

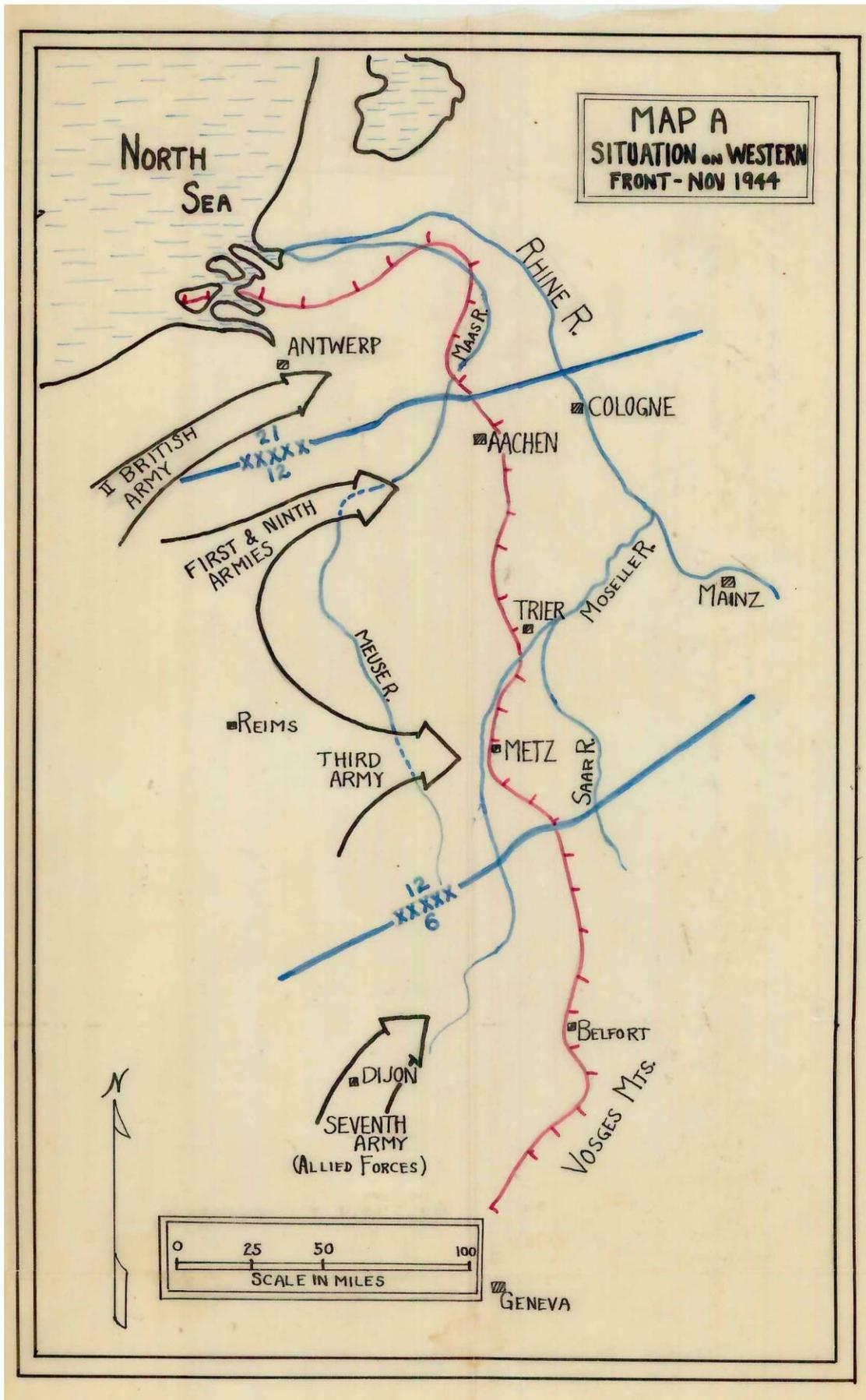
26th Infantry

Staff Ride

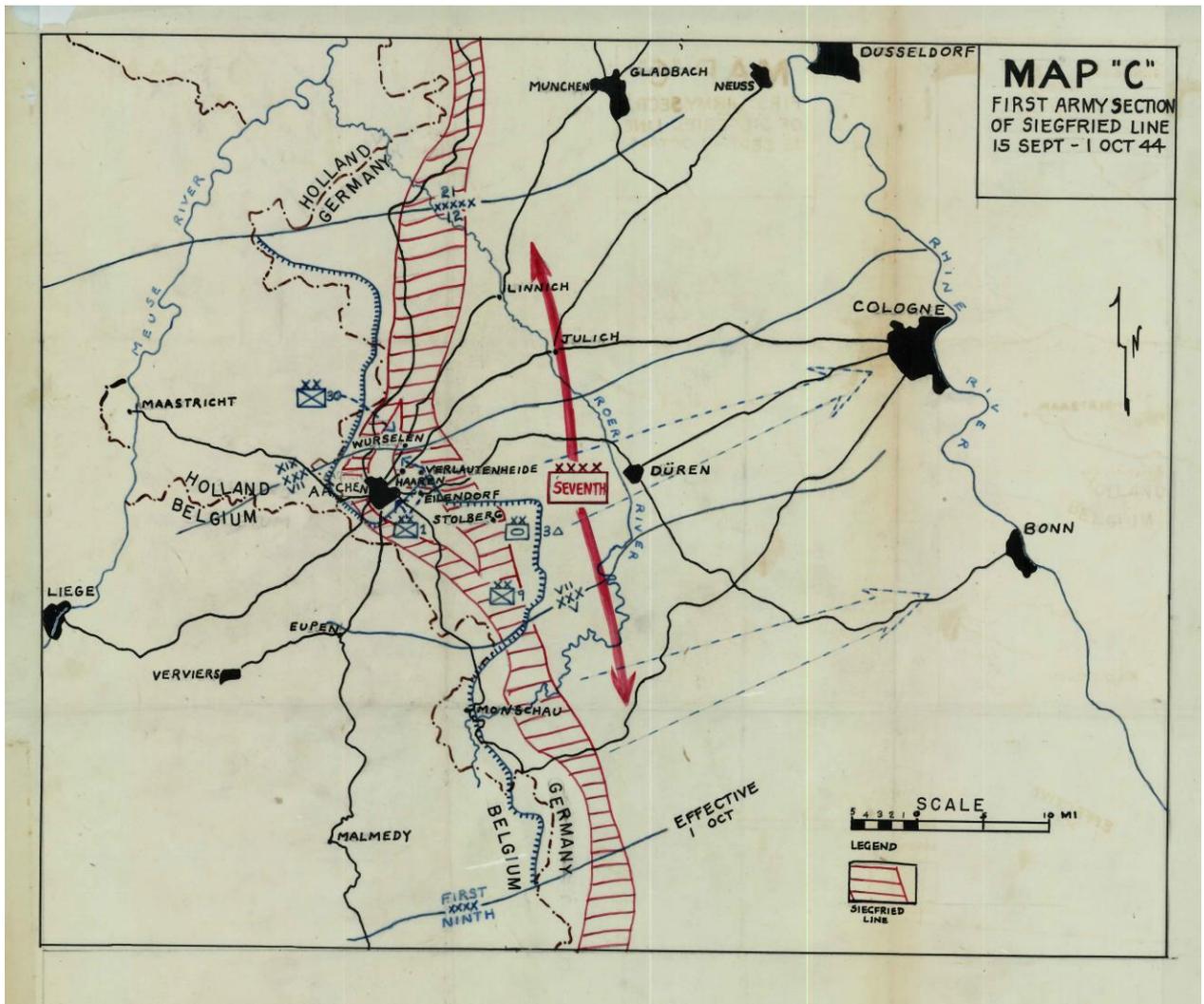
Hürtgen Forest

Schevenhütte,
Laufenburg Castle
Pfc. McGraw Hill
Pfc. Littleton Hill
Merode and Merode Castle

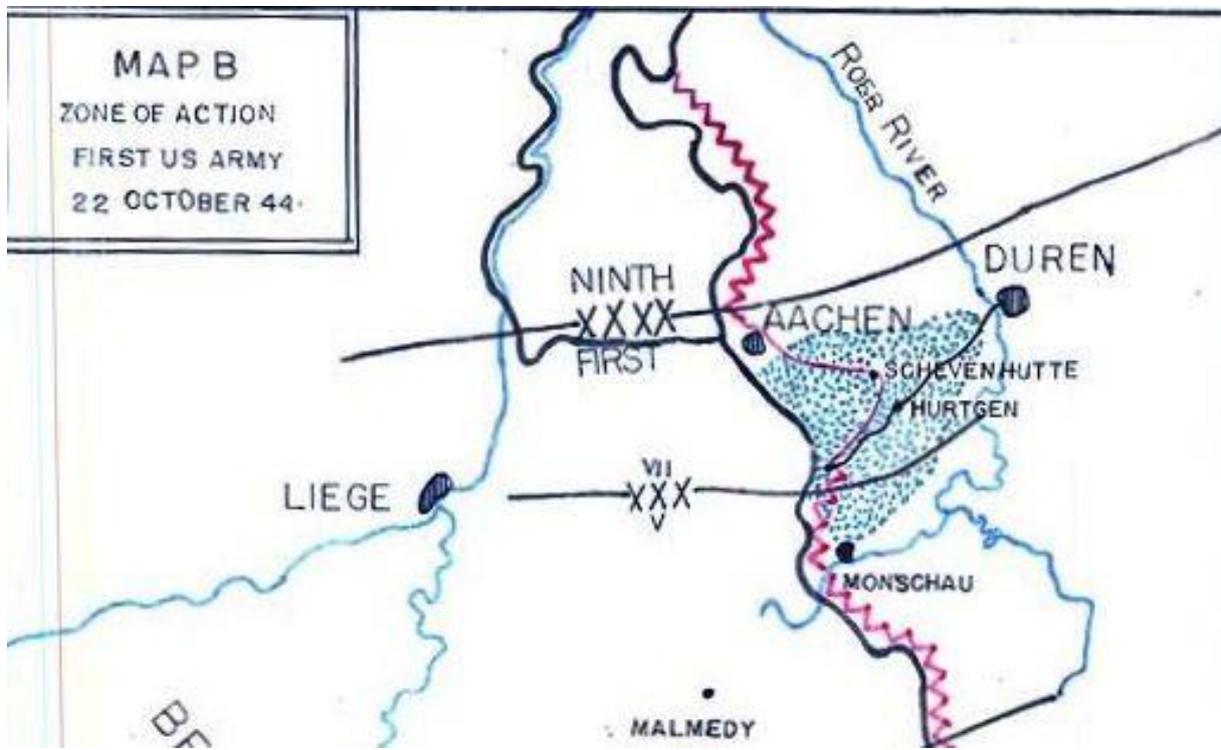
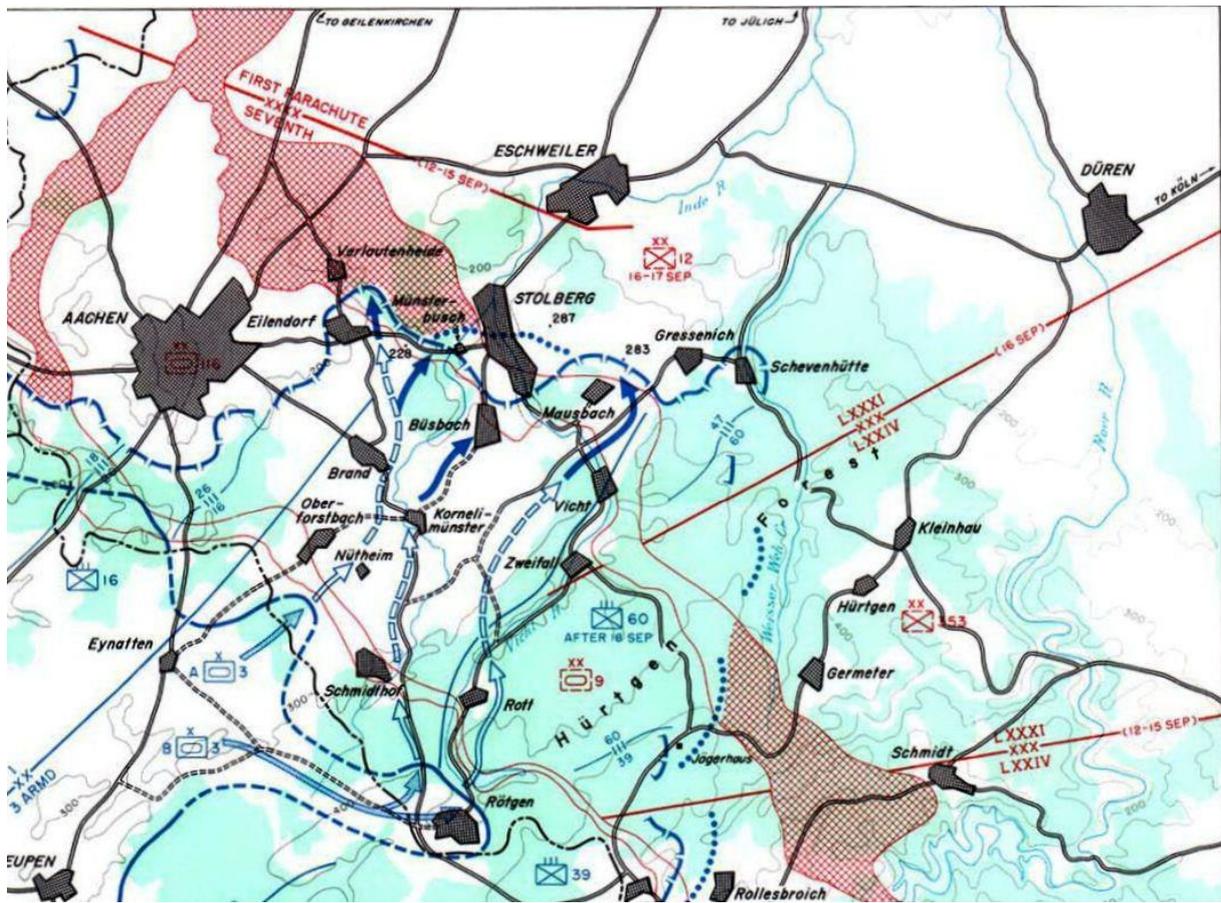
A Tribute to the Veterans who fought the
Battle! A Tribute to those who gave their lives
for their Country and for our freedom!
An event for all Blue Spaders!

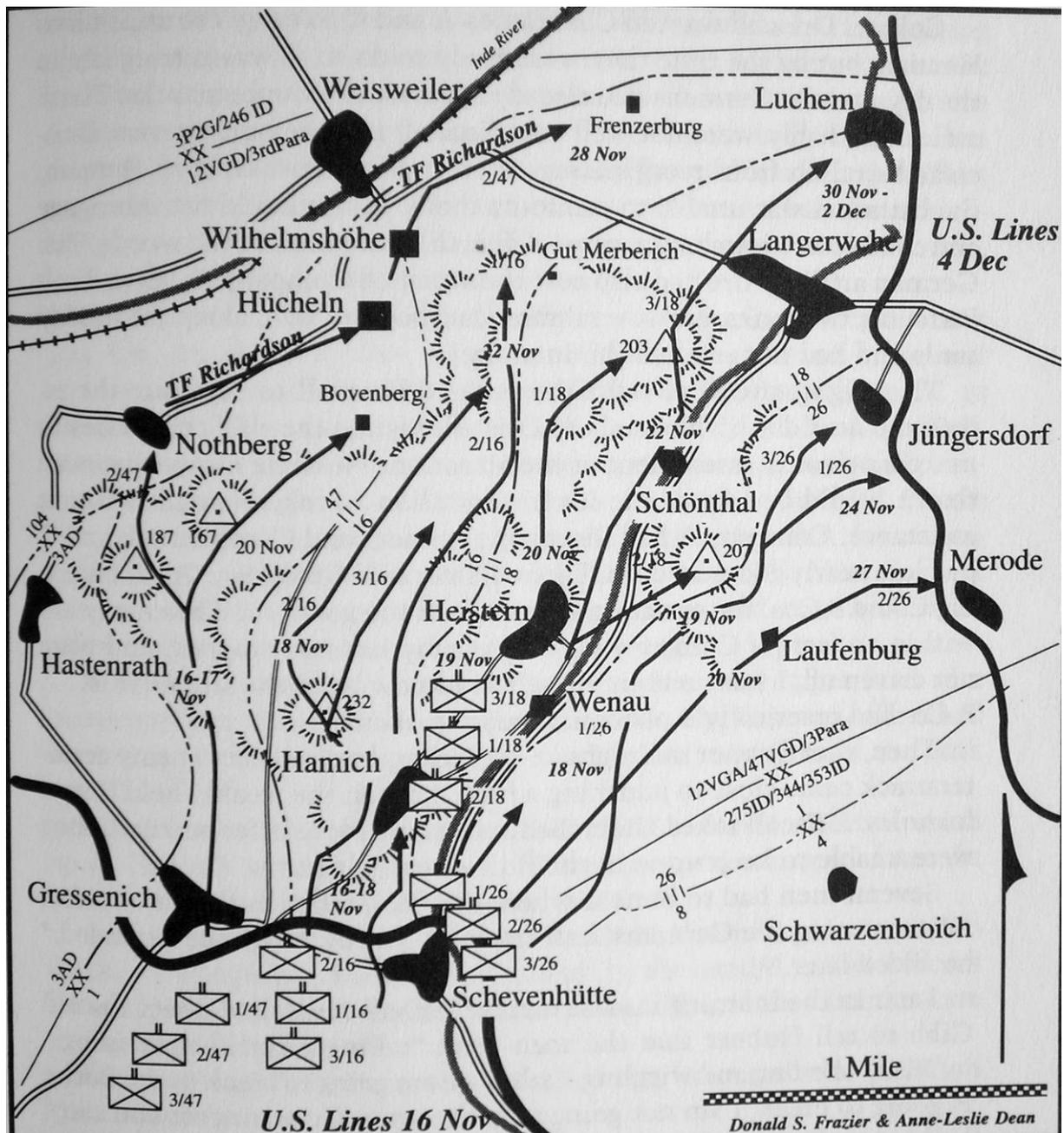


Western Front ETO November 1944

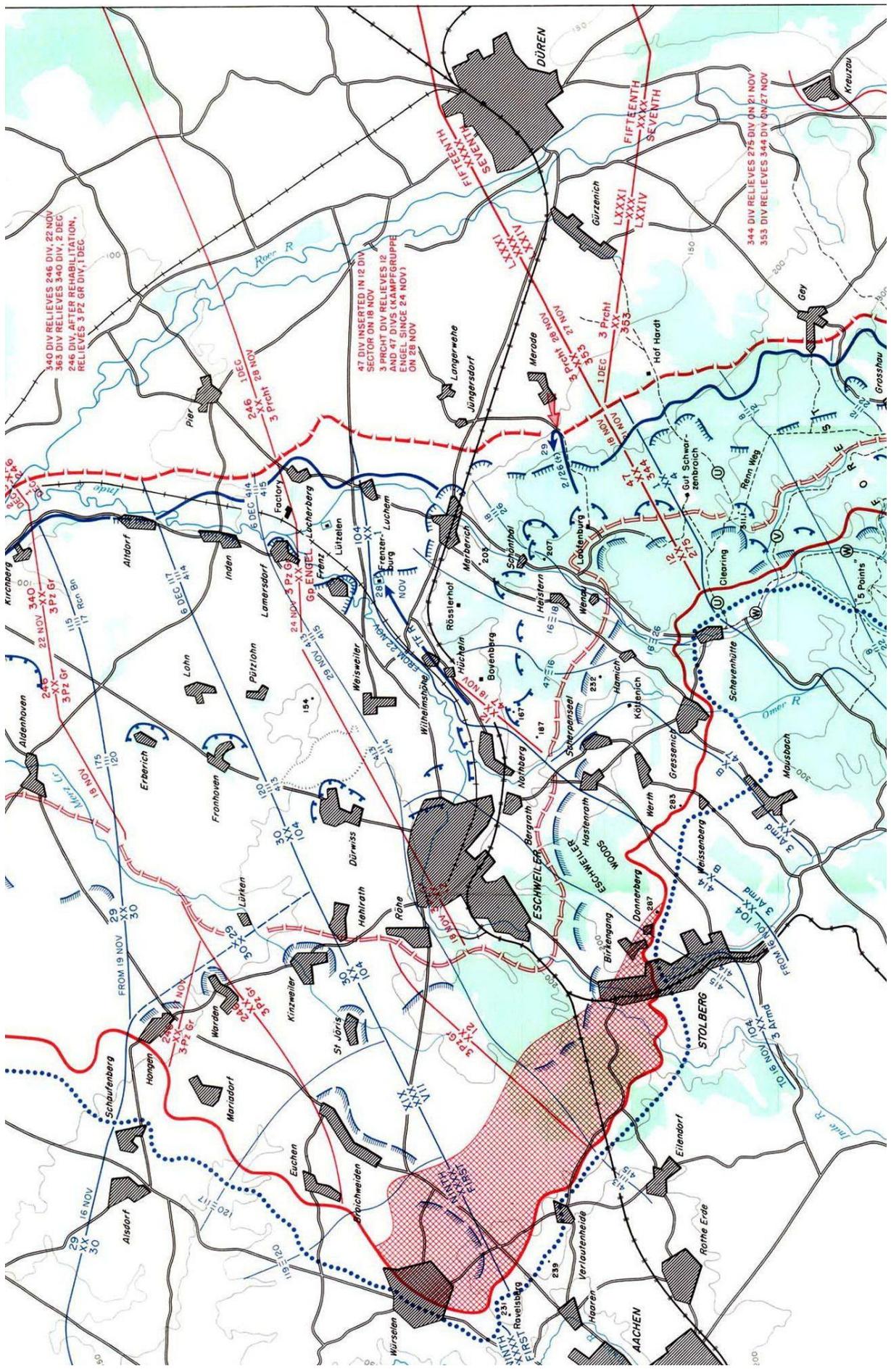


1st US Army and 7th German Army Sector September and October 1944





The Battles in the northern Part of the Huertgen Forest and the advance of the 1st Infantry Division from 16 November – 3rd December 1944



Company "G", 26th Infantry 19 November 1944

After the battle of AACHEN, we hoped for a rest. The assembly area in the HUERTGEN FOREST changed our minds. Our battalion, the Second of the 26th Regiment moved into an area behind elements of the 9th Division near SCHEVENHÜTTE/GERMANY. It was mid November and rain and snow made living in the open rather uncomfortable after our life of comparative luxury in the houses of AACHEN.

On 14 November 1944, all Company Commanders met at Battalion Headquarters to make a reconnaissance and to receive orders for the impending attack. The reconnaissance could have been made from a bed, for all the good it accomplished. We proceeded to the front line on the 9th and to its outpost, but all we could see was trees and underbrush.

After the reconnaissance the Colonel and the S-3 briefed all Company Commanders and gave us the plan of the attack. Our mission was to clear the HUERTGEN FOREST and hold a line on the edge of the COLOGNE PLAIN. This would allow the armored division an outlet to the COLOGNE PLAIN and, consequently, open country to the RHINE RIVER. Elements of a panzer regiment were known to be in our zone of attack, strength unknown. Enemy artillery and automatic weapons were known to be plentiful. Our battalion, on the right flank of the division would attack northeast into the FOREST, with elements of the 4th on the right, and our own 16th Regiment on the left. Our Regiment would be in a column of battalions.

My Company, Company "G" would lead the attack, with Company "F" on the right rear, and Company "E" on the left rear, with tanks and tank destroyers along the road. Usual attachments of artillery and mortar observers and a section of heavy machine gun were along. Artillery preparation would be fired prior the attack. The battalion command post group was to follow behind Company "G". The battalion was moving in a box formation affair in order to protect the tanks and tank destroyers, and to have all-around defense. Company "G" was to lead the battalion into position about half-way through the forest and then the other battalion would pass through us. The first Platoon would lead the attack, with the second Platoon on the right rear flank and the third Platoon on the left rear flank. The tanks, tank destroyers, and the weapons would follow in the center of the box formed by the rifle Platoons.

At 1200 hours on the 16th of November we had moved up to the line of departure in SCHEVENHÜTTE, we were ready to jump into another battle. We could hear our bombers hitting targets on the plains several miles away, and the friendly sound of our own artillery going over. At 1215 hours we were guided through the lines of the 9th Division, and again we our on our own.

The scouts of the first Platoon were guiding on the trail and the rest of the men were echeloned to the left and right rear of the company scouts. Before going 300 yards, the lead scout was fired upon from a few feet of his front and was killed. Several machine guns opened up on us. The Jerries were dug in and camouflaged to perfection. The first Platoon leader started up moving his man into position to direct fire on the enemy. The second Platoon was moving up online to assist, the third Platoon was held up momentarily by concertina wire



On November 16, 1944 the 26th Infantry started their offensive through the Huertgen Forest!



German soldiers who became POW's now! For these men the war is over!

covered with machine guns. The enemy rate of fire was increasing, and we had to get moving, so a message was sent to the tanks instruction them to move forward. The tanks move into the canter of the first battalion and started spraying the woods to our front with their machine guns. Again, we started forward and were stopped by concentrated fire a few yards to our front. Now the tanks couldn't move up, for a huge crater was blown in the canter of the trail. The engineers were called up. The third Platoon, meanwhile, had breached the wire and captured several prisoners, and was moving up abreast of the first Platoon, each Platoon was fighting it s way forward inch by inch against an enemy that was well dug in and camouflaged. Company "E" was working up on our left flank to stop the fire we were receiving from there. Day was drawing to the end, and we were only from 300 to 400 yards from our line of departure. The Colonel was up forward, and orders were given to button up for the night. It was growing dark fast, so we organized an all-around defense, and the men dug in for the night.

Our attack started again the next morning at 0830 hours. Immediately after jumping off, we again hit heavy small arms fire. The tanks were called forward, and again started spraying the woods to our front, and also firing delayed high explosive. That did the trick; the Krauts had enough. We collected the prisoners and started forward again. As we moved forward, we discovered that we were doing better than the 4th division on our right, for we began to receive some friendly fire from our right rear – but no damage was done. We moved forward, sweeping the woods each side of the road for about a mile, without any trouble. At this time, we hit a crossroad and for the first time received artillery fire. Orders were sent to the Platoons to deploy wide and to continue moving forward. Our advance was moving without any trouble now; we reached high ground suitable for a position, orders came down to halt and go into defensive position. We were getting ahead for the 4th and exposing our flank to much.

The company halted in a march of defense and the Platoon leaders joined for a reconnaissance of the position. The third Platoon went into position on the left of the road with the left flank joining Company "E" and the right joining the first Platoon. The second Platoon went into position of the right, with its s right flank joining Company "F" and its s left the first Platoon. Heavy machine guns were set to cross fire on the high ground to the front of the first and second Platoons, and a light machine gun was set up in the second Platoon area to tie in with the heavies and with Company "F"'s gun. The other Company light machine gnu was set up on the edge of the road behind the first Platoon, so that it could fire down the road over the third Platoon area. Defensive fires were planned and phoned in by artillery and mortar observers. The tank destroyers were placed to cover the approaches for enemy armor. Tanks were to back up the tank destroyers. (See Overlay)

At daybreak the morning of the 18th, the outpost captured two German officers and a radio operator who were reconnoitering the area. S-2 found that they were members of the 115th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, and that they were relieving the unit opposing us. Nothing more happened; positions were improved. The 4th was still having trouble and was far behind us.

On the morning of the 19th, things began to happen. Artillery and mortars began raining on our positions before daybreak and continued as the morning wore on. Trees along our lines were blow down, forming a block in front of the field of fire for riflemen and machine gunners. Just before noon, outposts spotted enemy Infantry crawling toward our line. I immediately headed for the line. When I reached the second Platoon Command Post, which was just behind the squads, the Krauts were firing everything possible into our second Platoon. Artillery fire was called for, and the 60- and 81-mm mortars opened up. The first

wave of the enemy was driven back. The second wave of the enemy came in almost immediately, firing automatic weapons, Panzerfaust, bazookas, and rifle grenades. Before we could get a change in range for the artillery, a few Germans had succeeded in getting in holes of the second squad of the Platoon. We brought our artillery down to just a few yards in front of our position, driving back some of the enemy. Others were in our position, and it was a toe-a-toe battle. Finally, by drawing men from another squad, we regained the lost holes. We reorganized quickly, expecting another attack, and had the artillery continue firing the area to our front and the approaches to the position. At this time the Third Battalion moved up to pass through and continue our attack out of the forest. When the Third cleared us, we began to get the casualties out. We went out front of our lines to investigate the damage inflicted on the enemy. Our artillery and small arms fire had killed about 80 Germans and wounded many more, we had captured several prisoners. The counterattack was made by a Battalion of the 115th Grenadier Regiment, all armed with automatic weapons and Panzer Faust. The attack hit only a small part of our line; we feints at other Platoons.

Our attack had been successful. We had taken our objective, and we knocked out a heavy counterattack. Our casualties and the holding of the position proved it to be a good position.

We learned many things about the forest fighting in our battle in the HUERTGEN FOREST!

- 1.) Never let the enemy pin your down. He has artillery and mortars zeroed in and will fire as soon as YOU stop when you are fired on by small arms.
- 2.) Avoid crossroads, junctions, and landmarks, as these are zeroed in and are covered by enemy observation.
- 3.) Make roofs for foxholes; tree bursts cause many casualties.
- 4.) Keep moving toward the enemy; he is in a covered hole and will call for artillery on his own position.
- 5.) Use all-around-defense. You bypass some of the enemy who may be in our position. Stay alert!
- 6.) Use fire and maneuver. Have on man covered another when advance.



Town and church of Schevenhütte, November 1944.

16. November 1944

The sky was clear. In the largest close air support of the war more than 9.000 tons of bombs fell on the towns of Jülich, Düren, Heinsberg, Eschweiler, Weisweiler, Dürwiß, and Helrath. The VII. Corps field artillery preparation began at H -60 and the attack along the Corps front began at 1245. The 104th Infantry Division took Donnerberg, the 3d Armored Division seized Werth and faced the southern outskirts of Hastenrath. The 1st Infantry Division fought to the outskirts of Gressenich, Hamich and into the Grossewald. In the 4th Infantry small progress slow progress was made. (First Army Report of Operation)

During the night many enemy patrols were active along the Corps front. Harassing fire was laid on the vicinity of Eschweiler – Weisweiler. The noise of moving trucks and armor vehicles could be heard during the whole night.

At 1100 the enemy fighter bombers and medium bombers attacked the vicinity west of the Roer River. The cities of Düren and Jülich were heavily hit in the afternoon.

Between 1200 and 1300 the enemy infantry attacked all along the Corps front. Infantry and tanks attacked from Mausbach toward Gressenich and Werth. Our MLR was break-up and the enemy reached the northern outskirts of Werth. The 12 VGD reported 27 knocked out enemy tanks in their sector.

The new arrived 47. VGD started to relief the 12. VGD during the night, but after the start of the enemy offensive, all plans was canceled. The 47. VGD received the order to assemble in the rear of the 12. VGD and to seize with one Regiment the “Moltke-Stellung” and with two Regiments the “Roon-Riegel”

On order of the “Kampfgruppe Manteuffel” an armored Task Force under the command of Oberst (Colonel) Bayer

had to close the gap between Hastenrath and Hamich.

Our artillery shot 12.000 rounds of artillery pieces during the day, but 16 of our own guns was destroyed by direct artillery hits or by air raids.

(German LXXXI AK report)



Soldiers of the 26th Infantry Division on their way from the assembly area around Vicht at November 10, 1944 toward the frontlines near Schevenhütte to relief the 47th Infantry Regiment who had hold the position since mid September 1944.

Blue Spader Side

1st Lieutenant Sidney C. Miller of Waupaca/WI joined the 2-26th before the battle of Aachen and became a Platoon Leader. He reached the assemble area in the vicinity of Schevenhütte before November 16, 1944. His Platoon was on the right flank and his order was to make contact with the 8th Infantry of the 4th Infantry Division. This was in the afternoon on November 15, 1944.

The next Day, November 16, 1944 Miller entered the Huertgen Forest and made slow progress. The Germans was dug in at well camouflaged defend positions. This was foxholes for mostly two men, covered with logs, brushes and dirt to protect the soldiers for tree bursts. Having slots on the enemy sides and so could lay small arms and machine gun fire onto the attackers. Some of the Foxholes had phones or radio inside and could call for artillery or mortar fire. The Germans always blocked the narrow roads with logs and hiding mines at these roadblocks.

Miller and his Platoon made slow progress that Day. Only about 300 – 400 yards!



Left to right: 1st Lt. Sidney Miller, PFC Chaney and Sgt. Kramer (Photo October 1944)

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry journal

Nov. 16, 1944 - At 1115 hours today American and British bombers along with fighter bombers and escort planes bombed enemy territory north and NE of our positions. The mission was supposed to be carried out by group of 2000 planes. It is the beginning of the Allied drive to Cologne and the Rhine.

H-hour was set at 1245 hours and at that time our 2nd Bn. pushed forward their objective #1 which is brushland in the vicinity of Schevenhütte, Germany. We are moving in a column of Bn. is in regimental reserve. We are now on a 45-minute alert to be prepared to assist in the 2nd Bn. if necessary or pass through them to objective # 3. Our mission as a Division in attack is to the east is to seize the crossing of the Rur River north of Düren. Our 16th Infantry in on our right with the 18th Infantry in reserve. We spent the afternoon preparing to move. The weather is clear, and it is beginning to dry a little.

German Side

The opponents of the 26th Infantry in the Huertgen were the Grenadierregiment 115 of the 47th Volksgrenadierdivision (47th VGD). The 47th VGD was a 3rd wave Division and a mixture of soldiers coming from the Navy, Air Force and soldiers which made it back to duty after recovering from wounds. The Division also received many recruits, which was born in 1926 and 1927 which was some 17 to 18 years old, but without any combat experience.

An Infantry Regiment usually has 3 Battalions, but the Gren. Rgt. 115 only has 2 Battalions, like their sister Regiments 103 and 104 who had to fight the 16th and 18th Infantry of the 1st Infantry Division.

Most of the Officer had combat experience from the Russian front, but the tactic on the Russian front was not to compare with the tactic of the allied side. The only thing what keeps this soldier together was their high spirit.

Josef Schwagerl, an 18-year-old EM joined the 47th VGD at Denmark and became a member of the 1st Company of the 115th Infantry. He was involved in the first days in the Huertgen forest against the 26th Infantry and saw action between the town of Schevenhütte and Laufenburg Caslte.



*Oberstleutnant (Lt. Col.) Inhofer,
CO 115th Grenadier Infantry Regiment*

He never will forget the artillery, mortars and grenades which hit the treetops and the yells of the wounded soldiers all day and night!

November 17, 1944

The attack resumed at 0800 along the Corps front. The weather was not favorable for air support. The 104th Infantry Division made slight gains while the 3d Armored Division cleared the town of Hastenrath, entered Scherpenseel, and repulsed a counterattack. In the 1st Infantry Division area, the 16th Infantry was counterattacked near Hamich while the 26th Infantry advanced 1000 yards northeast of Schevenhütte and the 47th RCT cleared Gressenich. The 4th Infantry Division's progress was impeded by barbed wire, mines, booby traps, and heavy mortar and artillery fire. In the south, the 12th Infantry reached the edge of the Huertgen forest northwest the town of Hürtgen. (First Army Report of Operations)

After a heavily artillery- and mortar barrage in the morning the enemy attacked again along the Corps front. During the

night more enemy Infantry- and Armored units was assembling in the Corps sector. The enemy attacked with heavily tank support in the vicinity of Hastenrath and Hamich. Our troops could stop and hold up all these attacks and also an enemy attempt from the vicinity of Schevenhütte towards Hamich. The enemy lost 23 tanks and other vehicles.

The day was overcast and the enemy air-force wasn't very active.

On 7th Army order the 47. VGD had to sent one Battalion into the vicinity west of Gürzenich to support the right flank of the 275. Infantry Division. Another Battalion had to stay in Gürzenich in a reserve position.

(German LXXXI. AK reports)

Blue Spader Side

1st Lieutenant Miller can remember November 17, 1944 as the day which started with a Drumbeat. Shortly after daybreak he checked his position and the other foxholes where his soldier dug in the last night. All was quite that morning. Then he noticed that Lt. Smith, the deputy Platoon leader put his hands on the edge of the foxhole to jump out. Just the moment when his body raised up, a single gun shot hit his belly and Lt. Smith fall back into the foxhole. After all, keep quiet, 1st Lt. Miller and a medic went over to Lt. Smith. He was seriously wounded, and they brought him back. Miller never heard anything from him after that.

Another soldier of Millers Platoon was Sergeant Kramer. He was with the unit since North Africa and made all three landings at North Africa, Sicily and Normandy.

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry Journal

Nov. 17, 1944 – The Bn. moved forward at 1045 hours and arrived on checkpoint 1 (031422) at 1200 hours, distance covered 4000 yards. Rear command group arrived at 994395 at 100 hours. All units were dig in and camouflaged by 1600 hours. Later

hot chow was served. Weather clear and cool. Casualties: 1 WIA, 3 abs sk, and 1 SIW.

German Side

The bad weather, the air assault from the day before and logistic problems reduced more and more the strength of the 47th VGD. Some artillery batteries of the Division were involved in the air attack onto the towns of Jülich and Düren the day before and were a 100 % casualty. So, the artillery men became members of the Infantry.

The Commanding officer of the Gren. Rgt. 115 was LTC INHOFER. He set up his CP at Merode (but not at the Castle). CO of the 1st Bn. was Hauptmann (Captain) HEIN and the CO of the 2nd Bn was Hauptmann Willi Arend.

November 18, 1944

The weather was clear until 1300, and with excellent visibility the IX Tactical Air Command provided groups of fighter bombers to support each Division. The 104th Infantry Division advanced just short the Village of Verlautenheide and came online with the 3d Armored Division units at Scherpenseel. The 3d Armored Division had not significant activities. In the 1st Infantry Division sector, the 16th Infantry cleared Hamich, and successfully repulsed a counterattack by 200 – 300 German Infantry and 15 Tanks. The 4th Infantry Division's 8th Infantry pushed 1000 yards east and the 22nd Infantry crossed the Weisser Wehe Stream (First Army Report of Operation)

After a heavy artillery- and mortar barrage and sharp clashes the enemy renewed his attack in the early morning along the Corps front. Because of the bad weather condition, the enemy air force used only fighter bombers for strafing our frontlines, vehicles and tanks.

The 47 VGD receives orders to take over their own front sector which runs eastward the town of Hastenrath to the south toward

the right flank of the 275 ID. All units of the 12 VGD were relieved today.

A second attempt of the enemy to lead an attack from Gressenich toward Langerwehe to encircle our troops in the vicinity of Eschweiler and Weisweiler failed.

(German LXXXI AK Report)

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry Unit Journal

Nov. 18, 1944 - The Bn. was alerted for the attack at 1045 hours. The order of march thru LD, is K Co left flank, L Co on right flank, and I Co covering road, Command Group and M Co. Resistance encountered thru checkpoints, 32(026433) was light from small arms, but mortar and artillery fire was heavy. The roads were well covered by enemy making it almost impossible to keep telephone with forward CP. At one time 32 breaks were repaired in the line by one wire crew. All messages were transmitted by radio.

The rear CP moved up to checkpoint 1(013422) at 1230 hours, upon arrival it was severely shelled by enemy artillery, casualties incurred. Lt. Hoh had to move his Medical Aid Station to Schevenhütte (007416) because it was convenient locality. 3 M29 vehicles were assigned to this Bn for transportation on the present muddy roads. Cas.: 1 WIA, abs sk 3, SIW 1

November 19, 1944

The weather was good during the morning and the IX Tactical Air Command flew 150 sorties for the frontline Divisions. The First Army Letter of Instruction effective at midnight November 20 changed the boundary between the VII and the V Corps from north of Hürtgen to north of Kleinhau. V Corps was ordered to attack from southwest through Huertgen and Kleinhau. CCR 5th Armored Division was relieved from attachment to VII Corps and reverted to V Corps. The 104th Infantry Division made substantial advances along the First Army and Ninth Army boundaries, and by the end of the day had patrols on the outskirts of Eschweiler and a significant active in the 3rd Armored

Division area. The 1st Infantry Division's 16th Infantry again defeated a German counterattack north of Hamich, and the 18th Infantry reached the town of Wenau. In the 4th Infantry Divisions area there were no significant changes to the situation. (First Army Report of Operations)

The enemy laid strong artillery- and mortar fire on our MLR and the rear area in the left Corps sector and started another heavy assault in the early morning. Hundreds of fighters- and dive-bombers appeared over the Corps sector during the day to support the attacking Infantry. The enemy seized the towns of Kinzweiler, St. Jöris and Schleiden. During the afternoon the enemy pressure in the left Corps sector against the 47 VGD becomes very strong and he was able to break-through our frontlines on several sites, against the young and non-combat experienced 47 VGD. But most of the enemy operations to penetrate our frontlines specially in the vicinity of Heistern and Laufenburg Castle failed, and the enemy and he received a high rate of bloody casualties. The mission of the enemy air force during the day was to strafe our troops and traffic in the rear area, our main supply roads and the bridges across the Roer River. Our anti-aircraft-artillery wasn't able to fight the attacking fighter planes successful because of limited ammunition.

All communication wires toward the frontlines were destroyed by artillery. Some of the smaller towns and villages within the MLR had given off to secure the frontlines.

Blue Spader Side

On November 19, 1944 the 26th Infantry approached toward Laufenburg Castle. That was the same day, when the German 115th Grenadier Regiment started a counterattack to repulse the 2-26 Infantry back. PFC Francis X. McGraw, a machine gunner with H-Company earned the MOH posthumously that day. Situation:



Laufenburg Castle before WWII



Leutnant Otto Krannich Forward Artillery Observer on Laufenburg Castle

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry unit Journal
Nov. 19th – The attack was continued at 1300 hours thru the LD (026433) Laufenburg Caslte at 1630 hours. The

swamp buggies had a 2-fold mission, on trips to forward CP they transported ammunition, water and C rations; on return journey they evacuated wounded to rear medical stations. This operation was carried on under heavy enemy artillery and larger caliber mortar fire, zeroed in on the road. Cas.: 26 WIA, 10 abs sk, 10 NP. Altogether there were 82 evacuations. Weather: Continued rain and cold. Lt. Yelverton, K, Lt. Ratchford, K, Lt. Key, M, Lt. Chancey, I, Lt. Cook, L, Lt. Phillips, M; the forenamed officers were casualties.

German Side

Captain Willi Arend, the CO of the 2nd Bn. 115th Gren. Regiment was leading the attack of his Battalion today, but he was wounded when a shell fragment hit his foot. He was evacuated and another Captain took over the Command of his Battalion. Artillery-, mortar and small arms fire let that attack failed! Lots of German soldiers was wounded and remained between the lines inside the woods. Later they were evacuated back to Merode or to Laufenburg Castle which was still hold by the 1st Bn. 115th Gren. Regiment. Captain Hein, CO of the 1st Bn. still remained at Laufenburg Castle that day. The next day should be the last day of his life!

November 20, 1944

The weather had with low clouds and no aircraft flew in support of offensive operations. In the north, the 104th Infantry Division cleared the towns of Röhe and Bergrath and up to Hehlrath and outskirts southwest of Eschweiler. The 3d Armored Division was pinched out by the 104th Infantry Division and the 1st Infantry Division which also cleared Wenau, bypassed Heistern and had elements well across the open ground toward Schönthal. The 47th RCT reached within ½ mile of the Aachen-Stolberg-Düren railway. The 4th Infantry Division's 8th Infantry was counter-attacked and lost some ground, while the 22nd Infantry mad slow progress toward Grosshau

The enemy renewal his attack early in the morning after a heavy artillery barrage. It seems that the enemy today want to make the attempt to break-up our frontlines in several sectors to break-through to the Roer River. Because of the high rate of our own casualties it was necessary to retreat our frontlines. Replacements didn't arrive so the Divisions had to put all reserve troops into the frontlines.

(German LXXXI AK reports)

Blue Spader Side

Big Push for the 26th Infantry that day. Elements of the 3rd Bn. / 26th Infantry reached the Laufenburg Castle, supported by a Platoon of Tanks of the 745th Tank Bn. and a Platoon of TD's of the 634th Tank Destroyer Bn. The 2-26th Infantry still was southeast and south of the Castle while it was bypassed by the 1-26th Infantry which was now north and northwest of the Castle around Hill # 207. During that Day, the 3-26th Infantry received heavy resistance from the German defenders inside the castle, lost several tanks and lots of soldiers.

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry unit Journal

Nov. 20th – The Bn. moved forward continuing the attack at 1400 hours from (028439). Artillery and mortar fire was heavy as the troops made their drive. At 1700 hours they accomplished the objective on checkpoint 61 (031445) a distance of 800 yards. Enemy artillery fell in and around both forward and rear CP 's. Cas. 20 WIA, 12 abs sk, NP 8. Weather: continued rain. Lt. Buck wounded but not evacuated.

German Side

Hauptmann (Captain) HEIN the CO of the 1st Bn. Gren. Rgt. 115 remained at Laufenburg Castle during the morning of November 20, 1944. Before noon a column of Tanks along with Infantry was coming up the road to the Castle. When the first tank in column stopped about 40 yards from the entrance, Captain Hein came out of the gate, only with his Army pistol and

began to shoot the tanks. The Americans answered with machine gun fire and Captain Hein was wounded in the belly. Some German soldiers were able to pick him up and brought him back into the castle where he died of wounds the next night. After the castle was seized by the Americans, his body remained in the basement till 1946. Then his mother (from Austria) came up to the Castle and put the remains of her son into wooden suitcase and took him home!

2nd Lt. Krannich, who was a Forward Artillery Observer was on top at the huge tower and lead the artillery fire toward the American lines. He too saw the tanks coming up to the castle and he took some



Hauptmann (Capt.) Hein KIA at Laufenburg Castle Nov. 20, 1944

Panzerfaust and knocked out 3 Tanks. The other tanks withdraw and shot with their guns onto the castle till the tower was set on fire. Lt. Krannich and a wire man remained at the top of the towers till midnight. Then they went down and noticed that the Americans had seized the castle. A double guard was patrolling in

the courtyard. The gate was closed. Then Krannich said to his wire man: "I will try to escape! Better you give up and you can become a POW!" The wire man accepted the order from his Officer. Then Krannich jumped down into the courtyard, fired 5 – 6 rounds with his pistol and then the opened the gate and could escape.

November 21, 1944

The 104th Infantry Division mopped up Hehlrath and Röhe and advanced toward Dürwiß. House to house fighting erupted in outskirts southwest of Eschweiler, Bergrath, and Bohl. The northern point of hill 245 near Merode was seized by elements of the 1st Infantry Division's 26th Regiment, while the 16th and 18th Regiments advanced 800 yards north of Heistern. The attached 47th Regimental Combat Team battled for Hill 188. In the 4th Division zone, there was little progress except a slight advance by the 22nd Infantry. The 9th Air force bombed Bergstein in the V Corps area and the 121st Infantry passed through the 12th Infantry Regiment but made no material gain. (First Army Report of Operation)

The enemy pressure in the right Corps sector today wasn't so strong as in the days before. Enemy assembling areas was bombarded with all our own artillery in the vicinity south of Eschweiler and Hastenrath – Scherpenseel. Forty and three enemy tanks were destroyed.

The plans for today is the retreating of the frontlines onto the "Moltke Stellung" and retreat from Eschweiler. This is necessary because of our heavy casualties and to support the reduced units.

(German LXXXI AK reports)



German Grenadiers on their way to the frontlines inside the woods between Laufenburg Castle and Merode, Nov. 1944

Blue Spader Side

After the capturing of Laufenburg Castle, the 26th Infantry erected some CP inside the castle itself, because it was the only building which the Americans could use, since they had leave Schevenhütte. They too erected outposts along the frontline and connected each outpost with a telephone. The same day, after the Caslte was captured, the Germans shelled the castle with artillery and 88 mm guns.

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry Unit Journal

Nov 21st – All Companies made slight gains to improve their position by dispersing pltns. security the main objective in shifting about. Cas. 1 KIA, WIA 14, abs sk 12, NP 8, Weather: Rainy



26th Infantry on the way to Merode



German Side

The Germans withdraw some 1000 yards to the east and build up a new MLR along the ERBSWEG trail. The Germans counter-attacked the castle three times but was unsuccessful. All attacks was thrown off now by the American defenders.

Hauptmann (Captain) DOHRMANN became the new Battalion Commander for Lt. Hein. His CP was in an old mine inside the woods. Dohrmann always was together with his remained men. His Battalion was reduced under 100 men of strength. No supplies, no warm food, always shelling and very bad and cold weather. No replacements.



Freeman V. Beasley, K-26th Infantry, KIA
Laufenburg Castle November 1944

November 22, 1944

All Divisions of the VII Corps attacked at 0800 and right regiments of the 104th Division advanced 2000 yards northeast and crossed the east-west railroad and entered the Inde Valley. The 1st Division made little progress against heavy resistance. The 47th Infantry captured Hill 188 after heavy fighting while the 18th Infantry repulsed two German tanks supported counterattacks. In the zone of the 4th Division, one Battalion of the 8th Infantry advanced 600 yards to clearing the woods and the 22nd Infantry battled 600 yards through the forest toward Grosshau. In the V Corps area, the 8th Divisions 121st Infantry continued its attack to the northeast, but met heavy small-arms, artillery and mortar fire and made only a slight advance. VII Corps orders effective midnight November 22; 104th Division seize Weisweiler-Frenz-Inden; 1st Division seize Langerwehe-Merode-Schlich high ground; 4th Division seized high ground vicinity Grosshau. (First Army Report of Operations)

During the night the enemy again laid heavy artillery and mortar fire on our MLR and the rear area and attempts to renew the attack for reaching the Roer river. The enemy focused his attacks today in the vicinity of Pier and Pattern and against the 47 VGD. In this sector the enemy tried to attack our frontlines from both flanks.

An enemy attack from the vicinity of Heistern toward Langerwehe was successful and we had to withdraw our frontlines. With all our artillery and infantry reserve we could close the gap during the day. The overcast was low, and it was raining all during the day that the enemy airforce activity was very limited.

(German LXXXI AK reports)



Lieutenant Colonel Derril M. Daniel, CO
2-26th Infantry

Blue Spader Side

Zoltan Gerencher, a member with Company C / 26th Infantry became a runner in the Huertgen forest. His job was to transfer messages and orders between the Battalion CP to the Companies and Platoons, because the wire of the phones

always was destroyed by the artillery. Also, most of the radios didn't work inside the dense forest. Zoltan Gerencher still can remember the shells of both sides coming into the area and hit the treetops. The shell fragments came down like iron rain and hit everything around. So, it was very dangerous to make a foxhole near a tree, because when a shell hit the treetop, all would come down on you. Most of the foxholes were covered with small logs, brushes and some inches of dirt to protect against the tree bursts. But most of the foxholes were filled with water. The last days of November 1944 the weather turned very bad and many rain and snow came in. So, lots of the foxholes were filled with water up to the knees. This was also a reason that so many soldiers became frost bits (Trench Foot).

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry Unit Journal

Nov 22nd – All Companies improved their positions. The CP was built up by a creek bed and logs were fell across the bed. This provided ample protection from shells bursting close to CP. K Co sent a patrol out to contact the enemy. The patrol received small arms fire. There were 77 replacements and 4 officers assigned to the Bn today. The following is a break down to each Company: HQ 1, I 20, K 23, L 20, and M 13. Officers Lt. Meyers, K, Lt. Elsen I, Lt. Mosias, K, Lt. Leslie I. All replacements kept in field training until needed. Present position heavily shelled. Cas. WIA 52, KIA 3, Lt. Meyer WIA, Lt. Goodrich and Lt. Chafin KIA as of the 21st of Nov. Rear CP moved to Schevenhütte (607416) on the rain route for the Bn. Forward CP heavily shelled the next morning at 0415 hours. Capt. Botts assumed command of K Co.

German side

The situation for the German defenders became worse from day to day. Many civilians was still remained and dug in the cellars and basement at Merode and Schlich and the castle itself. Lots of these people were old people and kids and they

had no opportunity to escape or went for evacuation. Allied fighter bombers and artillery watched all entire roads and trails into the town of Merode and Schlich, so a movement was only possible during the night, but most of the road and ways was destroyed by former air raids and artillery shells. The roads was covered with debris of the destroyed buildings, destroyed vehicles, equipment, dead horses, cattle and fallen soldiers and civilians.



*Hauptmann (Captain) Werner Dohrmann
CO 2nd Bn. 115 Grenadier Infantry Rgt.*

November 23, 1944

In the 104th Infantry Division sector, the Germans strongly defended Pützlohn near the Army boundary and the 413th Infantry lost and then recaptured Hill 272. The 414th Infantry on the right flank made substantial progress along the north bank of the Inde River. The 1st Division made progress on the left flank of the Division zone, where the 47th progressed one-half mile towards Hüheln. The 4th Division's 8th Infantry fought forward 700 yards through the forest along the Schevenhütte-Düren Road and the 12th Infantry progressed about 500 yards through minefields and artillery fire northeast towards Grosshau. In the 8th Division zone,

the 121st Infantry was temporarily checked by a German counterattack that was repulsed in the afternoon. (First Army Report of Operations)

The enemy artillery was very active during the night. In the left Corps sector the enemy advance some hundred yards. The enemy could extend the gap in the vicinity of Rösslerhof. All attempts to break our frontlines failed. The weather conditions were still bad, so the enemy Air force activity was limited again and a welcome pause for our own troops. During the day the enemy seized the Rösslerhof Farm and Hill 272 southeast of Laufenburg Castle. (German LXXXI AK reports)

Blue Spader side

November 23, 1944 was “Thanksgiving Day” The VII Corps Commander, Lieutenant General Collins (nickname “Lightning Joe) ordered warm turkey food for all men along the frontlines, include the soldiers of the 26th Infantry which was fighting the Germans in the Huertgen forest near Merode. 1st Lt. Miller and his Platoon Sergeant Tom Sheffield of Tyler/TX took each a cane of hot turkey and brought it up to the frontlines. Miller remembered that during that time the frontlines were quiet like in peacetime. Not even a rifle was shooting. Miller and Sheffield left one cane beside a huge oak tree and went with the other cane from foxhole to foxhole and each soldier became pieces of hot turkey and beans. Miller later said that he was the “First Fast-Food Service” in the Huertgen Forest.

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry unit Journal

Nov 23rd – At 0945 hours the Bn made another attack from 031445 and at 1030 hours reached point 400 yards north of checkpoint 59 (028453). They were still in attack and by 1600 hours another message transmitted to rear CP stated: “On objective” which was right thru BM 264 overlooking the Cologne Plain.

There were 35 replacements assigned to the following Companies: I 35, K 15. Cas.:

WIA 24, abs sk 5, NP 8. A word in passing that today was Thanksgiving Day a great national holiday at home. Turkeys were supplied to kitchens but were not served. Later when situation permits, we shall have a good feast.

German side.

The strength of the 115th Infantry was reduced day by day and the German Corps Commander asked for new replacements, but unsuccessful. The new 3rd Parachute Division was alerted that day. After fighting in Normandy, Northern France, Mons and Belgium, the 3rd Parachute Division was relieved and refreshed in the area around Cologne (Köln). Then parts of these Division were formed into the Task Force “Becker” named after LTC Becker, to fight against the allied forces at Arnheim and Nijmegen (Operation Market – Garden). The 3rd Parachute Division was on full strength of some 18.000 soldiers and this Division should become one of the spearheads for the Battle of the Bulge. But the German high Command (Field Marshall Model) ordered the 3rd Parachute to close the gap west of Düren and to relieve the 12th and 47th VGD in that sector. Field Marshall Model never gave any order to mention this in official military files; maybe he was afraid that the German Supreme Command would court-martial him for this. Elements of the 3rd Parachute Division didn’t arrive in the Langerwehe – Merode sector before November 26, 1944, because the 3rd Parachute Division was transfer by train into the vicinity of Gemünd, which was some 30 miles south of Merode and the 3rd Parachute had to walk this distance.

November 24, 1944

Enemy resistance along the VII Corps front and progress was slow. House to house fighting continued in Eschweiler and Weisweiler in the 104th Infantry Division’s zone. A Task Force of Tanks from the 47th Infantry and 32nd Armored Regiment captured Hüheln. Slight advance were made by other 1st Division units and the

struggle for the hill southwest of Langerwehe continued. In the 4th Division sector, the 8th Infantry continued its drive through the woods to the east (First Army report of operations)

During the night the enemy started several heavy attacks against the 12 VGD on the slag pile eastward Eschweiler, which could be seized by the enemy after a close combat fight.

A heavy attack against the 47 VGD failed and the enemy wasn't able to seize more ground. The weather conditions were optimal for the defenders. No enemy aircrafts appeared during the day.

(German LXXXI AK reports)

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry unit journal

Nov 24th – The Bn. is in a defensive position and fortifications are being strengthened. An artillery OP which overlooks the enemy's position from an excellent vantage point spotted enemy artillery batteries. Upon completion of a fire mission, the results were 4 batteries put out of action. Observation of enemy position is excellent. The weather permitted the Air Force to dive bomb and strafe the enemy position in our sector. In order to improve telephone communications a 12-drop switchboard was transported this morning to forward CP. The supply sergeants issued each man a pair of new socks and the dirty socks were returned to be washed by the QM Laundry. This afternoon, Sgts Mosely and Nestor returned from Danger Base after taking final physical examination for battlefield promotions to rank of 2nd Lt.

Lt. Col. Seitz visited the Bn Commander to discuss the future operations. The Blue 2 jeep returned after being repaired by ordnance. Introductory artillery fell upon the Bn. The Telephone line to forward CP was in contact for the most part today. Blue 1 has been at the Regt. CP also at the field train allocation replacements, the data which follows: I 20, E 24, HQ 8, M 1, also 8 officers were assigned: Capt Fielder F. Fair K, 1st Lt. Eugene M Alder L, 1st Lt. Edward R Costello K, 2nd Lt. William R.

Johnson I, 2nd Lt. Jack W. Lewis K, and Lt. Gray transferred from I to K. Cas.: WIA 8, abs sk 12, KIA 2, Lt. Mortimer I and Lt. Costello K. Weather: cool and clear today. 5 prisoners were captured.

November 25, 1944

In the morning the sky was overcast but cleared in the afternoon, and the IX Tactical Air Command provided close air support in the 104th and 1st Division areas. The 104th Division advanced to high ground east of Pützlohn, and the valley of the Inde River west of Weisweiler was secured. In the 1st Division area, the Infantry and armored team made good progress and the Weisweiler – Langerwehe road was cut. The 8th Infantry of the 4th Division made an 800 yards advance along the Schevenhütte – Düren road. The 22nd Infantry attack Grosshau but is repulsed by intense anti tank, mortar and artillery fire. There were no significant activities in the 8th Division area. (First Army Report of Operations)

During the day the enemy led an attack against the 47 VGD with the aim to breakthrough the edge of woods in the vicinity of Schlich – Merode – Jüngersdorf. Enemy fighter- and dive bombers were very active during the day and attacked our artillery batteries. The strength of the 47 VGD was so strong reduced that it was necessary to apply for replacement troops to support the 47 VGD and to close the gaps in their rows. After the Command Staff of the 47 VGD was relieved and was used for a Special Mission, the combat troops of the Division was reunited with the 12 VGD which was then named as "Kampfgruppe Engel" after its Commanding General, Major General Gerhard Engel. A planned counterattack in the afternoon with support of Sturmabteilung from the Kampfgruppe von Manteuffel with the aim to close the gap in the frontlines between hill 198 and 247 failed, because strong enemy fighter bombers attacked and reduced this combat team already in their assembling area, but

after the unit was reformed they attacked with the a delay of two hours the enemy front line. The enemy fought stubborn and withdraw slowly, but finally our troops could retake three important hills in their front sector.

Because of the strength of our Battalions and no further replacement troops was it necessary to line up our frontlines. The arc around Weisweiler changes into a North – South line along the western outskirts of Frenz – Frenzer Burg and Merberich. No change in the situation. The enemy continued its attacks to capture the bridgeheads of Düren and Jülich at the western edge of the Roer River. (German LXXXI AK reports)

Blue Spader Side

Jay E. Nauman was a PFC in Anti Tank Company 26th Infantry. His position at this time were somewhere in the woods in the vicinity of Laufenburg Castle. In the morning of November 25, 1944, he along with two other comrades had to check the wire which was leading from their forward Command post to the rear Command post. Just in the moment after they finished a break in the wire, a German artillery shell hit the ground nearby Jay and his two comrades, killing both of his friends and wounded himself. He was not seriously wounded, but he couldn't move. Suddenly two German soldiers were passing by and saw Jay lying in the ditch. The two German soldiers were on their way to give up. Tired of fighting and where looking for taken prisoner. The German soldiers then carried Jay E. Nauman toward the American frontlines till they arrived at a first aid station. Medics now took over Jay Nauman and he received further treatment. The two German soldiers were taken prisoner. Nauman later stated to me (Albert Trostorf) that he never had a chance to receive both addresses of those German soldiers. He like would send both "Christmas Cards" each year, because both saved his life!

German side

At the basement of my home at Merode was a Platoon Command post at this time. The basement was still full of refugees from the Merode Forester house where the Gowkens and Wamig family lived till they were kicked out by German soldiers. My father stated that the Platoon leader was a soldier who was with the Navy before he gets his assignment as an Infantry Platoon leader. He was a Lieutenant, but haven't any combat experience. Along with the Platoon was an Unteroffizier (Sergeant) from Vienna/Austria who was a Student of Theology. He was very religious and always volunteered for night patrols. Each night he and about three or four other soldiers left for night patrols and came back after a few hours. One day they came back and hold their briefing in the basement beside the civilians. My father and family, which was very familiar with the area and vicinity could now notice and find out where the frontlines and American position during that time was. One day, the Patrol leader and his men were hidden below the tip of a pine tree which was hit by artillery. American soldiers were on the other side and talking, never noticed that Germans was so close. Every time, after returning from the patrol, the leader and the soldiers sent some prayers to the Lord.

November 26, 1944

In support of the 104th, 1st and 8th Divisions the IX Tactical Air Command struck Weisweiler, Frenz, Lamersdorf, Inden, Langerwehe and Geich. The 104th Division captured Frenz and cleared Weisweiler. In the 1st Division area Task Force Richardson captured a strongpoint south of Frenz (Frenzerberg Castle). In the 4th Division area, the 8th Infantry cleared southward from the Schevenhütte – Düren road and in the 22nd Infantry area soldiers moved in greater strength to the edge of woods. The 8th Infantry Division's 121st Infantry moved forward slightly towards Hürtgen, while the attached Battalion of the 13th Infantry passed through the 12th Infantry and reached the forest edge faced

Hürtgen. (First Army Report of Operations)

Our withdrawal from Weisweiler toward the east was a chance for the enemy to renew his heavy attacks in the eastern direction. During the early afternoon hours was able to bypass the Frenzerburg Castle on both sides.

The Corps receive as replacements the Sturmgeschützbrigade 341 and 667 and the 3. Fallschirmjäger Division (Parachute Division). These units have to relieve the reduced 12 VGD and 47 VGD. The beginning of the relieving should start in the night of the 26 November.

Further enemy attacks against the bridgehead Jülich and in the vicinity of Frenzer Burg was beaten off by our last reserve troops.

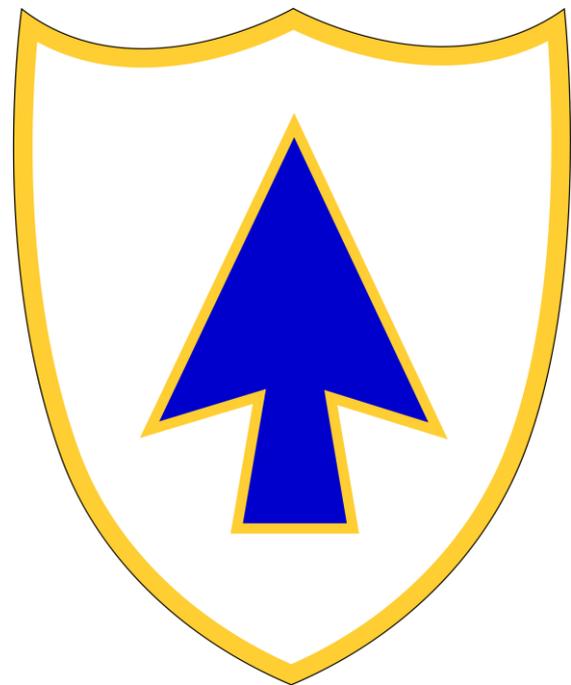
(German LXXXI AK reports)

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry unit report

Nov 26th – The Bn. remains in defensive position and strengthening of fortifications has been continued because of the increase in enemy mortar and artillery fire. There has been an increase of small arms fire

from the left flank of the firebreak and a Platoon of 1st Recon has been employed to cope with the situation. Decoy White and the 1st Bn. of the 26th Infantry have tied in with our left and right flanks respectively,

making them more secure. An M 29 swamp buggy and medical vehicle were ambushed near the entrance of the firebreak. Reports are not clear as to the results of the ambush. In the afternoon the P-47's dive bombed and strafed enemy position on the plains of the Bn. sector. Replacements were assigned to the following Companies: I 16, K 15, L 15, Lt. Ruby from abs sk to duty K Co. The forward aid station was hit by artillery and 2 casualties reported. Cas: 14 WIA, 1 NP, 12 abs sk, 1 SIW, Pvt Robert F Hargett, prisoner taken: 1 Officer and 3 EM.





The "Merode" Huertgen Forest was a nightmare. A Green-Deadly Hell.



Mortar's was used to reduce the German position in the forest



The weather was cold, constant rain mixed with snow and very uncomfortable. Evacuation of casualties and forwarding supplies and ammunition was always a big problem!

Blue Spader Side.

During the day the 26th Infantry received many replacements. Since November 16, the unit fought her way through the dense forest by a high price. Lots of Officers, NCO's and EM were lost by the intensive artillery- and mortar fire, small arms and machine gun. Other casualties were from the cold and wet weather was lots of soldiers became Trench foot. There was too some casualties by hallucination and other became other sickness. The new arriving GI's was mostly fresh replacements coming over from the USA after a few weeks of basic training. Lieutenant Miller and Sergeant Sheffield saw the new arrival soldiers coming up to Laufenburg Castle, wearing and carrying all kinds of garrison equipment. The first thing what was to do was to part from the

stuff what wasn't use for a fight inside the forest.

Then the replacement soldiers were transferred toward the frontlines and putting into foxholes along the frontlines. The same day, a limited German counterattack by the new arriving German 5th Parachute Regiment of the 3rd Parachute Division was repulsed by the 2-26th Infantry at Hill 245.

German side

Elements of the 3rd Parachute Division arrived at the vicinity of Merode and Langerwehe that night before. In the morning of November 26, 1944, the 1st Battalion of the 5th Parachute began to relieve the heavy reduced Grenadierregiment 115 had only 36 soldiers left! The 5th Parachute was a well trained and a unit with full

strength, but like all German units low in ammunition and equipment. For making roadblocks the engineers had to demolish fences from meadows. A German Parachute veteran told me in 1989: "Back in 1940 German Paratrooper engineers captured with modern weapons and equipment one of the strongest fortresses of the Maginot Line -Fort Eben Emael- - now, 1944 we are fighting a war like very poor peoples!"

At or about 10.00 AM the 5th Parachute started a counterattack against the 2-26th Infantry for re-capturing Laufenburg Caslte. The Parachutists went up towards the woods but was shelled artillery and mortar when they reached the High Ground by noon. Lots of Paratroopers was killed or wounded, other could escape and went back for Merode during the follow night. The 1st attack of the Parachute ended into a disaster.

November 27, 1944

In the 104th Division area heavy mortar and artillery fire prevented the 413th Infantry's daylight attack. After dark the regiment attacked and gained it s line of departure. The 47th RCT relieve Task Force Richardson in the 1st Division's area and captured Gut Merberich and Hill 203. The 1st Division 18th Regiment entered Langerwehe and of battalion of the 26th Infantry entered Jüngersdorf, well beyond the edge of forest. Very little progress was made in the 4th Division's area. The 12th Infantry, after being pinched out by elements of the 8th Division assemble in assemble areas for redeployment. Elements of the 8th Division's 121st Infantry entered Hürtgen and fought up to the church. (First Army reports of Operations)

During the night the enemy laid harassing fire in the Corps sector. No further activities.

The 12 VGD made further preparations for an attack with the Kampfgruppe von Manteuffel to close the gaps in their sector.

At Langerwehe the enemy fought against a fresh, non-combat experienced Parachute unit of the 3rd Parachute Division and could seize Gut Merberich and Langerwehe. The enemy also attacked from the direction of Kammerbusch and our paratroopers had to withdrawn behind the cemetery.

The attack of our Sturm-Bataillon to close the gap in the vicinity of point 237 the unit was encircled two times and finally was beaten back toward the southern edge of Jüngersdorf.

Three battalions of the 9th Parachute Regiment (German) started the relieve of the 12 VGD and 47 VGD between Langerwehe and Frenz. More infantry units should be relieved during the next night.

(German LXXXI AK reports)

3rd Battalion Report of Operation

Nov 27 – Bn continued it s present position (defensive) for the earlier part of the day. Section of enemy mortars laying a harassing barrage in and around CP was located by observer of Cannon Company. After completing fire mission enemy mortar fire ceased. A small amount of enemy artillery fell in and around our CP today. At 1500 hours the Bn. moved out for an attack on Jungersdorf, the LD 034456. Order of move L Co encountered small arms and followed by enemy artillery fire. L closed in on objective at 041468 at 1730 hours covering a distance of 1500 yards. Forward elements of L & I Co. consolidated on objective resisted counterattack 0400 hours. Lt. Zollweg, Capt Botts assumed command of I Co. Capt Fair although wounded carried on. Cas: 11 abs sk, 2 NP, 25 WIA, a 1 SIW – PFC Lawrence P. Reese. Weather clear and cold.

Blue Spader Side.

The 3-26th Infantry along with a Platoon of Tanks of the 745th Tank Battalion and a Platoon TD's of the 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion attacked and captured the town

of Jüngersdorf that day. This was the first town which was taken on the eastern and northeastern edge of the Huertgen forest. The town of Jüngersdorf was well defended and the attackers lost many casualties, equipment, some Tanks and TD's. Most of the Tanks and TD's were knocked out by Panzerfaust or "Ofenrohr" (Bazooka) fire. The town of Jüngersdorf too was the closest point or town reaching to the Aachen – Düren railroad, the Aachen – Düren highway (Route 264) and the Autobahn in the north. The next day, the 3rd Battalion of the 5th Parachute tried to recapture the town, but all attacks was repulsed by the 3rd Battalion.

German Side.

November 27, 1944 a young German Paratrooper was killed in action in his own home:

Johann Weiler, a 21-year-old Corporal with the 5th Parachute Division became a soldier in 1941. He fought several battles without a scratch. Early in 1944 he was trained as a Paratrooper and he became a member with the 5th Parachute of the 3rd Parachute Division. He surely must be very surprised, when his unit came into the vicinity of Langerwehe and Jüngersdorf, to fight the Americans, because the town of Jüngersdorf was his home. He raised here, everybody in the town knew him, his friends, neighbors, teachers, parents, sisters and brothers. Johann Weiler lived at (in 1944) a single house which was approximately 150 yards outside the town itself in the direction toward Merode. From his Company Commander he received the order to defend "his home" with his Squad. That was a special mission for Johann Weiler and his men. After he seized "his house" he walked through all room, searching for any information concerning his family which was for evacuation. His comrades later said that he felt very luckily and secure in his home. But soon after darkness, the 3-26th Infantry began to attack the town which was captured before midnight. Only the house of Johann Weiler was strong defended and still in German

hands. Many machine gun and rifle bullets hit the walls and destroyed the doors and windows, but couldn't get their objective. Suddenly all was quite and after a few minutes of waiting, Johann Weiler left his home through the front door and remained on the stairs. The next thing what his comrades could hear was a single shot and then they found Johann Weiler laying half on the stairs and in the entrance of the house. They took him back into the house, but he was dead. Later, after the war, Johann Weilers parents closed the front entrance with brick stone and left the house only through the back door.

November 28, 1944

The 104th Division's 413th Infantry attacked at 0430 and advanced 2000 yards against heavy resistance. It entered the towns of Inden and Lamersdorf and captured an intact bridge over the Inde River. In the 1st Division area, there was little forward movement. German tank support counterattacks launched between 0200 and 0300 were repulsed at Langerwehe and Jüngersdorf. The 4th Division inserted the 12th Infantry between the 8th and 22nd Regiments and the 12th Infantry took hill 90. CCA, 5th Armored Division and the 121st Infantry, 8th Division seized the village of Hürtgen in heavy fighting. A battalion of the 13th Infantry cut the Kleinhau – Brandenburg Road on the far edge of the Grosshau – Kleinhau clearing and stopped German counterattack from Kleinhau

The enemy renewed his attacks from Frenz against Lamersdorf, but his attacks was beaten off three times. Also, he penetrated our frontlines in at Langerwehe and Jüngersdorf and was able to win some ground. But our paratroopers were able to close the gaps and hold their frontline along the railroad tracks.

During the day was the enemy Air force very active. The enemy flew air raids against the Roer river bridges in the Corps sector.

The 12 VGD and 47 VGD was relieved, without an assault group of 70 soldiers and the Divisions artillery. The Division moved into a recreation area and the 3rd Parachute Division took over the frontlines, under the command of Generalmajor Engel.
(German LXXXI AK reports)

3rd Battalion unit Journal

Nov 28 - The Bn. set another strong defensive position last night, and at 0930 hours K Co in position on the ridge overlooking Jüngersdorf repulsed an attack. They drove up as Love Co the OP and in line the combat that followed 2TD's knockout. Later in the morning the regt'l anti-tank Platoon attached to our Battalion knocked out a Mark IV at 1200 yards. By noon the small arms and close-in fighting quieted, however the enemy shelled heavily the town of Jüngersdorf. At approximately 2000 hours, K Co. reported the enemy tossing hand grenades at position. At the same time the enemy movement was reported on the main road about 400 yards in front of our position, and left flank. A fire mission was brought to bear on the front while mortars covered the flanks. Cas: 12 WIA, 2 abs sk, 1 SIW S/Sgt Denmark, Replacements as follows: K - 1, and 2 casualties to Hq Co. Weather: Cold and clear.

Blue Spader Side

The day before the attacking the towns of Merode and Schlich, there was a briefing of the Company Officers at the Laufenburg Castle. The plan was to seize the towns of Merode and Schlich the next day. TOT was at 0900 the next day, November 29, 1944. Companies E (on left) and Company F (on right) with Company H and Company G (in Reserve) should breakout of the forest move toward the towns. A Platoon of Tanks and a Platoon of TD's would give support. Easy Company should leave the forest around 15 minutes before Fox Company, crossing the open wide field, bypassing Merode and moving into Schlich. Fox Company should leave the

forest, crossing the open field and seizing the town of Merode. Soon when the first soldiers have reached the houses, the tanks should breakout of the forest and assist the Infantry.

German side

Manfred Wagner, a young German Paratrooper was a member of the 5th Company of the Parachute Regiment 5. He and some other of his comrades had to seize foxholes in the woods between Jungersdorf and Merode. At Daybreak at this day, they noticed that American tanks came up in front to their position. Manfred Wagner leveled his Panzerfaust and shot onto the tank. The tank was hit at the turret and smoke came out of all slots. Suddenly the turret top open and the Commander and other crew booted out, and then the tank began to burn. One of Manfred comrades also wanted to knock out a tank, he leveled his Panzerfaust, but before he could shot, the Commander of the tank standing in turret fired his MP and Manfred's comrade was hit in the right hand, lost two fingers. Manfred brought him back to the first aid station inside Merode Castle.

The same night, my grandparents along with my 86-year-old great-grandmother and my Dad and aunt left the town of Merode on a horse drawn wagon, through all the artillery bursts, sniper fire and mortars. The roads were muddy and full of craters filled with water. Only the older people could ride on the wagon, the younger people and the kids must make it by foot walk. One time, a barrage of white phosphor shells hit nearby, and the fire came below the wagon and going through the wooden wheels. My great-grandmother, which was born and raised at Merode and lived here all her life said: "I never will come back, I never will see all this damages again!" She died by an accident a few weeks later in a hospital near Eitorf/Germany.

November 29, 1944

The 104th Division repulsed German counterattacks during the night in the

towns of Lamersdorf and Inden, but the Germans recaptured the bridge site over the Inde-River. In the 1st Division area, a battalion of the 16th Infantry cut the highway east of Langerwehe, while the 26th Infantry advanced into Merode. A squadron of the 4th Cavalry Group screened the gap developing between the 26th and 8th Infantry Regiments. The 4th



Merode and Merode castle from edge of woods. This was the same view as the veterans of CO F saw it on Nov. 29, 1944. Note: The open and wide field in foreground.

Division's 8th Infantry advanced 1000 yards along the Schevenhütte – Düren road and the 22nd seized Grosshau and cut the Grosshau – Gey Road. CCA and elements of the 121st Infantry seized Kleinhau and reported Hill 401 captured. East of Hürtgen, the Germans are driven back almost 1000 yards. (First Army Reports of Operation)

During the night the enemy artillery harassing fire was normal. The operation to clear the northern part of Inden was on progress during the whole night. The enemy received heavy casualties and

finally, 79 American soldiers became POW's. Also, during the night, the southern part of Lamersdorf was attacked by our own troops and we could take 18 American soldiers include two officer's prisoners. During the day the enemy fought bitterly for the capturing of Inden and Lamersdorf but all attempts to seize both towns failed. But in the evening hours, we have to withdraw from Lamersdorf.

In the left Corps sector the enemy assaulted with Infantry and heavy tank support in the direction of Merode and could seize the western edge of the town. A combat group of the 5th Parachute

Regiment (German) could close the gaps and stop the enemy advance at Merode. The Sturmgeschützbrigade 341 are now under the direct command of the 3rd Parachute Division.

The relieving of the 12 VGD and 4 VGD is going ahead. All Infantry units were relieved.

Situation: It seems that the enemy will renew his attacks in the vicinity of Jülich – Inden and in the vicinity of Schlich – Merode the next day!

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry Unit journal

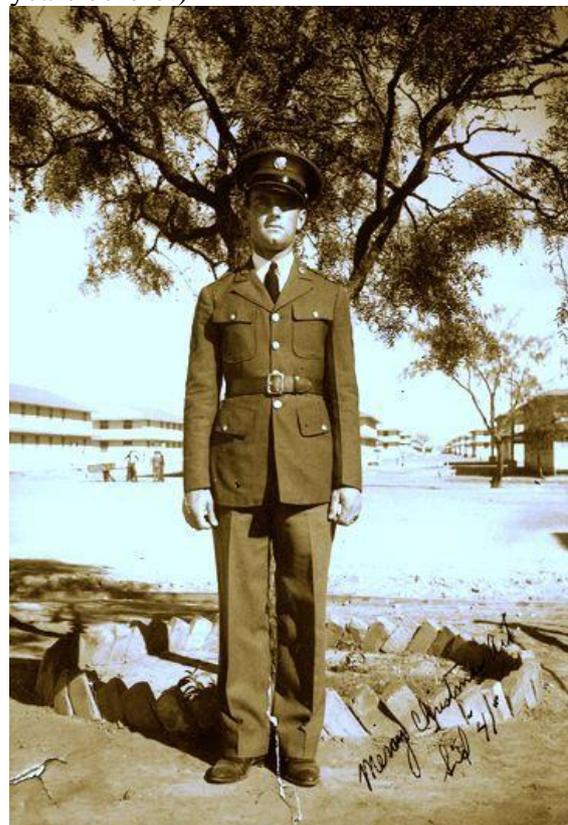
29 Nov – The Bn in its present defensive position strengthened and improved its front and flanks. The morning a 12-man outpost from L Co returned after being cut off for 24 hours. Enemy mortar and artillery fire continue to fall around our position today. The enemy was observed moving NE away from Düren. The Bn fired their mortars and called for artillery support as the weather gave clear visibility

and numerous of targets were spotted. The turkeys could not longer be stored so the kitchen prepared sandwiches and made hot coffee for the evening meal. There were replacements for K Co from 1st Bn. and 2 casualties assigned. One Officer assigned to I, Capt Claude R Croft. Cas: 6 WIA, 10 abs sk. Prisoners: 4, 1 wounded. Weather clear and cool.

Blue Spader side

In the morning of November 29, 1944, the 2nd Bn./26th Infantry went into position to attack the town of Merode. Companies E & F with parts of Company H and Company G in reserve should attack the town from the west. Company border was the small narrow roads which lead from the woods into the town, flanked by a belt of trees each side. H-Hour for the attack was set at 0900 hours. A Platoon of Tanks and Tank Destroyers should follow the Infantry soon they reached the first houses of the town.

Lt. Sidney C. Miller, one of the Platoon leaders became the order to capture the Merode castle in a frontal assault. His position on November 29, 1944 was the crest of the hill just west of the Castle. When his Platoon went into position, ready to make the run across the wide and open field, they received small arms fire from snipers at the edge of the town or from the Castle area. One of Miller's man was hit and during a medic gives first aid; the sniper shot again and killed the medic. Platoon Sergeant Tom Sheffield, jump over to the site where both men lay on the ground, noticed that the medic was killed, and the other men seriously wounded. Just in the moment when Tom Sheffield took the first aid kit from the medic, the German sniper shot again and the bullet hit Tom's jaw, hit some teeth and left the jaw on right side. Sid Miller saw that, and he went over to Tom Sheffield and gave him some morphine. Then sent him back over the crest of the hill. (In 1995 Tom Sheffield and his son visited me here at Merode and Tom found the site where he was hit 51 years before!)



1st Lt. Sidney C. Miller

Later Lt. Miller and his Squad leaders reached the edge of the woods and they looked where they could set up machine guns to give support fire during the Platoon cross the open field. Sid Miller and Sergeant Kramer found two good positions and then he sent his Sergeant back to his squad.



PFC Robert "Bob" Fischelis

Bob Fischelis, a 19-year-old B.A.R. gunner with Company F remembered the Huertgen forest as the "Hell on Earth" He saw action in Aachen, Stolberg and finally in the Huertgen. On November 29, 1944 he was walking down the hill toward Merode. Some 150 yards before the edge of the woods, just at the crossroad of the small path and the trail leading into the town he was wounded by shell fragments, hit his left arm, shoulder and head. *(About 10 years after WWII (1954) he visited this site again and then every 5 years he made the walk from Aachen to Merode via Laufenburg castle till the site he was wounded. Then he went back the same route and didn't leave the forest before 1974. Then, on a sunny November day in 1974 he left the woods, and he met my Dad*

and my brother working on a field nearby the edge of woods. Bob Fischelis was well in German language and he started and conversation with my Dad and my brother. This was the beginning of a long and deep friendship between our both families and Bob and his sons visited us many times. Bob too, was the key of my long and intensive research about the Battle for the Huertgen forest, especially about the Big Red One.)

Jonel C. Hill, a 19-year-old Corporal with Company F remembered those days also very well. He still can remember the heavily shelling of the woods and the fields. He saw many dead lying on the field, killed by artillery and mortar fire. He reached the town and they dug in at a garage, but later they was cut off from the rear and run out of ammunition and food. During the night, the Germans started the counterattack and he and his group was taken prisoner. The Germans came up to the garage and the tank fired on round into the upper floor. Then the Germans said: "Rauskommen, schnell, schnell"! A young German paratrooper who could speak English said to Jonel C. Hill: "For you the war is over, but it seems that I will die soon!"

Alwin E. Bulau, a Tank driver and assigned to 2nd Platoon Company C, 745th Tank battalion belonged to the Platoon commander crew of Lt. Novak. On November 29, 1944 his Platoon had to support the attack onto Merode. He was driving the 3rd Tank in the column and he can recall that the movement was very slow, because of the heavy German resistance and the heavy shelling. He saw many GI's which was killed or hit outside his tank. One time, a German machine gun opened fired on the tank and the Infantry. Soldiers were killed or wounded, before they could locate the machine gun. Two shots from the Tank gun zeroed the machine gun. Later all 5 tanks and 2 TD's bogged down in the muddy trail and were given up by their crews. The lead tank in

column turned over in the ditch and no more vehicles could pass that handicap. Bypass was impossible of the soft ground. (In about 1977 we dig out the foxhole where we assumed the MG position. We dig out a damage machine gun, ammunition, equipment, a purse with money in it, a box with tools and finally the bones of the when who was killed by the tank fire)

After short and heavy artillery barrage both Companies E and F should leave the forest to cross the fields and move into the towns of Merode (Co F) and Schlich (Co. E). But when the first soldiers left the forest, they were hit by heavy German artillery and mortar fire. Received many casualties in the open field and the GI's began to move toward the belt of trees which was along the road leading into the town from the forest. Sid Miller and Sergeant Kramer were standing near a fence and hold a short briefing, when another round of artillery came in and hit the ground nearby. Lt. Miller and Sgt. Kramer were both tossing into the air but didn't receive any scratch. Then Miller and Kramer went over to the belt of trees along the trail. The trail was leading through a canyon of about 4 – 5 yards deep. On the ground were laying many soldiers, wounded or dead, or still alive and scared to move ahead. Miller yelled on them that they should move out of this trap, the town is only about 150 yards ahead and they must move in it very soon. Then Miller, Kramer and two other GI's of Millers Platoon reached the backside of the first houses at Merode. Miller recall: "Normally when we came up to a house or a building, we shot through the door, kicked the door off and threw hand grenades into the basements. Why I didn't do it this time, I never knew. After I kicked off the door, I came into a hallway with a door on left side leading down into the basement. I opened the door and at the foot of the stairways I could see a bed and inside the bed were an about 40-year-old woman sitting on her knees and praying. What would be happened to her, if I had

thrown and hand grenade into the cellar? Kramer was close behind me and we called for "Soldaten". Then two enemy soldiers came up to the feet of the stairways with their hands up and made signs to give up. There were also some 5 – 6 more civilians hide in the basement which came out of the darkness now. I told the two German soldiers to come out of the basements with their hands up. I wanted to interrogate them for information about the castle and the town. The Germans still shelling the town and the open field behind the town and there were only 4 men with me at this moment from originally 46 soldiers. All other were killed or wounded in the fields. Suddenly the CO came entered the house and when he noticed that I took two German soldiers prisoner, his hands took the throat of one Prisoner and began to struggle him, yelling: "You S.O.B. killed all my man!" I put his hands off from the throat from this prisoner and said to my CO that this is "my prisoner and that I need information about the castle and the town. Then the CO left without any comments.

Later Sergeant Kramer came in and said that he found another basement and a house where we could take shelter for the next night, because it was going dark. We left the civilians in the basement but took both German prisoners with us. Leaving the house on backside coming to a farm. We entered a barn, and I noticed a board full of glasses with fruits in it, when a heavy artillery barrage hit the town. We lay down on the earth and some glasses fall on the ground and were damaged. We sit down on the floor and I took a Lucky Strike cigarette out of my shirt pocket and started to smoke. I noticed that one of the Germans soldiers fixed me with his eyes and then I again took my cigarettes out of my shirt and gave each of them to Sgt Kramer and the two German soldiers. Now we were sitting side by side and smoking cigarettes, while the shells still were coming in. After a while we left the barn and reached the house. The house had a very strong structure, and the entrance was

just in the center with a window on each side. After nightfall, three or for more soldiers of my Platoon had make it to the house in which were in. There was a Sergeant Smith and Dowd. Dowd was a B.A.R. Gunner and with the unit since Africa. He was a good soldier and I ordered him to stay on guard on the left window on front side of the house. Sgt. Kramer should watch the backside and Sgt. Smith should go into position on the top of the stairways leading into the basement, while two other soldiers and myself along with the German Prisoners dug in at the basement. The basement was part into two rooms, a small and a bigger one. In the small one there was also a small wall with a tin of potatoes behind it.

From Dowd's position you could watch the castle area and the castle itself. Sidney Miller, the two young GI's and the German prisoners was sitting in the basement beside the bin of potatoes. Suddenly someone was firing his rifle. Miller rushed upstairs and asked who had fired his rifle. Sgt Smith said that a German soldier tried to enter the house, then he fired. A few seconds later Dowd said that somebody is lying in the street and yelling "Help me!" Miller and Kramer who had come from the back side move outside the house and found a young GI. They brought him back into the basement and saw that he was seriously hit by a rifle bullet in his chest. He died in Millers arms.

A few minutes after that, they could hear noise from tanks or a tank. Luckily that the own tanks made it finally into the town, but then disappointed when they noticed that it was a German TIGER tank which was coming down the street

Jeromine Cicchelli was a member of Company H and assigned to Company F that day before. He too made it into Merode, and he and his comrades took shelter in a huge bricks stone house opposite the Merode Castle close the Y – intersection. Jerome was standing on guard on a first-floor window, when the tank was coming by. Firing his gun into a

house down the street. Jerome keeps quiet and dug behind the edge of the window. Paratroopers were all around and had a bunch of prisoners with them. Soon the tank stopped at the front of the huge building. The German paratroopers were yelling something, but Cicchelli didn't understand anything. Then the tank gun fired on the house. The shell went through the window and hit the wall opposite from Jerome, who was hit by some fragments in the legs and lost his eye light for a few minutes. Some comrades came up to him and brought him into the basement of the house were he later was taken prisoner by the Paratroopers.

Lieutenant Francis Hellner was a Forward Artillery Observer of the 32nd FA Bn. attached to the 26th Infantry during the battle of the Huertgen forest. He made it into the town together with the 2nd Bn and lead successful artillery- and mortar fire on the German lines and attackers during November 29 and 30, 1944 until his position was overran by the German Paratroopers who took him prisoner. One of the German Paratroopers, the 17-year-old Manfred Büschel, took his binoculars and keeps them, till he was taken prisoner by the 9th Infantry Division about two weeks later. After interrogation by the Germans, Lt. Hellner along with other prisoners was led to the old School house, because this building was use as collection point for captured American soldiers. Here at the Schoolhouse Lt. Hellner found a small booklet which he used as a diary for the time he was on the march to the POW Camp and the time he was a POW.

Sergeant Snodgrass was the driver of the lead tank which was attached to the 2-26th Infantry. When his tank left the dense woods, he received lots of fire from artillery and mortars. Fragments were hitting his tank. Lt. Novak gave him the order to break through to reach the outskirts of the town to assist the Infantry. He left the road which was still full of soldiers and drove on the right side straight

ahead. About 150 yards outside the town, he again received heavy fire and his Tank Commander told him to go back onto the road to take shelter below the trees and bushes. Not knowing, that the road now was running in a canyon, he turned to the left and the tank turned over when he went over the edge of the earth bank. The tank now was lying on the top with the Tracks showing to air. No opportunity to move they went outside the tank below the emergency entrance and run back into the woods.

1st Lieutenant Charles A. Free was a Platoon leader with Company H and he was going into the town of Merode as a liaison officer. During his movement toward the town he came up to the ditch (trail) and saw many soldiers on the ground. Artillery and mortar fire still was coming in very heavy. Lt. Free made it into the town, but he too was encircled and finally taken prisoner.

Lieutenant Sidney C. Miller along with Sgts. Kramer, Dowd, Smith, and the other two GI's and the two German soldiers were hidden in the basement of that house. They could hear the Tiger Tank coming up to the house. The tank shoots his gun into the house and stone and debris fall down into the basement. One of the paratroopers yelled in English "Come out, come out, but without any weapons!" Lt. Miller made signs to one of the German prisoners to call their comrades which they finally did. Then they leave the basement and became prisoners. The soldiers were paratroopers and wearing the typical German paratrooper outfit includes their helmets, which looked different to the regular Army helmets. Lt. Miller and his men was lined up at an wall and for the first moment Miller thought that the Paratroopers want mow them down, but these KRAUTS were fair and brought them back down the street toward the German command post. They passed the house which they had occupied first this afternoon, now set on fire! What would be happened to the civilians? (Note:

The civilians was rescued by the paratroopers and evacuated later)

Oberstleutnant (Lieutenant Colonel) Karl-



Heinz Becker CO 5th Parachute Regiment

The officers later were part from the NCO's and EM. Miller was brought into the German Command Post, a huge white building at the northeastern edge of Merode. In the basement of that CP was a first aid station. Miller was brought into a room where he met some more officers of his Battalion, but he didn't know one of them. Then he was called for interrogation. In a separate room he saw the German commander sitting at a table with some more officers around him. A very young German officer was the translator for the interrogation. One officer took Lt. Miller's billfold and checks it for military information, but he only found personal stuff, like family photos, etc. The translating officer took the picture of Miller's son and showed it to his comrades. He said to his comrades: "A pretty boy! Isn't he?" Then he gave all things back to Miller. The interrogation was holding short and sharp. Miller couldn't give any information about strength or future plans. The only thing

What he could mention was his name, rank and unit, nothing else!

German side

Lieutenant Krannich, who was on top of the tower of Laufenburg Castle several days before, was now assigned to the 5th Parachute Regiment as a forward artillery observer and a liaison officer to the 147th Field Artillery Regiment, because the Field Artillery of the 3rd Parachute Division still was on the railroad wagon and not in position. Lt. Krannich position was in a house on the eastern edge of Merode and from this position he led the artillery fire onto the attackers and column of tanks.

After two enemy Companies has seized nearly the whole town of Merode, the Germans made plans for a counterattack to retake the town. LTC Becker a high decorated Officer and CO of the 5th Parachute would lead this counterattack personally with his soldiers of the 5th Parachute Regiment. Becker was a paratrooper since 1936 and combat experiences since 1939 fought in Poland, Holland, Greece and the Island of Crete where here was awarded with the Knight Cross. Then fought several tours at the Russian (eastern) front in the Leningrad (St. Petersburg) sector, Welikije Luki, Smolensk, etc.) then fought at Africa and at Monte Cassino, before he became the CO of the 5th Parachute Regiment in 1944. Becker builds a combat group, and he assembled his soldiers in the town of Schlich that evening. He called for a Tank and the Corps loaned him a Tiger tank to support his counterattack. Then the attack began. The tank stopped at each house and the tank fired his gun. Also, the paratroopers shoot with their Panzerfaust into the basement windows or threw hand grenades down into the basements. Many houses were destroyed or collapsed, other were heavily damaged and must be demolished later. Lots of Blue Spader soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner that day. Official German records says that some 200 soldiers were taken prisoner, include 12 officers and that they

counted some 165 soldiers which was KIA that day. The Germans too had casualties, soldiers who were killed, wounded or missing. The first Bn of the 5th Parachute lost nearly all Officers in their first Battle and the 2nd Bn received a high rate of casualties too. Some 220 Parachutists are buried at the Merode military cemetery. This is a high rate, because more Paratroopers are buried on different other cemeteries, like Hürtgen, Knechtsteden, Lommel/Belgium or Ysselsteyn/Netherlands.

November 29, 1944 was the 23rd birthday of Rolf Odendahl, who was a Platoon leader in the 1st Bn. 5th Parachute Regiment. He saw action at Merode, and he belonged to the paratroopers who helped to hold the frontlines in the Merode woods. He still can remember the heavily artillery and mortar barrages coming down into their position. He still can remember that cold and rainy and dark weather in November. After WWII he made many tours back into the Huertgen and the Ardennes and he closed many friendships with American veterans of the 26th Infantry.

Josef Reischl was a Parachute combat Engineer and a squad leader in the 15th Engineer Company of the 5th Parachute Regiment. He belonged to a group which placed roadblock made by barbed wire in the streets in front of important sites between the castle and the edge of woods. Later he and some other engineers destroyed the bogged down tanks on the trail west of the village.

Paratrooper Alfons Forderer and a friend Nikolaus Hansen dug in a basement when the 26th Infantry attacked the town. After darkness Alfons and his friend want to leave the basement, but his friend was wounded and died of wounds 3 days later.

30th November 1944

In the 104th Division sector, very heavy fighting occurred in the town of Inden and several German tanks were destroyed.

Lamersdorf was completely cleared. 1st Division units experienced heavy fighting in their attempt to relieve two Companies cut off in Merode. Langerwehe and Jungersdorf are held against heavy counterattacks. The 47th Regimental Combat Team is relieved from attachment to the 1st Division. The 4th Division's 8th Infantry advanced along the Schevenhütte – Düren road and its 12th Infantry advanced through the woods towards Gey. The 22nd Infantry with the attached 46th Armored Infantry Battalion cleared the area north of Kleinhau. The 8th Division's 121st Infantry along with the CCA, 5th Armored Division advanced east through the woods south of Hürtgen. (First Army Report of Operation)

The counterattack of the 3rd Parachute Division was successful. Units of the 2nd Battalion 5th Parachute and with the 1st Parachute, which actually is still under the command of the LXXIV Corps were retake the former MLR west of Merode.



Hauptmann (Captain) Schulze the CO of the 1st Battalion / 5th Parachute Regiment



Siegfried Hinterlechner was captured at Merode in early December 1944.

120 American soldiers and 10 Officers could be taken prisoner. Seven tanks which were bogged down in the muddy trail between the forest and the town were blown-off. After the old MLR was secured, we counted more as 200 killed enemy soldiers.

The left flank of the Division, which was held by the 6th Company / 5th Parachute had to withdrawn for approximately 800 meters to link up with the neighboring unit.

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry unit Report

30 Nov – The enemy probed the right flank position of K Company at 1000 hours. Mortar fire was brought down upon them and repulsed their attack. At mid-day an OP observed enemy foot troops marching in and vehicles bringing fresh troops to support and hold present position. All of this enemy activity was taken under artillery fire while mortars engaged closer



The Merode Castle was a heavily defended strongpoint, but not captured before December 11, 1944

targets. At 1630 hours another enemy patrol engaged or contact with right flank of K Company. The 4.2 mortars and artillery undertook fire mission making this patrol withdraw from the flank.

Blue Spader Side:

Short after daylight the battle for Merode started again. There were still some American soldiers hidden in basements or bunkers fighting the Germans.

Sergeant Duane Kish was a member with Company G-26th Infantry. His position was on the edge of the woods in a reserve position. Watching the fights, unable to give any assistance and support to his comrades trapped by the Germans.

Captain Jean G. Peltier was a Forward Artillery observer, and his location was in a hole about 150 yards outside the forester house west of the town. From his position he gave orders to fire the artillery into the town and the outskirts of Merode. Sometimes he could recognize troop movement or enemy mortar positions, but after the communication with Companies E

& F break down, he couldn't give any successful fire support to this companies.



Alfons Forderer was 17 years old when he made his first combat experiences at Merode in November 1944



Rolf Odendahl served at a Warrant Officer with the 1. Company of the 5th Parachute Regiment.



Nikolaus Hansen who was a friend of Alfons Forderer was killed in action on December 3, 1944 at Merode

Report of Manfred Trommler former member of the 5th Parachute Regiment and his experiences near at Merode in November and December 1944

-Extract-

30/11/44

Out at night. Marching off. In dawn the battalion walks dispersely on the street to Langerwehe.

It late gets bright but with this the artillery-airman are here again and start shooting our convoy.

There comes a storm- gun in front of us. It passes by and shoots. Most time we lay in the holes which were sinked next to the Marschstrasse. We left a vehicle with our belt boxes on the street. It really flies through the air as a bomb hit nearly. Good that some belts are shared out among the group.

The integrated whole breaks. Our platoon, who stayed at least in position at the Gey-Merode-frontline, is positionned at the end of the convoy. The front columns reach the dear field by getting through the railway tunnel and can go quicklier. During that time the American still stops us at the dear street.

As we can leave the street and want to get through the railway we were attacked by fighter-bombers. One cordon after the other. Always four Mustangs, quite good in formation. First flight bomb attack, second, third,...fire comes out of every gun. On the railway - Take the had off! - A multiple anti-aircraft-artillery (4-guns each) which shoot everything it has on the attacking fighter bombers.

We must get on. Peter Serve lays in a whole next to me. He has the machine-gun. So, I jump first. There the Jabos return. I run for reaching the protecting railway. As I fall down, I realize that there is nothing more which can protect me, only the dear steel supporters. I removed my head. The impacts hailed at the right-hand side in the wall of the bridge. Then I start running,

because there's no protection. On the right-hand side behind the railway -one house. Straight there. In the cellar I found some people out of the convoy in front of us. One after the other our convoy meets, but we are divided. The connection between us doesn't exist. Wait and have a breather. Or should we stay in reserve? It takes a long time. Then the command: Get ready -out! It goes further.

We walk through the prohibited zone of the artillery through the dear felled, then through streets and gardens to the fire of the infantry. The air is blue coloured and dusty because of the impacts of the shells. It smells of explosive and fire. We are the second wave and in the beginning we storm behind our men, but with our full power. The groups are getting differred; the act goes more and more on in platoon. There are failures and new formations. I am allocation to Hoell. Kurt Tost - our third marksman - is with Peter Serve at the machine-gun. They stay anywhere. Later they told me, that Peter is wounded very badly. Kurt has got the machine - gun. I have to go with Karl-Heinz Hoell.

He is the lance corporal of our group. A soldier how it's written in every book: on duty a, but in action an ace. He has a lot of experience. We came together.

On the street, in the gardens, everywhere you look- dead men. Of us and of the American.

Often several next to each other. We come nearer and we have to fight more and more.

The Americans fall back.

But many of them were overrunned or let them overrun, start fighting again, attack the other from back side and try to break through. Others stay at there positions or hide themselves in the cellars.

They hope that there comes soon an attack by their side. If they are found they surrender. But not every time. There are some dangerous actions on the short day of November where it's getting quickly dark. The HKL is brought to the beginning of

the forest. We followed to the forest exit of the village.

Lt's strange: The rival is overpowered, there is no more frightness and the convoy pursues the rival. The Americans don't feel as poor as we, so...

Hoell and I go for another time. Only to another cellar. Some warning shoots then they come out.

Three Americans again. We just count two-digit. Back to our cellar. Big hallo. Like the others the Americans aren't brought back and have to stay with us in the cellar. Slowly they become quiet.

The happenings of the last days made them k.o. We smoke together their Lucky Strike and Chesterfield. And together we watch the photos everybody has.



Manfred Trommler was an 18-year-old Paratrooper with the 5th Parachute Rgt.

At the night we were told what is on here. The place is called Merode. The battered building on our right-hand side is a castle. There is the first company. The Americans came here Two days ago, but they were

fight and so stopped. Yesterday he fought a big attack helped by Jabos, tanks and the artillery. So, he fought with success and had the place almost in his hand. But we fought grim and stopped them. While this were seven Sherman-tanks broken.

Today the Americans felled back into the forest. The platoon leader Kurt Streckfuß - the length - is bad wounded while he fought against the tanks. The leader of the company is hidden, too.

There are a lot of wounded men, even dead.

01/12/44

We can't think on quite minutes. The cellar where we lay is place of fighting, prison and collecting- room in one. When the sun comes out our first task: the place is to be cleaned of the rivals.

I, m detailed to Karl-Heinz Hoell again.

We vacated the houses in our nearest environment yesterday evening. Thus, morning we go farer.

One house, broken like all of them. Everywhere are fragments. Some shots. Nothing moves.

We go downstairs to the cellar. In the cellar - left by the Americans - a big machinegun. It's built up on the lafette, and It's position on the window of the cellar. It's ready for shooting. They can watch and shoot on the whole street through the village and they had shot there. Then they piled. There's nothing else in the cellar. Behind there is a room, divided with a black curtain like in every cellar.

It was furnished as protecting room and used till the last moments.

There maybe we could find something to eat or so.

I turn back the curtain with the gun. I'm hidden in the face. At the same moment an American pounce on me and hits my hand that the gun falls out of my hand. A second shows his gun, takes aim at Hoell- he jumps back on the step - podium - and screams: "hands up!", like Hoell did it one

minute before. Then it goes on with accent: "Do not shoot!" Suddenly there are five rivals. Resistance is senseless. Hoell let his gun fall down and is packed - like me- by the Americans and strained into the darkness. They push the rifle barrel hard into my neck and tell me where I can sit down. The same happens to Hoell. As it becomes quiet, we see the Light of a candle. Now I can see that they placed us face to face in a way that they put the screws on us. The one who speaks German is a Sergeant with a long gun. He sits outside from us so anytime he has the possibility to jump on in the corner an officer with a pistol in his hand. With this he almost demolished my hand. The three others are GL's with their gun between their knees. There they sit with their big red ONE on their sleeve. Now I realize that on my side in the corner is sitting someone else. Someone with yellow mirrors. Someone of us, from another company.



Captain Eckenrod was the CO of Echo Company and captured in a pub house at Merode

The officer is handing us in a bad way. With his people, too. He forbids speaking. Then the Sergeant has to translate. We are in prison for the second time. Like yesterday we will hold out till our battalion breaks through again and fights again. They are our prisoners, and they are treated

like prisoners. If they will become a danger for us, they were shooting.

Then calm. Secure to outside. Time passes very slowly. Slowly the people relax. The battle outside becomes louder. Around us are more and more dangerous sounds. In the house upstairs, too. The officer seems to be right. But the day passes by. We talk a little bit. Mostly between the officer translated by the Sergeant with Karl-Heinz Hoell. The lance corporal is a kind of partner, because he has the highest position on our side. So Hoell with his big mouth is our dealer but it isn't bad - Hoell every time gives a contra.

As all realised that the battle becomes quite - the Americans didn't reach their aim - our Americans realise that their plan wouldn't work and that they have to get out here. They create a plan: we leave at night. If we'll meet Germans, we'll bring them back and take care that they are treated in a good way as captives. Hoell isn't agreeing with this. If we reach the American border, we'll go back to our side. We need their guarantee for that.

Okay.

They will get back their guns from us, but before we will make them unusable.

Okay.

Between those times a man told me that I'm sitting on a dead man. Now I realise that the mattress where we're sitting on is lying on the dead man. He lies under the mattress; the Americans killed him while a similar action before we came. He told us this later.

The behaviour between us is getting more and more relaxed. We check the guys of "The Big Red One" although have hunger, but nothing, more to eat. Then we eat the last pickled food from the people who normally live in this house. A picture for gods! Friend and rival - eight people and one pickle-glass. It goes around from one to other. Everybody takes a bit for two or three times and gives it to his neighbour.

During the night the Sergeant goes outside for peering. Several times. Then the officer, too. Finally: Get ready!

For the last time we speak about everything and seal it. Word of honour. The officer goes first and takes Hoell with him. Then the others go. As we are in the hall, both returns. The moon is shining, it's too much light for our plan. Back into the cellar. Hoell- who has remarked that our people are around us again, realises our chance. He tells the officer that we have to get out here and if it's possible into another cellar. He knows one. During this exciting event we can talk unnoticed. Everything is dear.

We go out for another time. Now we have the initiative. Hoell is our leader. The officer is behind him. Then a GI, then our third man, then me and behind me a GI. The Sergeant goes on last position.

The cellar is a little bit far... There still is everything okay. We tiptoe next to a hedge. Finally, very near to us some noise and German words. Now: "Alaaaarm! Americans behind the house!" "is screamed by me into the night. Quickly two or three people of us arrive. The Americans surrendered without any resistance. The officer looks at me like he wants to say: You break you promised word!" Under normal circumstances I would have told him pardon.

But with this constellation we had no other possibility. Sorry. Be lucky- now you pass it! As we told the situation to the people around us, there is a big hallo. Then we march for eight to the command post of the battalion. We walk with a sign in the wrong way and give back our prisoners. When our story becomes public there really is a big hallo. Five prisoners- one of them an officer- and not the normal way. There are some smart alecks; too- such things will never happen to them!

02/12/44

When Hoell and I go back to the front we realize we don't have any locks on our gun. And with this we brought back our

captioners? Maybe they even haven't thought on this or it was equal for them. The time for us to throw the guns away and for taking one American gun with magazine for each of us. They lay there.

A dangerous calm. Maybe they stop fire for rescuing the wounded people. Such things really happened. We arrived the forest exit of the place and walk through the dear field as far as it's possible along and protected by the gardens. Very far on right hand side a range of trees. It's a way from the castle to the forest. On the other hand, side, the left Sherman's.

We arrive in the forest at the command post of the company and told that we're back. They told us that yesterday it really was a very exciting day. The Americans did again an attack and even attack us with plains and hard guns. But we defeated them. There were dose combats and dead men.

Eight wounded men- one of them Helmut Schulz from our group- and four dead. Our musician Helmut Schlimper is dead.

From our group still exist five people, but they aren't divided. Karl Heinz Hoell is ordered to another place, too. Me and the rest have to secure the command post and the place where the wounded men stay. But that means too, to act as registrator and dragger. The materially and powerfully superiority is unbearable. Our group is at the end with our nerves and power. No hour calm, for days nothing to eat. Even hadn't a bottle of tea. Only cigarettes arrive. We get it in 100 pieces per package. Someone brought them to us. I have to take them with me and have to give them to the others.

For everybody enough, because of the lots of deads. The Sherman's are still burning and the amunition, which lays in the near of this, explodes. In spite of this we put everything out of the tanks. It's really surprising what the Americans take with them. But not always the things we need. As I ran on the other side of this way and come back, I climb into a Sherman and

take an originally packed bag with me. I have a good hope. What is in: a complete uniform. But if it arcs clothes than I liked more some underwear. I'm without any power, really ill. My stomach doesn't feel good, I have an ache.

Then it goes on. The artillery attacks us that we think this is our end. Suddenly they arc here again. They arc coming through the forest. We attack them for resistance. But then they arc here again.

The men who're laying in front of us have to go out of the way. The Americans make us go back.

I'm on the way to bring a wounded person over the dear field with an ambulance- there arc they on the end of the forest.

As we go forward again it seems like the Americans arc at the first houses. But they arc stopped.

It is a resistance battle with a lot of casualties. Close Combat.

Our artillery shoots and stops the following Americans.

Then a really rare event: some fighter pilot come here, some FW 190 take part at the battle and breaks- but only for a very short time- the superiority of the American fighters.

I do the order to support the ambulances so well I can do. It's hard. I have to take the way for several times. In the cellar at the command post of the battalion there is the wounded place of our group.

The dead men lay under a roof along the house in their tarpaulin- nobody could help them any way.

Down in the forest everywhere dead men. Of us and of the Americans. Unrecognisable mutilated and screaming wounded people.

That's the hell.

We push the rival back into the forest out of a reception place. The HKL is now at the end of the forest. Again, back at the front I take place at the rarely occupied HKL. Lt's dark. As we make a hole into the earth we're attacked by the artillery.

The own artillery shoots not far enough! Terrible.

That thing, too. I'm jumping into a hole and duck.

As it stops finally, and we call after each other we realize that we lost some of us. I look around me and decide to stay in my hole. The one before my had to be a GL, American clothes lay on the ground. I haven't to sit in the water, that's good.

Tired and exhausted near the rival. The nerves are strained, but we feel asleep. My body feels bad, maybe I ate something which wasn't good for eat. Late in the night the assault tiptoes along us forward.

03/12/44

First Advent

Lt's wet and cold. As it becomes light and I want to take position at my covering trench, I realize: the whole night I sat on a dead GI. With dead feelings you don't have any troubles with this. I put something on him and stay at my place. The battle continues again. The Combat is as hard and brutal as it was before. At some places there are some dose combats again. I am told to come to the command post of the company and to secure again like the day before. Then I'm on my way as registrator and I realize the balance of the events yesterday. We lost 35 men. 12 wounded men, eight missed men. We miss our ambulance Sergeant- I was in his near and out of our platoon Fritz Tschisgale. 15 men killed in action one of them my friend Sergeant Gerhard Nolde and Sergeant Heinz Lippelt. The company exists only with the half of the people. Exhorted and mixed up.

The structure of our company only exists from the rests.

I bring back a wounded soldier, he shots with a machine gun. His hand was shoot. We try to get across the dear field to the end of the town- it's always dangerous. The impacts are near, but he goes on. It's like a phenomenon after hurting: if you are wounded you think you are resistant

against other hits or so. In the TVP they ask him, if he had wounded himself Lt's really a silly question!

As I go back, I stop at our radio operators. They lay in the house I know. Between the people one of our ambulances. I talk a little bit, then I go on.

Twelve steps- not more.

Suddenly a flash - a loud sound. A blow like of a hammer hits my leg. I fall down. Red- hot shell splitters are everywhere. Blowing ache in my right leg. I lay down and duck. Shellfire. I think I die. I scream for the ambulance: Medic Medic Some minutes before I talked to him. He took me into the cellar, breaks my trouser and dresses my wound. It's over. I 'm alive.

As I realize something again, I hear: "You had luck! "He lays my arm around his shoulder and totes me down the street of the village.

In the first aid station cellar is full of wounded person. An assistance doctor-who is with us since Lüben and not right in his mind - stand with somebody of the battalion at the window of the cellar. He is the first man who is not very nice and friendly. The horrible work is left for ambulances. My fresh and good bandage stays like it is- there are much more worse things.

A friend of mine- a driver of a fighter pilot- from Hamburg is brought in after me. He looks terrible- his head, his upper part of the body, his arms.

In the night we were brought back to Mariaweiler to our main first-aid station place of the fifth regiment. Four laying persons and one who sits in a vehicle which is signed with a red cross. It can't get out of the way of the shell splitters like the other vehicles, too. Sometimes we are very near the shells. In the Field Hospital I received medical treatment and a surgery.

As it's over and I want to know if all shell splitters are out of my leg or not, I only receive an unclear answer. Later I noticed that the wound only was opened.

Next day this unclear answer is a problem for me. Because I can't answer the questions proposed by the operators in the hospital. The result is that they didn't take the splitter out of my leg, later I have a lot of problems with this.

04/12/44

In the morning Fallschirmfeldlazarett 3, Junkersdorf / Köln. One of the big buildings. The wounded people- it is lots- are laying in the hall with their bloody wound dressings. A very young nurse helps me to go to toilet. After so long time it's really necessary, but I can't do this without help. Every moving aches. It's really embarrassing, because I wear nothing from my stomach to my toes. I thank her bashfully. Later I don't care on my nakedness while I'm bathing our getting a new wound dress.

Then in the OP. Like in a slaughterhouse. Everywhere blood. A big hall, one Operation table next to the other. The doctors do what they can- they operate a lot. I lay there and wait. Next to me one is amputated. I watch how they take away his arm. That goes on my nerves. As it's my turn and they can't say something dear they don't decide. *End!*



Heavy casualties on both sides.



German Paratroopers nearby Merode on 29 November 1944

**Debate at Merode (Draft from
the book: The Siegfried Line Campaign)**

Merode was no ordinary object. It was a promise of no more Huertgen Forest. To fulfill that promise, the 26th Infantry had but one battalion, already seriously weakened by thirteen brutal days in the forest. Another battalion was in Jungersdorf. The third had to hold the regiments right flank in the woods because the adjacent 4th Division had not reached the eastern edge of the forest.

Merode lies on a slope slanting downfall from the eastern woods line. Although numerous roads serve the village from the Roer plain, only a narrow car track leads eastward from the forest. Astride his narrow trail across 300 yards of open ground the 26th Infantry had to move.

Behind a sharp artillery preparation, the attacking battalion commander, Colonel Daniel, sent two companies toward Merode shortly before noon on 29 November. Despite stubborn resistance of the 5th Parachute Regiment in a line of strongpoints along the western edge of the village, Colonel Daniel's men by late afternoon had gained the first houses. Yet



A heavy machine gun is firing supporting fire from the edge of woods into Merode

no one believed for a moment that the Germans were ready to relinquish the village. Employing numbers of pieces that the 1st Division G-2 estimated to be equal

of those of the Americans, German artillery wreaked particular havoc. Despite several strikes by tactical aircraft and several counter battery TOT's by the 1st Division artillery, the German pieces barked as full throated and deadly as ever.

The minute the riflemen gained the first houses, Colonel Daniel ordered a Platoon of tanks to join them. Two got through, although one was knocked out almost immediately after gaining the village. Commanders of the other two tanks paused at the woods line, noted the "sharpness" of the enemy's shell fire, and directed their drivers to turn back. As they backed up, a shell struck a track of the lead tank. The tank overturned. Because deep cuts, high fills, and dense, stalwart trees on either side of the narrow trail, no vehicle could get into Merode past the damaged tank.

Various individuals tried in various ways through the early part of the night to get mor tank and antitank support into Merode. They might have been dogs baying at the moon, so futile were there efforts. Someone called for a tank retriever to remove the damaged tank, but not until next morning did one arrive. Then some unexplained reason, the retriever could not remove the damaged tank. Someone else called for engineers to build a bypass around the tank, but this would be at best a long, tedious process. A Sergeant trying to borrow tanks attached to another battalion of the 26th Infantry met a rebuff from the regimental operations officer. "You keep your tanks", the S-3 told the battalion commander. "He can't them have unless we know the full story on these tanks."

This was fiddling while Rome burned. The Germans even then were laying down a curtain of shellfire to prevent reinforcement of the American troops in Merode. Soon after, they counterattacked. Because American radio batteries had been weakened by constant use, communications with the two companies in Merode failed. No one know where to throw artillery fire to stop the German drive. Not until near midnight was there further word from the men at Merode.

Then a plaintive message, barely audible, came over Colonel Daniel's radio set. "There is a Tiger tank coming down the street, now firing his gun into every house. He is three houses away now still firing into every house..... Here he comes....."

That was all anyone heard from the two companies in Merode until about three hours later when a Sergeant and twelve men escaped from the village. Using these men as guides, a combat patrol tried to break through to any men who still might be holding out. Shellfire and burp guns forced the patrol back.

For all practical purpose, this marked the end of the 26th Infantry fight for Merode. Though prisoner reports through the next day of 30 November and into 1 December continued to nourish hope that some of the two companies still survived, attempts to get help into the village grew more and more feeble. Failure of every strong patrol that tried to get into the village convinced Colonel Daniel that only a full-strength battalion could do the job. The 26th Infantry Commander, Colonel Seitz, dared not weaken the rest of his front by sending another of this battalions. Even when the 1st Division G-3 offered to send a battalion



Staff Sergeant Walter A. Sak, KIA on 20 November 1944 Laufenburg Castle



Young German Paratroopers moved through the ruins of Merode. The soldier on left carried a MG 42 machine gun and the typical "jump helmet" the soldier on right carries ammunition boxes and the typical infantry helmet "Model 1934"

from another regiment, Colonel Seitz declined. "What is in town many be annihilate by now," Colonel Seitz's S-3 told the G-3. "Moreover, any attack on the town would have to be strictly an infantry attack. There is no road"

Made to look like fools in their first fighting, the enemy your paratroopers at last had found the right time and place to deal a punishing blow. The 26th Infantry listed 165 men missing on the day of the Merode engagement. For the Americans it was an ignominious end to the final fight to break of out of the Huertgen forest.

1st December 1944

The skies was clear, and the IX Tactical Air Command supported attack of the 104th and 1st Divisions with fighter-bombers. In the 104th Division's area house to house fighting in Inden continued. The 1st Division made gains in the forest south of Jüngersdorf but was unable to relieve the

two 26th Infantry Companies isolated in Merode. The 4th Division made slow progress into the German main line of resistance and advanced to positions overlooking Gey. In the 8th Division area, small advances were made northwest of Brandenburg and up the slopes from the Tiefen – Brook northwest of Vossenack. (First Army Report of Operation)

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry unit Journal

Dec 1 – A Patrol from K company went out to investigate enemy activity by locating fresh partially dug fox holes. Enemy mortar and artillery fire fell on Bn position all day; this was an increase over previous days. Relief of Bn was delayed due to enemy artillery fire. Decoy Red 18th Infantry 1st Bn. began relieving us at 2100 hours and at 0200 hours, Dec 2 the entire Bn was relieved. Thunderbolts were bombing and strafing enemy positions at our front. One of our planes in its s strafing run came too close to I Co position and one casualty was reported. Weather clear and cool. Cas.: 9 WIA; 2 KIA; 6 abs sk, 2 NP, and 1 SIW – Pvt. Balchen. One replacement assigned to K Company transferred from Can. Co.

2nd December 1944

The 104th Division's 413th Infantry cleared Inden and during the night of 2-3 December executed a night attack across the Inde River. In the 1st Division area gains were consolidated and patrols were sent to the front to maintain contact with the Germans. Two German counterattacks struck the 4th Division in the 8th and 22nd Regiment areas. A penetration of about 600 yards was made in the 22nd area but ordered the 4th Division relieved by the 83rd Division beginning 2 December. (First Army report of Operation)

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry unit Journal

Dec 2 – Our Bn. was relieved by Red Bn. of the 18th Infantry at 0200 hours. Bn, withdrew in the area in which they were initially before attacking Jüngersdorf. At 1115 hours the Bn had another mission of

cleaning the woods to the east of our position from (046454). The Bn. scattered resistance. Enemy artillery and mortar fire was not as heavy in the previous days. Cas.: 3 abs sk; 5 WIA, 1 SIW.

3rd December 1944

Between 1330 and 1445 hours, approximately 60 ME 109s and FW 190s bombed and strafed the VII Corps area but caused little damage. For squadrons of the IX Tactical Air Command supported the 1st and 104th Division, whole one squadron provided support to the 4th Division. Elements of the 104th Division launched another night attack that resulted in Lucherberg being captured. In the 1st Division area, the 16th Infantry cleared Luchem, while the remainder of the Division consolidated. The Division abandoned hope for rescuing the two Companies trapped in Merode the 4th Division 8th Infantry resumed its attack but was hit by a counterattack. The Germans maintained heavy pressure on the Division's center and right. The 22nd Infantry was relieved by the 330th Infantry, 83rd Division at 1900 hours. In the 8th Division's sector, a Battalion of the 121st Infantry advanced 1000 yards to the outskirts of Brandenburg, while elements of the 28th Infantry advanced about 800 yards to the western edge of the clearing adjacent to Bergstein. CCR, 5th Armored Division, attached to the 8th Division took Brandenburg. (First Army Report of Operation)

3rd Battalion 26th Infantry unit Journal

Dec 3 - The rear CP moved up to join with the forward CP at 1000 hours and at 1200 hours the entire transmission was complete. L Co relieved G Co of the 26th Infantry after pushing forward to the edge of woods. The Bn is now to an assemble area to reorganize and equip the troops. The position is one, located in the woods. Hot chow was served to all Companies less L Co, because of present status. Weather: cloudy, rain and cool. Cas.: 10 abs sk; 4 WIA, Capt. Faid hosp. CO of K Co.

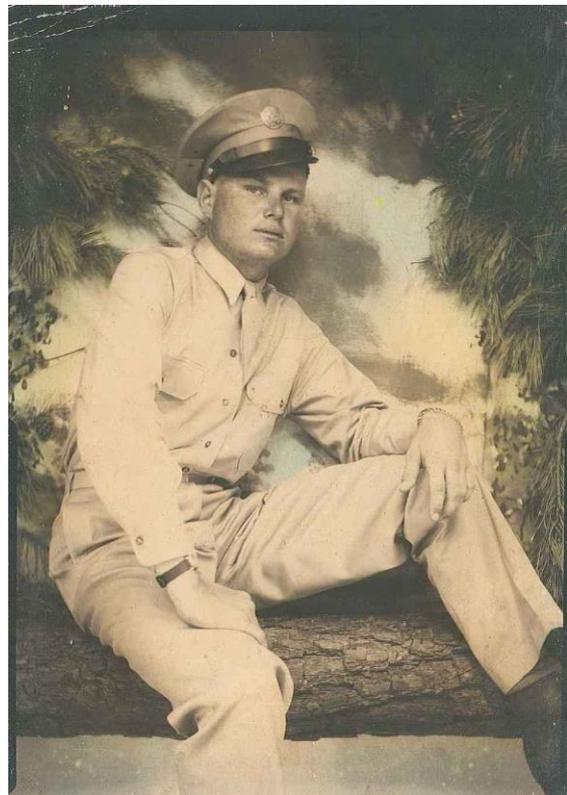
Dec. 4 – Bn. underwent reorganization within Companies. Supply sergeants were at the Companies to equip and supply troops with a change of socks and underwear. These dirty clothes were sent to the QM laundry to be washed. V mail forms and Xmas cards were issued to the personnel. A few rounds of enemy mortar and artillery fell in our position. Cas: 5 WIA; 11 abs sk, Lt. Buck hosp. battle injury.



Corporal Hyman Goodman of F-Company was captured at Merode on 29th November 1944.



Harold Hultengren, killed in action at Merode on 29 November 1944



Robert F. Schmidt, wounded in action at Merode on 29th November 1944

After Action Reports 26th Infantry for the month of November 1944

Activities of the regiment during the month of November fall into two phases:

The period from 1-15 November which found the regiment engaged in patrolling activity; the period of fighting through the Gressenicher Forest to get to the open ground west of Düren, Germany.

1 November through 15 November 1944

1 November 1944 – In the new sector northeast of Eilendorf, the 1st and 3rd Battalions sent out patrols to clear out the enemy groups that had been detected in the orchards and houses about a mile from the battalion positions. There was some stiff fighting before the combat patrols were called in.

2 November 1944 – Heavy shelling of the 3rd Battalion area lasted throughout the night. A 1st Battalion patrol locate an ammunition dump and artillery fire directed upon it after the patrol returned blow this enemy dump.

3 November 1944 – The 1st Battalion sent out three patrols, but these reported no enemy contact. The 3rd Battalion sending out patrol's northeast of Eilendorf ran into intense fire from enemy pillboxes. TD fire directed against these just bounced off the sturdy fortifications.

4 November 1944 – About 0005-0200 hours enemy patrols attempted to probe battalions positions but were driven off in sharp clashes. About 0700 hours, 88mm gun fired landed in the 1st Battalion positions, but no casualties resulted from this. Harassing fire was laid down all night on road junctions, pillboxes and weapons emplacements and railroads. The expected fighting in the woods had brought up the question of using light machine guns instead of the heavy machine guns which were more cumbersome. It was decided that heavy weapons companies would be given some light guns in addition to the heavy machine guns to employ when

supporting rifle elements committed in assault upon enemy positions in the woods.

5 November 1944 – Patrols sent out by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions reported no enemy contact. Attempts to capture a prisoner for questioning failed. Another attempt on the following day to get prisoners also failed, the patrols reported no enemy contact. Blue flares were used by the enemy on 7 November in the front of "L" Company positions, but no attack materialized. Some mortar fire laid down on enemy positions. New area to be occupied by the regiment, below Schevenhütte was reconnoitered by the three Battalions. During the first night the 3rd Battalion was relieved by the 18th Infantry, and the 1st reverted to the 16th Infantry control.

8-15 November – By 1500 hours 8 November the 3rd and 2nd Battalions, with Company "C" 745th Tank Battalion closed in the new area. Except for active patrolling which revealed little enemy activity from 8 through 15 November, all was quiet.

16 November through 30 November 1944

16 November 1944 – Prior to the 2nd Battalion jumping off in the attack through the Gressenicher Forest, a bombing mission was executed against enemy positions in front of the Battalion positions and on the roads and towns to the north and east of Schevenhütte. The 2nd Battalion reported that intense mortar and artillery fire hitting the trees was inflicting casualties upon the advancing companies. The enemy was well dug-in and defended the clearings, fire breaks and trails in the woods with mortar and machine-gun fire. Progress was extremely slow, for the thick woods meant that the areas the battalion moved through had to be thoroughly cleared. Enemy observers with radio were hiding in the woods and calling down fire on the companies they observed advancing. The muddy terrain made passage for vehicles difficult and

necessitated clearing new paths through the woods by engineer details. The 1st Battalion was alerted to move one company to cover the gap between the 3rd Battalion and elements of the 8th Infantry, and to protect the rear of the 2nd Battalion. The enemies use of two-man bunkers to cover the trails also caused some confusion, since the hostile groups often allowed battalion elements to pass them and then fired upon the groups following the advance elements. Darkness coming early in the woods, it was necessary to button up for the night at an early hour so that the men could dig shelters which overhead cover from tree-bursts.

was discovered containing an American light machine-gun. In an effort to speed up the 2nd Battalions advance, a company of the 1st Battalion was committed to its left, to work up a ravine which ran north o the road which headed towards Schevenhütte. "A" Company worked through the ravine to a position on high ground, which was subjected to heavy enemy artillery and mortar fire from the north and east,

17 November 1944 – As worked out by General Huebner, the artillery laid down heavy fire on positions in front of the Battalions and the 2nd Battalion continued its attack at 0800 hours. The battalion ran into mines and wire defense covered by fire. An enemy pillbox which was overrun



Officers of the 2nd Bn-26th Infantry who entered the Huertgen Forest. Left to right: Capt. Ozell Smoot, CO E-Company, KIA November 17, 1944. Lt. Jelinek. 1st Lt. Hamilton, CO F-Company, POW Merode, 29 Nov. 1944; 1st Lieut. George E. Tragnitz, KIA Nov. 29, Hill 254; unknown

Inflicting heavy casualties upon the company. Little progress was made.

18 November 1944 – As the 1st Battalion moved north of Schevenhütte, the 3rd Battalion moved into the vacated positions. Engineers were called up forward to clear new path or improve the narrow trails which were under heavy fire. “C” Company had moved to “A” Company positions with “B” Company following. “C” Company ran into a fire fight with an enemy group, and until the extents of the enemy force were determined, the other two companies were not committed. The 2nd Battalion remained into position, while the tank and tank destroyers were brought forward to place bunkers and pillboxes in

the area under fire. “C” Company patrols having developed the enemy defense. “B” Company was then committed to the right of “C” Company. Slow going was reported by both companies.

19 November 1944 – Enemy patrols attempting to probe “E” Company positions were driven off which casualties, and three prisoners of the 115th Grenadier Regiment were taken. The 3rd Battalion was committed to move through the 2nd Battalions position. The tank dozer spearheaded the 3rd Battalion movement through the woods as it worked to hill 272 and the road junction west of Laufenburg. An enemy attempt to turn the 2nd Battalion flank was aimed at “G” Company’s position northeast of Schevenhütte, but the company held, and the enemy attack beaten back with heavy losses. “C” Company was still engaged in clearing up its area around 145, and in working towards the road leading to Schevenhütte, where the 16th Infantry had established a roadblock on the Wenau-Schevenhütte road. By 1600 hours both 1st and 3rd Battalion reported on their objectives and was ordered to dig in for the night.

20 November 1944 – The attack called for the 1st Battalion to move west towards the road and then north towards Wenau. “A” Company moved out, with “B” and “C” holding their position in the ravine and on the hill overlooking the road. Both 2nd and 3rd Battalions were under heavy artillery fire. The 2nd Battalion had another attack launched against it by at least one battalion or more of the 115th Grenadier Regiment, whose mission was to clear the woods up to Schevenhütte. In close fighting, the enemy thrust was hurled back. By 1400 hours the 1st Battalion had reached its objective. The 4.2” mortars were placed in the ravine covering the road.

21 November 1944 – Heavy enemy attacks against the 16th Infantry positions kept the 1st Battalion in position, as it reverted to Division control as its reserve Battalion. As soon as it was evident that the enemy attack had been contained, the 1st Battalion was released to the Regiment at 0930 hours. The 3rd Battalion was counterattacked, but that thrust by enemy infantry was also beaten back with heavy losses, and the 3rd Battalion swung into the attack which was halted by the intense enemy mortar fire. The 1st Battalion by 1130 hours had been committed to pass through the 3rd Battalion positions and move to the east, above Laufenburg. Hard fighting by the two companies committed, “B” and “C” resulted in some progress.

22 November 1944 – The 1st Battalion continued to attack towards the road junctions near the triangulation station at 244.5 The two combat patrols sent out by the 2nd and 3rd Battalions ran into heavy resistance and had to pull back. Casualties were heavy.

23 November 1944 – “E” Company was counterattacked but held its ground. One off the prisoners captured claimed that the attack had been launched with the idea of preventing our battalions from continuing their attacks. “L” Company in the forward move reached 155 and headed towards Hill

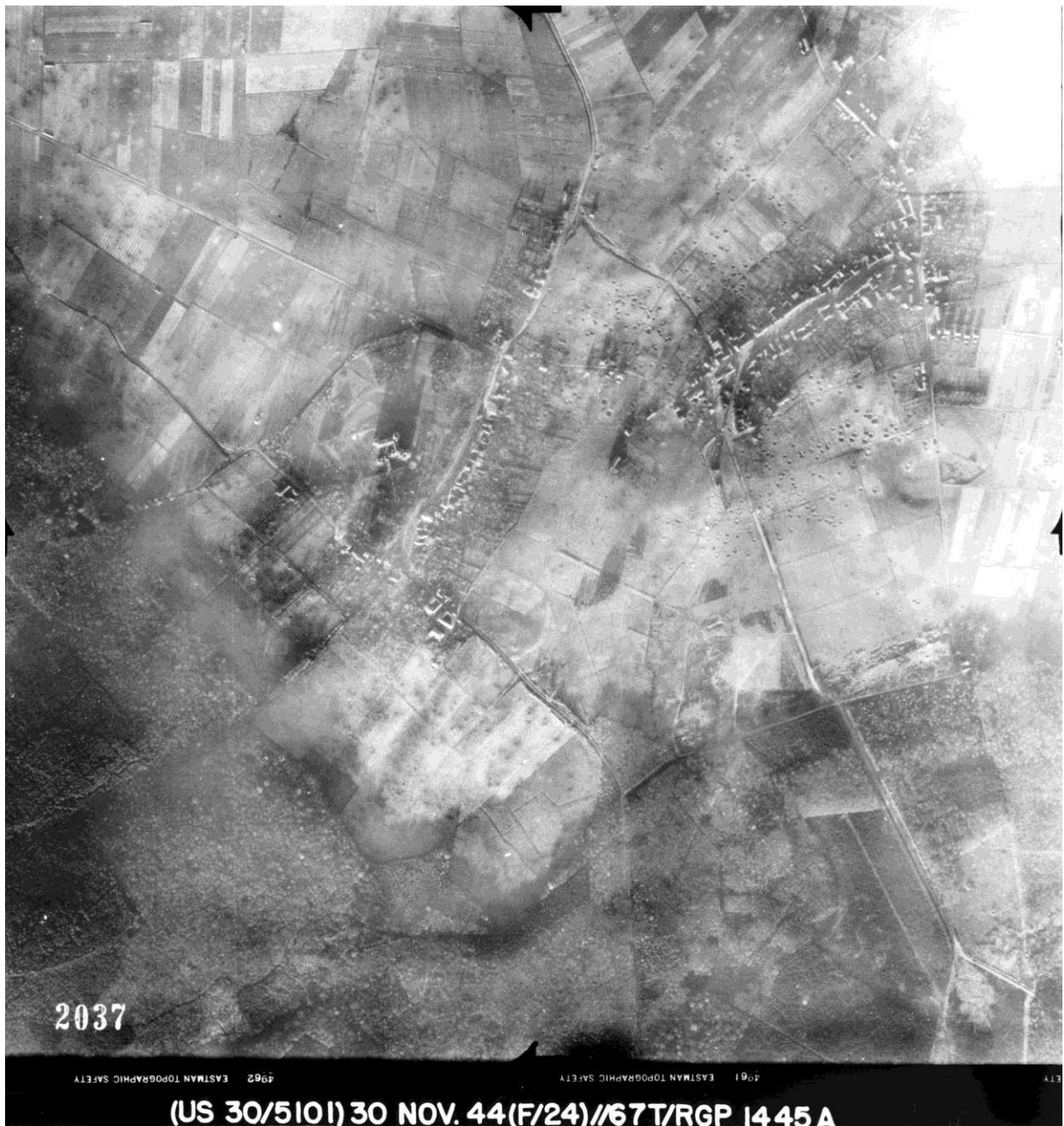
200. "C" Company moved into the castle which had been part of the 3rd Battalions position. A cavalry group from JIVE relieved "E" and "F" Companies for the forward move.

24 November 1944 – All three battalions were ordered to stay in their respective areas and mop up enemy snipers and small groups which had been bypassed in the forward moves.

25 November 1944 – The weather allowed planes to strafe and bomb targets to the north of the regimental positions. Mopping up in the battalion area continued. At night, the 3rd Battalion OPs were placed under enemy searchlights which made spotting difficult. These when placed under mortar fire were extinguished.

26 November 1944 – Throughout the night there were sharp clashes in "A" and "B" Company areas as enemy groups sought unsuccessfully to penetrate their positions. In the morning, patrols from "A" Company worked towards the patrol sent out by the cavalry and mopped up enemy groups and one machine-gun emplacement in all-day fighting, 2nd and 3rd Battalion position were static, but heavy mortar fire was laid on enemy positions throughout the day.

27 November 1944 – "G" Company tied in with "C" Company, while the 3rd Battalion moved towards Jüngersdorf at 1500 hours. "L" Company reached objective at 1550 hours, followed by "I" Company, while "K" Company secured the high ground overlooking the town. The fighting for the



Aerial photo of Merode (left) and Schlich (right) taken on November 30, 1944. Left in the center is the Merode Castle. The edge of woods is in the lower part of the picture. Some houses at Merode are still burning. The battle was still going on. Both sides of Schlich you can recognize bomb craters.

town was heavy, and parts of the town were still in enemy hands when the 3rd Battalion reported itself on its objective. Tanks and TDs moved up and reached the infantry in town, helping to clear out enemy strongpoints.

28 November 1944 – In the early morning hours, the 3rd Battalion laid down defensive fire upon some enemy machine guns, silencing these. Both 1st and 2nd held their positions, with the 1st Battalion mopping up enemy groups in the vicinity of the castle. At 1000 hours the enemy counterattacked “K” Company’s positions on the heights and was beaten back after an intense struggle. Two TDs sent to support “K” Company failed to tie in with the infantry, and these were attacked. One of these was destroyed by enemy groups before a platoon of “K” Company could reach them. About 1100 hours a 57mm gun at 12 yards range placed a Mark IV tank under fire and destroyed it.

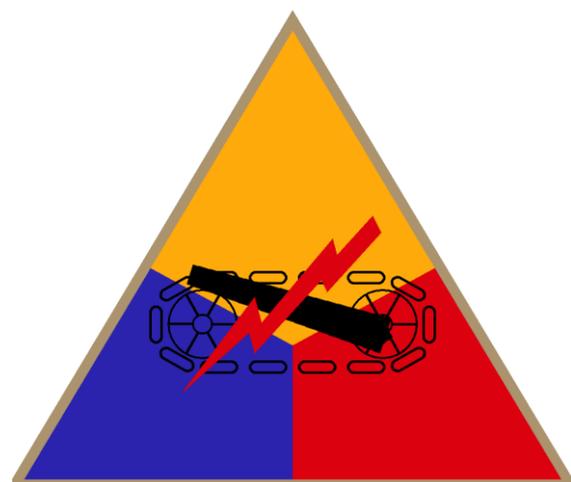
An enemy ruse was detected while a friendly flight of planes above Jüngersdorf. Capitalizing on the fact that friendly artillery batteries had been marking targets with red smoke shells to be bombed by the air force, the enemy laid red smoke on the town. The trick was detected in time.

29 November 1944 – Following had upon a heavy artillery barrage, the 2nd Battalion moved towards the town of Merode at 1000 hours. By 1030 hours the battalion had passed the 1st Battalion positions and reached a point directly west of Merode. Considerable enemy mortar and small-arms fire was encountered in the move. By noon, the two leading companies, “E” and “F” had reached the western edge of town and requested that the tanks and tank destroyers follow the infantry into the town, where heavy fighting was in progress. The infantry was receiving heavy enemy artillery fire from Schlich, and an air mission was requested on that town and positions to the north of it. Last reports from “F” Company placed enemy infantry

supported by tanks thrusting against their position.

30 November 1944 – A combat patrol sent out to contact the two companies was turned back by heavy enemy mortar, machine-gun and small-arms fire, and by tank fire. Attempts to pull bogged down tanks, which were blocking the way for other vehicles, out of the road leading to the town were futile, since the trails were under heavy artillery fire. Artillery fire was laid on the far end of the town at 1105 hours. The day passed with now news from the companies. At 1845 hours a prisoner gave some idea if what had happened. German infantry and tanks had cut the companies after they are below the town. In the evening, the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry relieved the 3rd Battalion. Plans were drawn for using the 3rd Battalion to drive into Merode and relieve whatever elements of the two companies were still holding out.

SUMMARY – October had found the regiment in clearing the city of Aachen from the enemy. November had found the unit fighting through the enemy defense in the Gressenicher and Merode Woods and reaching the open ground west of Düren.





Infantrymen of the 26th Infantry inside the Huertgen Forest in November 1944



The Laufenburg Castle was captured on November 20, 1944. Note the shell holes in the tower at the right.

HUERTGEN FOREST
16-30 November 1944
2d Bn., 26th Inf., 1st Div.

Interviewed with:

James Libby, S-3, 2d B.

Capt. Besor B. Walker, CO, G Co.

Capt. Gilbert H. Fuller, CO, H Co.

Lt. Ray Smith, Plat. Ldr. 3d Plat. F. Co.

Place: Schonach, Czechoslovakia.

No journals used

Interviewer: Major Kenneth W. Hechler,
2d Info and Hist. Service

The stiffest fight which the 2nd Battalion had in the HURTGEN Forest was at Merode, where almost all of E- and F-Companies were en-circled and captured. Up to that point, which occurred at the close of the Huertgen forest operations for the battalion, bitter opposition was encountered in the battalion's eastward progress from SCHEVENHÜTTE five kilometers to the edge of the woods just short of MERODE.

The enemy's defenses were cleverly conceived to take full advantage of the easily defended dense forest country. Dugouts with overhead cover, fronted by logs and often by barbed wire, provided good protection against artillery fire and also excellent concealment for machine gun and panzerfaust positions.

The 2nd Battalion generally used a box formation in its advance. G Co. was the assault company initially; E Co. on the flanks of the square; and the tanks inside of the box, so the infantry protected them against anti-tank weapons.

The enemy resisted strongly from small strong points frequently scattered throughout the forest. Schuh-mines were

liberally scattered in the front of these positions.

The main LANGERWEHE road and the small river which paralleled the road furnished the axis of advance for the battalion from SCHEVENHÜTTE to a point about 1 kilometer east of HEISTERN and southwest of SCHÖNTHAL.

On 19 November, when the 3rd Battalion was starting to pass through the 2nd Battalion on the LANGERWEHE road, the enemy chose this opportunity to launch a counterattack. A battalion from the 115th Grenadierregiment, unsupported by armor, circled around the right flank of the 2nd Battalion in an attempt to hit their positions from the rear. The counterattack was repulsed by numerous of heroic stand by individuals of the 2nd Battalion.

Pfc. John J. Littleton, outpost of the 1st Platoon of G Co., spotted the first wave of the enemy infantry. Manning his BAR, he started firing at the advancing infantry and alerted his mates. Although wounded in the stomach he kept on firing. "At least 20 dead Germans were piled around his foxhole," said Captain Walker.

Pfc. Francis X. McGraw, a machine gunner from Co. H on the left flank of the battalion, fired until he ran out of ammunition and then sneaked back for more while the enemy artillery was dropping heavily around him. Because the artillery was dropping numerous trees in the front of Pfc. McGraw's position, soon his tripod was too low to give him a good field of fire and he threw the machine gun over a log to get more effective results. A shell explodes against the log, tossing his gun into the air, but he retrieved it and continued firing against the enemy armed with panzerfaust, burp guns and hand grenades. Pfc. McGraw died on his weapons.



PFC Francis X. McGraw

Captain Walker states that there were 80 enemy bodies in front of a platoon and a half of G Co., and F Co. also accounted for a number of enemies. The battalion losses for the counterattack were light – being approximately seven men for each company.

The 3rd Battalion then passed through the 2nd Battalion and proceeded to attack the castle of Schloss LAUFENBURG. (029445), while on 22 November E Co. captured hill 261, (033434) and G Co. took the road junction (026443) southeast of Wenau. E Co. was counterattacked after taking hill 261, but held its ground and artillery aided in repulsing the counterattack. G Co. met a dug-in company near the crossroad, hit their flank and overran their positions with the assistance of friendly artillery. Hill 272 at (022443) was then subdued.

MERODE – the scene of the 26th Infantry most bitter fight in the HUERTGEN Forest – was a strongly fortified village blocking several eastern exits from the forest leading to the Roer River and its

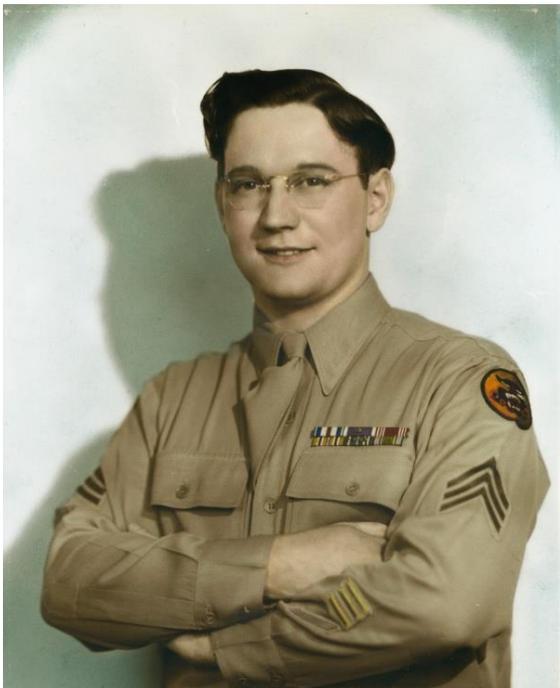
approaches to the Cologne plain. The town was easy to defend because all approaches afforded the enemy good visibility, and it was simple to zero artillery on the edge of the forest. Leading out of the forest and toward MERODE was an inferior road which always seemed to be mudded and rutted, even in dry weather.

Troops of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Parachute Regiment, were defending MERODE. On 29 November, F Co. on the left and E Co. on the right moved out to the edge of the woods west of MERODE without strong opposition. As soon as the companies started to emerge from the woods barrage after barrage of artillery and mortar fire descended on them. About 100 yards from the edge of woods, the assault platoons were stopped by a chain of enemy bunkers. These were reduced by plodding, slow and advance and man-by-man elimination of the enemy. Both companies eventually pushed into the town of MERODE after the enemy had determinedly opposed their advance. The Division G-2 Report on the action makes the comment that “resistance was stubborn at first, but collapsed under pressure, or possibly on direct orders.”

It is difficult do conclude whether the enemy was deliberately springing a trap for E- and F – Companies. After dark on 29 November, the 2nd Battalion of the 5th Parachute Regiment launched a powerful counterattack precede and accompanied by artillery support. The artillery curtains the western approaches to MERODE in such a way that the American troops in MERODE were cut off from armored or infantry support. Early the counterattack, communications were cut, preventing the support of friendly artillery. The last contact with the companies, which soon became completely surrounded, was a series or plaintive radio messages in which the radio operator described the hopeless situation of the companies: “There is a Tiger Tank coming down the street now, firing his gun into every house, “ the radio

operator reported. “He is three houses away, now, and still firing into every houseHere he comes” With that all contact with the friendly elements in MERODE was ceased.

Approximately 15 men, under the leadership of T/Sgt. John Parker of E Co., succeeded in sneaking out of MERODE under cover of darkness on the night of 30 November. All others from the two companies were killed or captured.



Sgt. Harold Moods – 634th Tank Destroyer Battalion.

Officers of 2nd Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment First Infantry Division

“Who Made the Invasion of France on “D” Day”



Left to Right

Front Row

Weeks, Smoot, Libbey, Kelly, Cupelo, Col. Daniel, Belisle, Fuller, Preston

Middle Row

Telenko, Chestnut, Walker, Simonds, Lafley, Kuby, Trow, Simon, Betz

Back Row

Kahn, Heath, Graziel, Jelinek, Hamilton, Eckenrod, Hetz, Carew, Vanale, Flynn, Villereal, Jones

**26th Infantry Regiment Casualties
in the Battle of the Huertgen forest
(Nov. 16, - Dec. 7, 1944)**



Robert "Bob" Fischelis, F-Company
wounded in action November 29, 1944



Steven Z. Kish, G-Company wounded in
action November 29, 1944



Captain Ozell S. Smoot on left, CO E-
Company and 1st Lt. George Tragnitz,
Platoon Leader E-Company. Capt. Smoot
was KIA Nov. 17, 1944 by a tree burst.
1st Lt. George S. Tragnitz was mortally
wounded and died of wounds November
29, 1944 at Hill 254 west of Merode



George O. Trout from A-Company was
killed in action Dec. 1, 1944 by shell
fragments in the Huertgen forest nearby
Merode.



Staff-Sergeant Frederic H. Noonan served with Company F-26th Infantry. He was killed in action on November 29, 1944 at Merode.



Sergeant Wesley F. Smith served with the 2nd Bn./26th Infantry. He was killed in action in the Merode Forest on November 24, 1944 between the Erbsweg Trail and the edge of woods west of Merode.

In Memory of
S. Sgt. Walter A. Krahling
United States Army

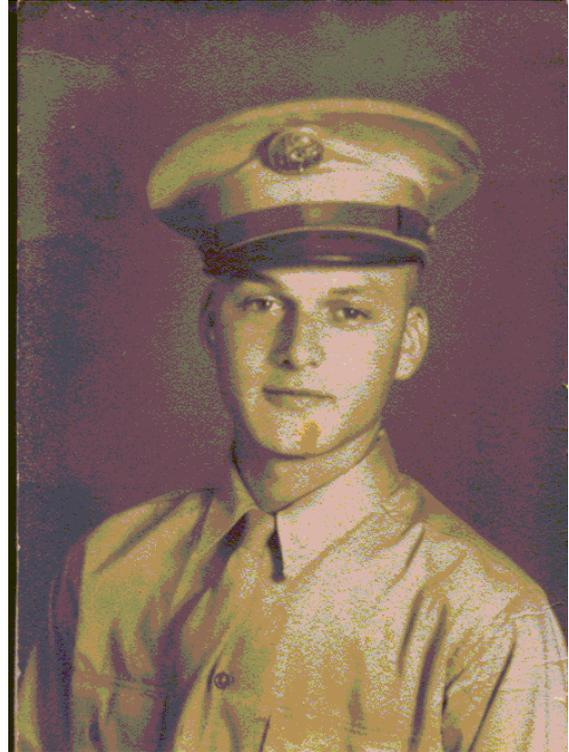


MEMORIAL SERVICES AT
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, George
Rev. J. G. Baumgaertner, Pastor
Sunday, February 4, 1945

Staff Sergeant Walter A. Krahling was a member with C-Company. He was killed in action on November 29, 1944 in the forest west of Merode.



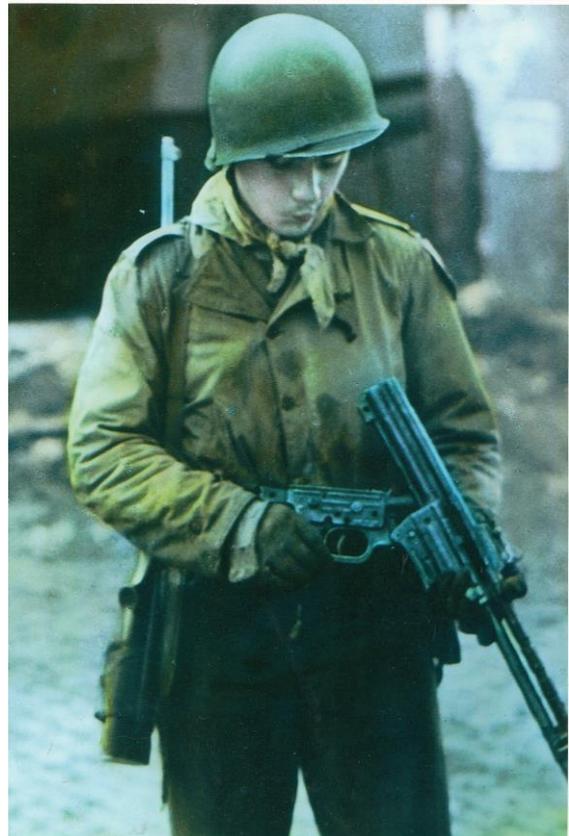
First Sergeant John Sutphin served with F-Company/26th Infantry and was captured by the German Paratroopers at Merode on November 29, 1944



Joel Outlaw served with A-Company in the Huertgen Forest. He was killed in action in December 1944 in the vicinity of DOM Bütgenbach during the Battle of the Bulge.



Pvt. Kermit E. Sargent served with the 2nd Battalion/26th Infantry. He was a D-Day veteran and is missing in action since November 29, 1944 at Merode. His remains were probably recovered in 1972 at a farm at Merode and reburied at the Merode WWII cemetery (Marienbildchen)



PFC John Dimitroff – KIA 30 Nov. 1944 at the CP 2nd Bn.-26th Infantry



This collage was forwarded to me by Sandy Wentworth concerning her uncle 1st Lt. George Tragnitz who was killed in action on November 29, 1944 at Hill 252 west of Merode.