy said, the tank destroyers in VERLAUTENHEIDE destroyed 6 enemy tanks: 2 Mark VI's; 3 Mark V's; and one Mark IV -- not counting two "probables".

Sgt. Orville Nessa (not interviewed) was credited with knocking out 4 of the 6 enemy tanks destroyed.

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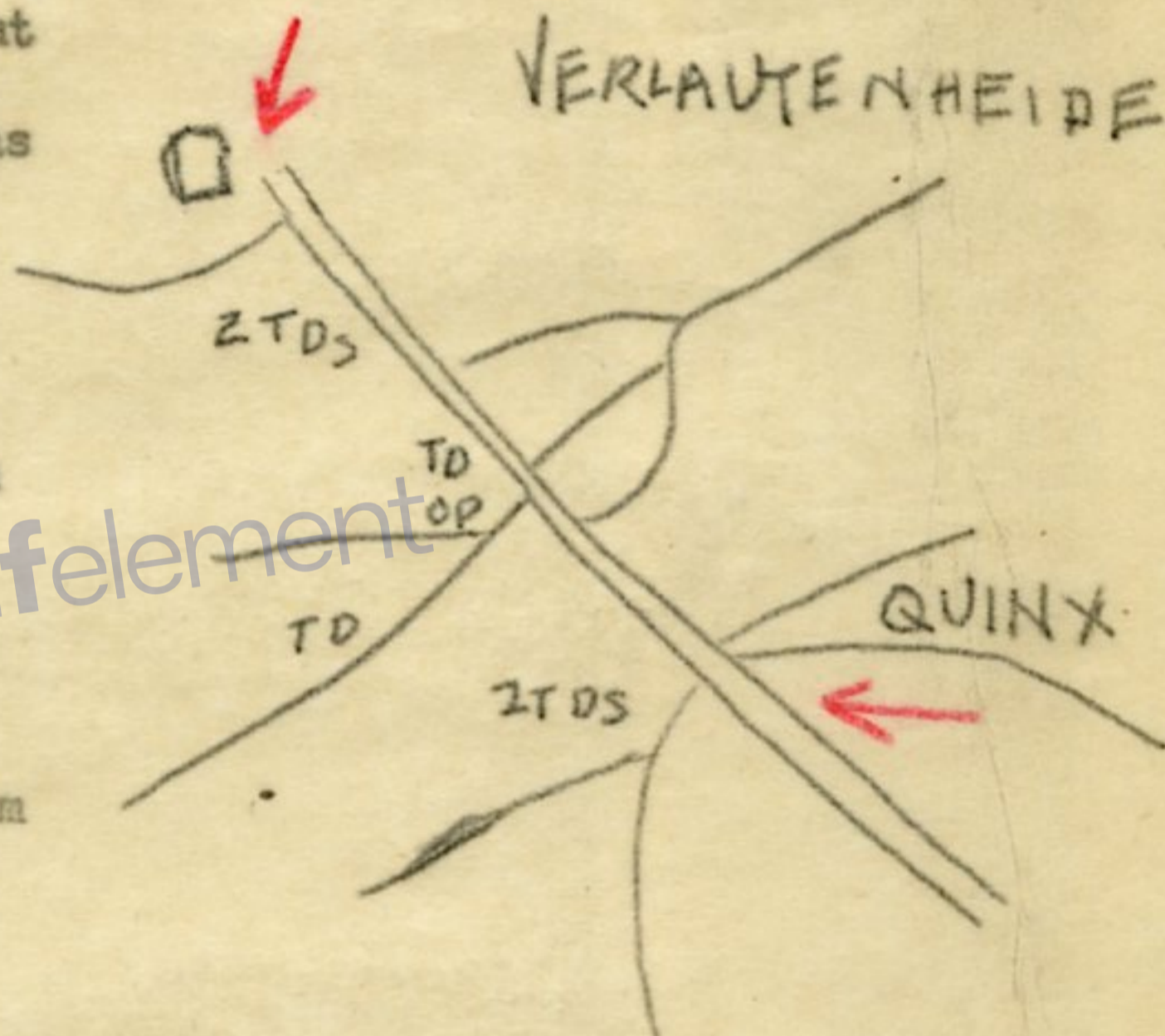
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Interview with: Lt Emmett R. Duffy, leader 3d platoon ✓

Prepared by: T/4 Ridgely C. Dorsey, 2d Info and Hist Serv, 1st U. S. Army

8 Oct 44 - Ordered to support the 2d Bn, 18th Inf Regt, in its pre-dawn attack northward to VERLAUTENHEIDE, the 4 destroyers of the 3d TD platoon left the RR tracks north of EILENDORF at daylight, going through the RR underpass at (88754420), and followed by friendly tanks. The doughboys of E and F Co's had pushed off at 0400 and were already in VERLAUTENHEIDE by this time. Near the CR (888450) just south of the town the TD's "shot up" two enemy pillboxes and one machine gun nest, firing 14 rounds. Friendly infantry got some prisoners out of the pillboxes.

The Sherman nearest the TD's hit a mine at the indicated crossroads, and another was put out of action in the same vicinity. Lt. Duffy saw other medium tanks in difficulty. The four TD's held up, as did other armor, and remained near a house at approximately (89204485) from about 0700 to nearly 0900 when the area ahead had been swept for mines.

Arriving in VERLAUTENHEIDE around 0900 without much difficulty, there was not much small arms fire at the time, but increasingly heavy artillery fire. Two of the destroyers were placed in the vicinity of the E Co CP, the square-shaped group of buildings at (88454565), guarding the northern approaches to the town, and the other two to the south near the F Co CP, covering the QUINX road center, vicinity (88754430). It was a "quiet" night except for enemy artillery, which hit one of the destroyers in the south of the town, killing one crew member and wounding another, but not putting the vehicle out of action.

9 Oct 44 - At 0630 Lt. Duffy was notified that the enemy had attacked to the south, QUINX crossroads vicinity (887453), and penetrated between F and G Co's, threatening the Bn CP just west of the crossroads. He took one destroyer near the CP building; found that the enemy had penetrated up to the main northwest-southeast street in front of the CP; and were across the street to the south. Battalion told him "to shoot everything across the street." If any F Co doughboys were left on the east side of the street they were in cellars and pinned down. Enemy small arms and heavier fire was coming across the street. The destroyer "sprayed" the buildings on the other side (east) of the street, and blasted some with 76 mm fire. Meanwhile, friendly tanks on either side were also firing across the street. (See account of Sgt. Hajek and Cpl. Jacobs, 2d platoon, B Co, 745th TK Bn), and by 0830 the attack was broken. During the engagement an enemy shell fragment ripped the radiator of the destroyer engaged, and shortly afterward another was hit, leaving Lt. Duffy with 3 damaged TD's and one undamaged vehicle. All remained in action, however.

10 - 15 Oct 44 - For the next 5 days Lt. Duffy said his and other armor remained in VERLAUTENHEIDE undergoing continual artillery fire, so heavy that the men could scarcely leave their vehicles. The job of the TD's, the lieutenant said, was to keep the infantry positions in the town from being overrun in the repeated enemy thrusts. The enemy wanted the Americans to come out of the town, particularly the protective armor, where the enemy armor and artillery could destroy them; but the destroyers' job was to hold and safeguard; and that is what they did. Actually, Lt. Duffy said, the TD's could not have gotten out of the town if they had wanted to, friendly mines being laid so heavily and closely about.

On Monday and Tuesday (9-10 Oct) after the destroyers got settled, the lieutenant said he went over "every foot of the town." He set up his OP near the church (88654540) affording good observation; made a sketch of the terrain; and gave a copy to each TD commander, indicating the spots to be watched. Since it was "a bastard job" keeping radio communications in the heavy artillery fire

he organized telephone communications, destroyer-to-destroyer. These were often shot out.

On 11 Oct 44 two destroyers of the 2d TD platoon were moved to the HAAREN vicinity, and Lt. Duffy had charge of the other two 2d platoon vehicles remaining in VERLAUTENHEIDE, as well as the four of his own platoon. He positioned the destroyers in the town, as shown on the sketch, to give all around protection, but particularly to the north and east. From these positions the vehicles were moved as needed to meet enemy threats, or to blast pillboxes, such as the one knocked out

at (893460) on about 11 Oct 44. It was

believed that enemy infantry in the

box, well beyond American lines, had

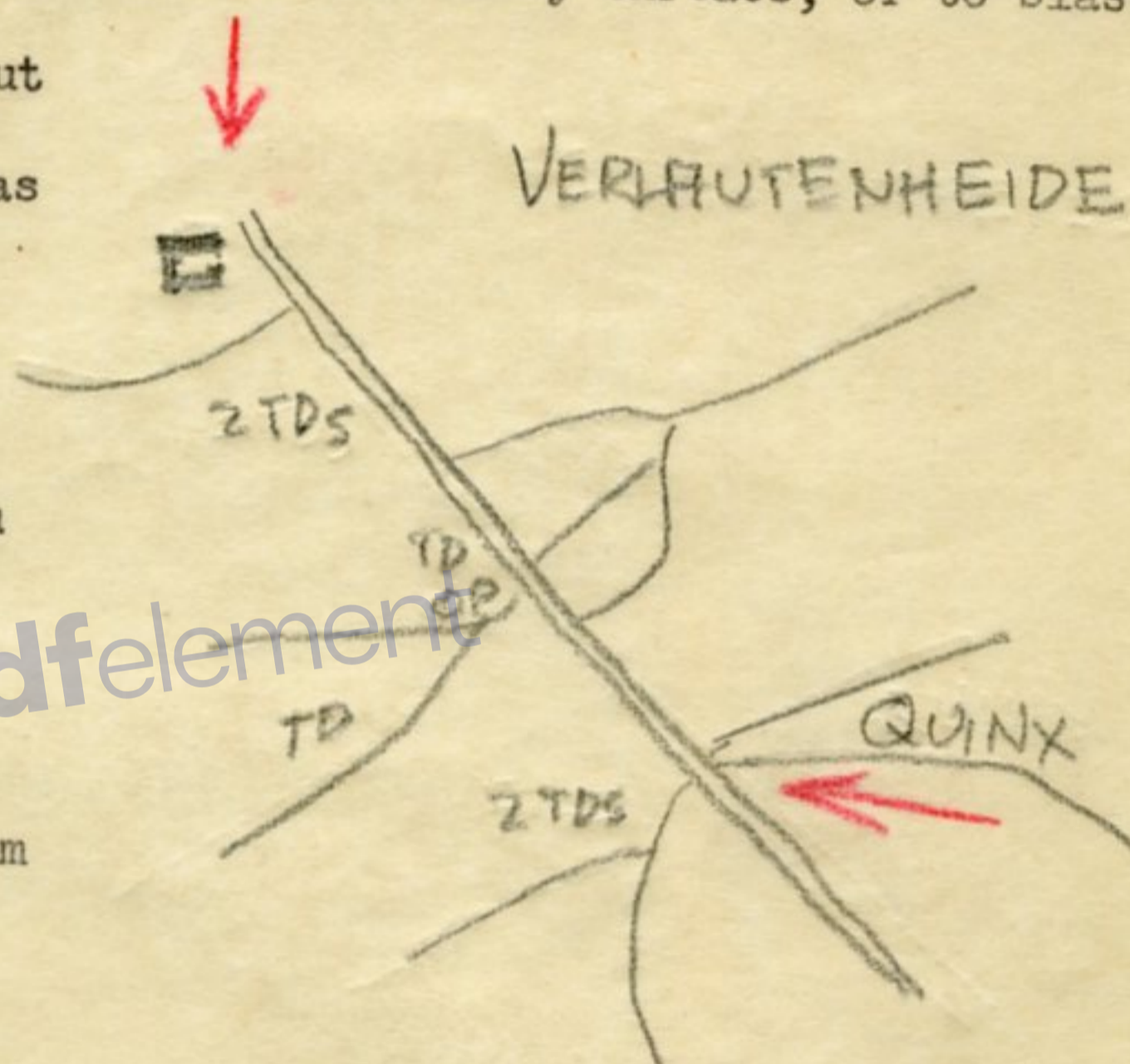
a mortar. A destroyer put a shot thru

the embrasure of the pillbox, and

other shots blasted the roof off.

There was no more observable fire from

the emplacement.



15 Oct 44 - Early in the morning enemy tanks were reported moving toward American positions in strength, from the north and east. The TD men knew that several enemy vehicles had infiltrated from the direction of WEIDEN (8948) to the RJ just north of VERLAUTENHEIDE, but had been unable to spot them because they were hidden behind the houses from (883461) to (88454585). In the morning of 15 Oct, however, the main enemy tank threat was from the east.

Around 0800 tanks were glimpsed over the folding ground 1,000 or more yards northeast toward WAMBACH (901468). A little later Lt. Duffy saw two tanks leave WAMBACH and head for the woods several hundred yards southeast, vicinity(906464). They made it to the woods before the TD nearest the OP could

get on them. Then two more, Mark VI's, tried it. But just as they showed their tails, turning to their right into the woods, the TD's shots went home; and both enemy tanks were knocked out, still in observation. Lt. Duffy said the destroyer's 76 mm fire would not have gotten the Mark VI's but for the fortunate hits on their rears. The TD also damaged an enemy SP gun in the indicated wooded area. None of the Jerry armor returned fire while making the dash for the woods, or when hit. "They were damn poor shots when they did fire back" that week, the lieutenant said.

On the same day, a Mark IV was also knocked out by 3d platoon destroyers just outside the woods to the east at (901455). The Jerry crew made off; but later (while communications between the destroyers' OP and the vehicles were shot out, and effective fire interrupted) another German tank pulled out of the woods and towed the crippled vehicle to cover.

Note: The following paragraph is supplemented by information supplied separately by Sgt. F. G. Yantis, driver of a 2d TD platoon destroyer involved in the action.

At about 1800, an enemy force of one company and two Mark V's attacked from the direction of QUINX, the enemy foot soldiers getting hold of F Co forward foxholes and the houses along the eastern edge of VERLAUTENHEIDE. (Sgt. Yantis said it was raining and the enemy pushed in because the doughboys had left the forward holes to get back to the houses out of the downpour.) Lt. Duffy moved two destroyers to stop the attack. One was a TD already in the southern part of the town, under Sgt. Nessa (not interviewed), who shot out one of the Mark V's, helping to stop the attack. The other destroyer, which had been out for repairs, had just been brought back to VERLAUTENHEIDE that afternoon, to RJ (886455), to help guard the northern approaches. It was the only 2d platoon TD in the town at the time, Sgt. Yantis driving. The vehicle was ^{brought} near the church and OP to meet the attack; but the commander of the vehicle was killed by artillery fire while he stood outside trying to get his gun on the other Mark

V, which otherwise, Lt. Duffy said, would not have gotten away. Sgt. Yantis, the driver of this vehicle, said a friendly Sherman just behind (north of) him was knocked out by the enemy tank. He also said friendly artillery was very effective in breaking up the enemy attack, and chasing the enemy tank in his vicinity.

16 Oct 44 -- In the morning a destroyer in the orchard near RJ (885456) spotted a Tiger tank about 300 to 400 yards north of the town, by the houses vicinity (884460), where enemy vehicles were known to be located. The TD fired 8 rounds at the Mark VI but the shots "bounced off" the enemy's thick front armor. A little later another destroyer in the same vicinity got within 100 yards of the Tiger and fired 5 rounds point blank, apparently without effect, for the Mark VI immediately returned fire, penetrating and knocking out the TD, and killing the gun sergeant and seriously wounding two others. The driver and assistant driver escaped.

However, one enemy Mark V was knocked out in this engagement; and during the same day a destroyer got another Mark V deployed on the edge of the woods 1200 yards to the east.

Thus, in two days of fighting, Lt. Duffy said, the tank destroyers in VERLAUTENHEIDE destroyed 6 enemy tanks: 2 Mark VI's; 3 Mark V's; and one Mark IV -- not counting two "probables".

Sgt. Orville Nessa (not interviewed) was credited with knocking out 4 of the 6 enemy tanks destroyed.

~~SECRET~~

Incl 1 to
Periodic Report 128. (Reproduced from 1st Inf Div Per Rpt No 113, 10 Oct 44.)

THE ULTIMATUM PRESENTED TO THE CITY OF AACHEN, 101050A OCTOBER 1944

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 1050A to the Adjutant of 2d Bn, 352d Inf Regt, by 1st Lt. C. A. Lafley of the 26th Inf. The ultimatum gives the enemy forces in AACHEN until 111050A 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~~ 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 everything now in it, thus avoiding needless loss of German blood and property, or you may refuse and await its complete destruction. The choice and 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 Lt. C. A. Lafley, 26th Inf, who delivered the ultimatum is of considerable interest:

"At 101020A October 1944, Lt. William Boehme, PFC Ken Kadigg, and I left the Co CP of F Co, 26th Inf, to deliver an ultimatum to the Military Commander and Civil Leader of AACHEN.

"Our detachment, with PFC Kading bearing a white flag, proceeded down Trior Strasse towards an underpass on the southeastern side of the city, vicinity (859425). 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~~ we were blindfolded and led up the street to an apartment. Here we were taken to an officer. We told the officer, a Lt, that we wished to give the ultimatum to the military commander of AACHEN or to his commander.

"Our blindfold, our own handkerchiefs, was again put in place and we proceeded to what we believe is a battalion CP (probably 2d Bn, 352 Regt). 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 that 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, "We are evidently unit commanders."

"The three guides who had brought us were then summoned and a pass made out for them by the adjutant. Responding to a quick salute, we again put on our blindfolds and were lead 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 own 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 1157A. The receipt had been signed at 1050A, and so our mission was completed.

"The adjutant signed with the name "Keller," confirming the fact that it was the CP of 2d Bn, 352 Inf Regt. He wore the Iron Cross, a war decoration and a combat badge. He also wore the Russian Campaign Ribbon." "

4. Two PsW from the 1043d Bn surrendered to the 1106 Engr 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.

(G-2 VII Corps Note: No answer to the ultimatum was received.)

DIGEST OF COL. WILCK'S SPEECH TO THE GERMAN SOLDIERS

"Dear German Soldiers:

I am speaking to you at a painful moment; I was forced to surrender because we ran out of ammunition, food and water. I saw that the further fight was worthless. I was acting against orders, I was supposed to fight to the last man. At this time I have to remind you, that you are German Soldiers, and please, behave as such. I also wish you the best of health, and a fast return to your Fatherland after the ceasing of hostilities and to help rebuild Germany. I was refused by the Americans Authorities to give a "Sieg Heil" and "Heil Hitler", but we can still do it in our minds."

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HEADQUARTERS THIRD BATTALION
18th Infantry
A. P. O. #1, U. S. Army

24 October 1944

The following account of Ravels B Hill is included to show the value of this all important hill and how vital it was that we keep possession of it. Ravels B Hill was the key to Aachen and the side that held it had all the advantage on their side:

Ravels B Hill is so situated that it commands the two roads, one from Aachen to Wurselen and the other from Aachen to Weiden. It also commands the RR from Aachen to Wurselen and it commands the factory district NE of Aachen, Eilendorf, Brand and Aachen. The occupation and holding of this hill gave Company "I" access to cutting and blocking the main Aachen-Wurselen road which completed the encirclement of Aachen.

As the clearing of Aachen started and supplies were needed by the enemy the occupation of Ravels B Hill by them was the key to gaining access to the encircled troops of Aachen.

The defense of Ravels B Hill consisted of men, small arms, mines, bazookas and grenades. Ravels B Hill is steep and woody on the South and southwest and on the North and Northeast, dropping off suddenly and then straightening out towards Wurselen and is bare. There are a few rugged cuts to the North and Northeast.

Plowed fields, rain and open country made the hill an impassible mass for tanks, tank destroyers or anti-tank guns. We could not get anything on the hill that could live for anti-tank protection. Therefore, the hill had to be held and held by the infantry alone.

The only survivors on the hill were the men in the pillboxes, for every man on the outside was either wounded or killed by the enemy shell fire. The shelling was so heavy that it knocked out all outside foxholes and emplacements. So the men had to stay inside the pillboxes during the shelling and then occupy the open emplacements after the shelling had ceased. Even then the enemy tanks and assault guns worked point blank fire on machine guns and BAR's. Two light machine guns and three of four heavy machine guns were knocked out by this fire.

The men of Company "K" held on regardless of the fire and the enemy never broke the crest of Ravels B Hill to see the city of Aachen. This determined stand of Company "K", 18th Infantry is a display of mass heroism and valour. There is an estimated 150 to 200 enemy dead North of the hill to the credit of the defense put up by Company "K", 18th Infantry.

- Their actions during these two days of gruelling warfare contributed decisively in retaining a most strategic piece of terrain, the loss of which would have not only jeopardized the entire right flank battalion of the 18th Infantry but would have also opened the closed, North main roads leading into Aachen thus allowing access of fresh enemy troops and supplies to reinforce the doomed and encircled garrison of Aachen.

Their valor; their might; their will and grim determination have contributed one of the most glorious pages to the battle annals of the unit and their noble deeds this day will stand forever as an inspiration to those who follow.

HEADQUARTERS THIRD BATTALION
18th Infantry
A. P. C. #1, U. S. Army

24 October 1944

The following article, written from the 3rd Battalion Journal portrays the defense of Ravels B Hill by Company "K", 18th Infantry on 18th and 19th of October 1944:

On the morning of October 18, 1944 at 0630 hours a strong enemy force, estimated at a reinforced battalion, attacked the position of Company "K", 18th Infantry on Ravels B Hill. The night was dark, the wind was blowing and the rain was falling in sheets. As the road block, two squads of the 3rd Platoon, Company "K" with mines across the road at 866468, was returning to its position the enemy came in behind it and immediately cutting off one squad before it could reach its position. One squad did reach its position but the enemy over ran them immediately thereafter. In a very short time the enemy had overrun the 3rd Platoon pillboxes numbers 2, 3, 4 and 6.

The attack of the enemy was supported by two tanks at 867469 firing direct fire into "K" Company position and knocking out our machine guns and emplacements. Further back there were other tanks and SP guns laying assault fire into Ravels B Hill. From a PW report there was an estimated fifteen tanks and SP guns in support of the battalion making the attack, the 3rd Battalion, 8th P. G. R of the 3rd P. G. D.

Although the enemy suffered great numbers of casualties their superiority in numbers enabled them to gain possession of pillboxes 6, 3 and then 4. In front of pillbox #6 there were 11 enemy dead in one short ditch and farther out there were many piles of enemy dead with 15 to 20 bodies in some piles.

Although subjected to intense small arms, mortar and artillery fire, the 1st and 2nd Platoons of Company "K" took defensive positions on a line Southwest to Northeast and prevented the enemy from getting to the crest of Ravels B Hill which overlooks Aachen to the Southwest. The stubborn defense of these two Platoons prevented the enemy from gaining the crest of Ravels B Hill, but he did keep possession of the captured pillboxes and began to regroup for another assault on Company "K".

Then another part of the enemy force estimated at two platoons attacked the 1st Platoon position on the left. This force was forced to withdraw from the withering fire laid down by the 1st Platoon and suffered heavy casualties. After tanks, mortars and artillery had again covered the area with intense fire the enemy tried the second time to assault and capture the 1st Platoon's pillboxes, numbers 5, 7 and 8. Again they were stopped and forced to withdraw leaving many killed and wounded on the hill.

Throughout the remainder of the day the enemy attempted to move around to gain entrance into our positions but our men kept up such a volume of fire that all enemy attempts were unsuccessful.

At dusk, the 1st Platoon of Company "K", reinforced by Company "B", 18th Infantry, began to attack to regain pillboxes 3, 4, and 6. Despite stubborn resistance and very heavy enemy fire the forward pillbox, No. 6 was taken and 11 PW also. Two hours later the 2nd pillbox, No. 3 was retaken and 11 more PW's. The only pillbox now remaining in enemy hands was No. 4 and it was surrounded by two squads of the 1st Platoon. At daybreak, 19 October 1944, with the aid of two tanks, one tank dozer which was knocked out and never used and another Sherman that hit one of our mine fields and had a track blown off, the 1st Platoon began an assault on the final pillbox #4 and retook same after fierce fighting. Twenty-three PW's and one Officer were taken from this pillbox. This move restored our original positions. However, because of heavy casualties another platoon of Company "B", 18th Infantry had to be used to reinforce the restored positions.

At 1400 hours, 19 October 1944, the enemy started a barrage on Ravels B Hill. The enemy used all calibers of assault guns, mortars and artillery. It is believed that the enemy used 75MM and 88MM tank fire, 80MM and 120MM mortars (possibly larger sizes were used), and 105, 150, 170 and possibly 210MM artillery. This barrage lasted until 1430 hours and it is estimated that 100 or more rounds per minute fell on Ravels B Hill. From 3,000 to 4,000 shells in all fell on Ravels B Hill in an area 300 yards by 300 yards in thirty minutes. This is the heaviest and most concentrated artillery and mortar barrage laid down by the Germans so far in this war.

Smoke was laid in front of Company "A" CP to cut down our observation and in front of Ravels B Hill to screen the advancing infantry. At 1430 hours the enemy infantry closed in on Ravels B Hill behind the artillery and began their attack.

The enemy made a very determined attack with about three rifle companies, supported by five tanks firing direct fire, 2 tanks located at 865472 and 3 located at 867471, and other indirect assault fire from SP guns farther back. Pillbox #6 was overrun but our men continued to fight from inside the pillbox. One squad of the 1st Platoon went to the assistance of the 3rd Platoon and forced the enemy to halt their advance.

Artillery fire from our own guns was trained on a group of trees in our own positions. It was imperative that these trees be knocked down so that mortar and artillery fire could be most effective. Then more artillery fire was called for on and around our positions. This artillery fire was very effective, knocking out three enemy tanks that ventured too close to our lines. One light tank was knocked out by a bazooka in the hands of one of our infantrymen.

The enemy succeeded in gaining possession of one pillbox, #3, but a counter attack by our 1st Platoon quickly regained this pillbox and again our positions were restored.

Again the casualties were extremely heavy and two squads from Company "L", 18th Infantry were sent to reinforce the 3rd Platoon of Company "K".

Enemy artillery and mortars continued to shell our positions heavy and just before dark the enemy began to reform for another attack but was dispersed by effective artillery fire from our guns.

HEADQUARTERS THIRD BATTALION
18th Infantry
A. P. C. #1, U. S. Army

24 October 1944

C-I-T-A-T-I-O-N

"For extraordinary heroism in action. When confronted by numerically superior enemy forces estimated as a reinforced battalion, with approximately fifteen tanks and self-propelled guns in direct support, Company "K", 18th Infantry, in the front lines since 10 September 1944, war weary, exhausted and understrength, repulsed relentless, enemy counter attacks for two days and nights (18th and 19th October 1944) on Ravels B Hill, #227, near Haaren, Germany. During these two days and nights Company "K" repulsed three ferocious and fanatical, enemy counter attacks.

When the enemy forces did succeed in penetrating a portion of the Company's positions, this Company rose to super-human levels and with grim determination and great courage counter attacked three times to drive the enemy from its positions. Under the most gruelling and bitter hand to hand fighting the Company retrieved and reoccupied its original positions.

Between counter attacks, and while the Company was being reorganized, the enemy shelled the Company unmercifully and continuously from three sides: (a) from the direct front; (b) left flank and (c) from the rear by the guns of Aachen, with the most heaviest, intense and concentrated artillery, large mortar and machine gun fire yet encountered by this unit in two years of battle, wounding and killing many of the men who had dug themselves into foxholes to man the outside defenses of Ravels B Hill.

Yet realizing the importance of the terrain they occupied, new men would leave the shelter and protection of the pillboxes to go forward and occupy the same exposed and unprotected foxholes which their dead and wounded comrades had occupied so as to prevent the enemy from penetrating their positions.

Though only a small number of men in forward pillboxes had been over run, the majority of the men had persistently refused to yield ground and held on with a tenacity gifted only to the most courageous. Finally after two days of bitter fighting this gallant and courageous band, reduced to a mere remnant of their original number, were relieved by Company "I", 18th Infantry rather than to allow them to relive General Custer's Last Stand and be annihilated.

HEADQUARTERS 3RD BATTALION
A.P.O. #1, U.S. ARMY

18
24 Oct. 1944

FIELD ORDER)

Number 1)

1.
 - a. The enemy hold the ground around the Kurhaus and the Palace Hotel.
 - b. The 26th Inf. has been assigned the mission of clearing Aachen of enemy.
2. Our mission is to secure these two buildings and surrounding ground.
3.
 - a. "I" Co. with five tanks and three T.D.'s attached will attack to the S.W. along Roland St. This attack will be preceded by 155 MM rifle fire. Twelve o'clock upon capture of their objective will be S.W.
 - b. "K" Co. will attack N.W. with their left flank on Manheims Allee and their right flank on the S.W. edge of Kurhaus with their final objective as the occupation of the Palace Hotel.
 - c. "L" Co. will secure a Line of Departure with one plt. of Infantry with two tanks, two T.D.'s and a sect of HMG's attached. After "K" Co. has advanced to the South of Kurhaus, the platoon of "L" will secure and hold Kurhaus. The rest of "L" Co. will be Bn. Reserve in its present positions.
 - d. "M" Co. will attach a sect. of HMG's to "K" Co. and a sect. of HMG's to "L" Co. The remaining plt. of HMG's will protect the N.W. flank of the Bn. The 81 MM mortars and the 4.2 mortars will fire on call and be prepared to fire a concentration of smoke on Louis-berg Hill anytime after 1200 Hrs. on order of this Hq.
 - e. Two Pits. of "C" Co. Eng. will protect the rear of "K" Co. from their present positions. One squad of Eng. will be attached to "K" Co. for demolition work.
 - f. The Bn. A.T. plt. will go into position in vicinity of Krefelder and Pass Street to defend the N. flank of the Bn. and protect the assembly area for the Armored Unit.
 - g. The 3rd Plt. A.T. Co. remains in position initially with "L" Co. Attach two Bazooka teams to "K" Co.
 - h. The Bn. A.P. plt. will attach two flame thrower teams to "L" Co. Be prepared to do necessary demolitions.
 - x.
 - (1) 0600 hrs. 1 Plt. (-1 sq.) moves from present position to given house to secure L.D.
 - (2) 0615 hrs. 1 sq. moves out of house to secure high ground.
 - (3) 0620 hrs. Balance of plt. of "L" Co. moves out.
 - (4) 0625 hrs. 2 tanks and 2 T.D.'s move out of present positions toward plt. objective.
 - (5) 0630 - 0645 hrs. 155 MM Rifle fire.
 - (6) 0645 hrs. "I" Co. and "K" Co. cross line of departure.
 - (7) 0700 - 0715 hrs. Mortar smoke on Salvatore Hill.
4. Administrative details issued verbally.
5.
 - a. C.P. remain in present location.

Page two.

- b. Advance C.P. group with "L" Co.
- c. Radio communication until wire can be laid.

CORLEY
Commanding

OFFICIAL:

Crawford
CRAWFORD
S - 3

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LIST OF MEN CAPTURED BY THE ENEMY AND RECAPTURED 21 Oct. 1944

Co. "I" 119th 30th.		
Phillips, H.W.	T/Sgt.	20361 457
Henderson, R.P.	Sgt.	352496657
Wray, W.V.	Pvt.	37635144
Howard, B.L.	"	36763154
James, L.T.	"	36958908
Wood, D.R.	"	35249335
Schroeder W.	"	42091378
Macielak, W.A.	"	35098291
Lovell, J.E.	"	38692057
Kaminski, J.F.	"	31456826
Kelly, H.L.	"	33848372
Osburg, M.O.	"	36834028
Petersen, A.E.	"	35919332

238th "B" Co. Eng.

Haswell (Boswell), J.B.	Sgt.	6289448
Padgett, E.M.	S/Sgt.	34538197

Hq. Co. 3rd Bn. 119th Inf.

Zalucki, C.J.	Pfc.	52747158
Lang, W.J.	"	33301994
Mucciante, M.M.	"	35515575

"I" Co. 26th Inf. 1st Div.

Gilbert, S.	Sgt.	12080908
Panik, P.R.	Pvt.	20514327
Kintosh, M.K.	"	34851048
Schreiber, G.F.	Pfc.	35593458
Trzaska, J.S.	Pvt.	32093567

"K" Co. 26th Inf.

Krieber, L.	Pvt.	12060558
Drendlaw, R.	"	37588487
Hoyt, C.C.	"	36903222

Anti Tank Co. 26th Inf.

Krimall, W.C. (Krimall)	Pfc.	12123628
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