

8022 is file
UNIT: 2nd Bn, 319th Inf Regt.

PERIOD: 7 - 28 February 1945.

ACTION: Attack across Our River into Siefried Line.

SOURCE: Lt Col Paul Bandy, CO 2nd Bn, 319th,
Capt John Leake Jr, S-3 2nd Bn, 319th Inf,
Capt Thomas C. Mason, Arty Liaison Officer 905 FA Bn.

PLACE & DATE OF INTERVIEW: OUTSCHEID, GERMANY, 2 March 1945. X

INTERVIEWER: Major D. G. Dayton.

MAPS: Germany; 1/25,000 Sheet #6103 (WALLENDORF)
Sheet #6003 (METTENDORF)

Previous to the attack by the 319th Inf across the Our River on Feb 7 the regiment was concentrated in town in the vicinity of the attack area. The 1st Bn was in REISDORF (944418), the 2nd Bn in MOESTROFF (923418), and the 3rd in BETTENDORF (907428), where the regimental CP was located.

The 2nd Bn had no special preparation nor adequate time for reconnaissance prior to the attack on the 7th. As a sort of a preliminary to the crossing of the Our, the 2nd Bn did cross the Sauer River near MOESTROFF on the 5th but conditions were unlike those encountered under battle conditions. There was no shell fire, no darkness, ample time, and the river at the point of crossing flowed smoothly. On the night of the 5th the 150th Engrs brought their assault boats into HOESDORF preparatory to the crossing operation. A disassembled Boot-bridge was also hauled into the town. The same night 1st Lt Gerald J. Foley, S-2 2nd Bn 319th, and T/Sgt E. W. Harrell, reconnoitred the exact point of embarkation -- just southeast of HOESDORF (940436). On the 6th Lt Col Bandy and his company commanders, from an OP on the near shore, got to see the crossing site and the attack zone beyond the river. Visibility was poor, however, and little information or detail was gathered from the visual reconnaissance. The Bn had no

ground reconnaissance on the enemy side of the river.

X As planned by the engineers and infantrymen, a dispatch point was to be set up where the boats were to be stacked--about 300 yards from the crossing site. Here 9 infantrymen and a manning crew of 3 engineers would obtain the boat and carry it to the point of embarkation. At the river's edge a control point would handle the launching of the boats. Located on the enemy's bank would be another control point to assist in assembling the troops and handle the return of the boats to the far shore. Conditions which arose at the time of crossing prevented the plan from being carried out.

The 2nd Bn planned to cross in a column of companies, with four assault boats moving across at a time carrying approximately a platoon. At 2000 on the night of the 6th the Bn left MOESTROFF and, after crossing the Sauer, moved via a trail to HOESDORF, prepared to cross the Our River at H hour, 0200, (subsequently changed until 0300 and not actually getting started until after three).

Shortly after 0200 on the 7th our artillery began a preparation which lasted for 45 minutes. It was the typical artillery fire preceding an attack. The corps artillery concentrated on communications, counterbattery missions and CP's while the division artillery hit the immediate objectives to neutralize the enemy fire and dislodge or destroy his troops. Fifteen minutes before H-hour our artillery was placed immediately opposite the crossing site and, after the crossing operation started, about 0320, our artillery continued to fire for an hour and a half. This fire had been planned to be shifted ahead of the advance in 200 yard increments about every twenty minutes.

Enemy artillery began answering our fire shortly after it started and, when the crossing of troops started, artillery was falling thick

and fast about the crossing site. The smoothness of the operation as planned was non-existent. The artillery threw both the engineers and the infantry (of which about 25% were reinforcements going into their initial action) into a state of confusion. To quote Lt. Col. Bandy, "Only the forcefulness of the Bn Exec, Maj. Williams and Capt. Christianson, Bn. S-2 150 Engr., resulted in getting men across!" The slope leading down to the river over which the boats had to be carried was steep and caused trouble in the darkness. Once down the slope, however, the river was easily accessible from the bank. The river was at flood stage though and flowing so swiftly that launching the boats, even from the favorable bank, was not easy. Many boats capsized or they were overloaded and were swept downstream by the current. Others were sunk or overturned by artillery fire. In the initial phase of the crossing approximately fifty per cent of the boats capsized; however most of the men returned to the near shore. It soon became evident that the engineers couldn't return the boats to the near shore so they were beached on the far side. X

Under the regimental plan the 2nd Bn. was to cross the river, bypass the pillboxes in its path and move north to seize the high ground (938454) behind the pillboxes overlooking the river. The 1st Bn. was to cross the river south and seize the high ground (959440) to the south ~~west~~ east. While the lead Bns were crossing, the engineers were to construct a footbridge over which the Third Bn. would cross. Once across it would move along the river and clean out the pillboxes ~~bypassed by the other battalions~~ bypassed by the other battalions. Difficulties incident to the crossing operations made it necessary to subsequently alter the plan.

Spearheading the attack of the 2nd Bn across the Our R. was F company. It was followed by E and G companies in the order mentioned. Each of the two lead companies had attached a HMG platoon from H company. The 81 mm mortars were emplaced back of Hoesdorf. They were controlled by the Bn. C.O. and used to do pin point firing in the zone of advance. A F.O. was with the company commander of each company.

In spite of the terrific artillery fire, about 60 men from F company and an equal number from E company got across the first night (early morning 7th Feb.). In crossing F company lost its light machine guns and both companies lost considerable equipment. Once across, F company advanced into the draw about three hundred yards from the crossing site, took a pillbox that resisted them and then dug in. ~~For the night~~ E company moved up behind F.

X During the night of Feb. 6-7 the engineers failed to get a footbridge and, ~~with daylight~~ ^{when the morning mist lifted} on the 7th, crossing operations ceased. There was only a sporadic exchange of small arms and sniper fire across the river but artillery fell heavy on the crossing site and in Hoesdorf. Capt. Mason, the arty liaison officer, said he estimated " ^{rounds} 2000 fell in the town during the day, a lot of which was 150 mm". X

From his O.P. in Hoesdorf Lt. Col. Bandy got a panoramic view of the operation beyond the river. He could see the German pill boxes and the field fortifications around them. He could also see his understrength companies already across the river.

On the 7th the Bn mission was changed slightly with orders to seize the high ground directly in front of it. (950446). Companies F and E made little progress toward the objective.

X On the night of 7-8 Feb. the remainder of the 2nd Bn.

was to have crossed the Our~~x~~ River via a footbridge to be constructed by the 150th Eng. The Engineers got the footbridge in about 0200 on the ~~8th~~^{8th} but it was torn out almost immediately by the current. Consequently during the night only a few additional men from Easy and Fox companies got across the river-- these by boat. ~~x~~ Some supplies were also taken across and the wounded evacuated.

Artillery continued heavy during the daylight hours of the eighth so once again the crossing had to cease. After it got dark three tanks from the 2nd platoon C/702 Tk. Bn. moved into Hoesdorf for the next day's operation. During the night the remainder of the ~~x~~ second Bn. moved across the river.. However Lt. Col Bandy continued to control the Bn from his good observation post in Hoesdorf. ~~x~~

No permanent wire communication was across the river but radio worked all night. Between units on the enemy side' however, the rough terrain all but ~~neutralized~~ radio reception. The F.O.s had little need for communication because there were few good targets. Indirect fire on the pillboxes did practically no damage. ^{See} (Insert #1.)

On the morning of the 9th the second platoon of F company which, under 1st Lt. Thomas L. Merrick, had advanced up the draw about 500 yards the previous day, was counterattacked in their organized position by about thirty of the enemy.. The platoon had little trouble in stopping the attack and killed nine Germans in so doing.

~~x~~ The Bn had meanwhile discovered the organization of the pillbox defenses. ^(See sketch) The primary pillboxes were strongly built and located to give each other mutual support. They were usually found three in a group, each of which housed about eight men. A command pillbox in the rear~~x~~ completed the setup and ~~mx~~ formed

More or less the outline of a kite on the ground. (See sketch)
Adjacent to the ~~pillbox~~ command pillbox was a bunker, for ~~personnel~~^{Personnel},
having from 18 to 20 men. In ~~rear~~^{rear} of the primary command pillbox
was a secondary row of pillboxes, less strongly reinforced, and
behind them~~e~~ was still another command pillbox. Underground ~~x~~
communications connected the defensive pillboxes to the command
pillbox. The command pillboxes were connected for control purposes.
Round about the pillboxes were communication trenches and other
field installations.

Having ascertained the nature of the Siegfried installations
the 2nd Bn on the 9th began the systematic assault of them. First
artillery would be placed around the box or boxes being attacked on
a perimeter about 200 yards square. This usually drove the defenders
to the field fortifications adjacent to the pillbox. Then pinpoint
(accurate) mortar fire would be fired on the fortifications driving
the Germans into the pillbox. Meanwhile tanks jockeyed into position
in Hoesdorf, where possible, ~~fire~~ fired directly into the pillboxes,
assisting to keep them buttoned up. (Note. 76 mm fire seemed to have
no effect on the primary pillboxes.) Machine gun and small arms
accomplished the rest. Once the box was buttoned up the assault squad
would move in on the rear. Few boxes had to be taken by use of the
explosive charges placed therein. Of the first twenty taken satchel
charges were used only on the first one. Thereafter once the initial
phases of the reduction had taken place, a representative talking
to the German occupants usually was successful in bringing about ~~in~~
their surrender. Occasionally the Germans would set up their
machine guns in the corridors of the pillboxes and ricochet the
bullets off the walls to the exterior of the boxes ~~after the exterior~~

after the embrasures had been buttoned up by the fire. The concussion of the satchel charges usually ^{took} ~~took~~ care of the gun. The boxes which held out were in almost every case controlled by an officer.

Sgt Elwood R Sloyer of the A and P platoon spoke German well and induced the Germans in a number of pillboxes to surrender. He said they usually were not very reluctant when he explained to them what would happen if they didn't. On one instance he listened in on a telephone conversation from one of the captured command pillboxes. At that moment the CO was ^{talking to} ~~telling~~ the junior CO of some pillboxes being attacked. Among other things the CO told the Jr officer to hold out. Soon after, however the latter ^{said} ~~said~~ the Americans were over-running the boxes. Thereafter communication went dead. Sgt. Sloyer said once the command pillbox fell the rest was easy.

At 1230 on the 9th companies F and G were dispatched to ~~help the 1st Bn~~ assist the 1st Bn, which had meanwhile secured a small bridghead. They advanced down the river road toward Wallendorf. Company F went to the town and pushed directly north up the steep slope of Hill 304 (961454); G moved to the northwest ^{on} company Fs left. They tied in with the 1st Bn which had moved on the high ground above them and to their right. Company E remained in the vicinity of the crossing site and reduced the pillboxes in that area.

On the 11th Lt Col Bandy crossed the river. The same day companies F and G reverted to his control at 1610 and 1115 respectively. The Col. (who had come over from the states with the Bn) stated that he had never seen troops so weary. They had been going almost continually since the initial crossing on the morning of the 7th.

On the 13th the Bn attacked northwest along the Our towards Ammeldingen (937444) supported by tanks and TDs which had meanwhile been moved across the river. E company swung along the hills to the north of the town while G moved along the river and into it. The town was unoccupied and taken without a fight. F company having been ~~left behind~~ hit hard while with the 1st Bn held the high ground above where the initial crossing was made.. The 2nd Bn occupied pillboxes in the vicinity of Ammeldingen until the 18th. The 1st Bn was meanwhile moving the ridge line to the north west.

On the afternoon of the 18th the 2nd Bn left the High ground about Ammeldingen and closed in Biesdorf (972439) in the evening.. They did not complete the relief ~~thxxxxxi~~ of the troops of the 318th until ⁰⁴⁰⁰ the following morning. An attack jumped off ~~the following morning~~ at 0800 with the high ground around Kewenig (964467) ~~and~~ and Niedersgegen (952463) as the objective. Preceding the attack there was a 30 minute artillery preparation--15 minutes on KEWENIG aimed at blotting it out and a 15 minute close-in walking barrage. The Bn attacked from the high ground (964459) supported by a platoon of C/702 Tk Bn and a platoon of C/811 TD Bn. The enemy was dug in immediately below them only about 100 yards away. F company was on the right with an exposed flank; E was on the left. G was to follow after the high ground west of KEWENIG was taken, and attack the town of NIEDERSGEGEN from the northeast. Companies E and F advanced rapidly, after annihilating the enemy directly to their front, and by 0900 were on their objective. G company followed but met opposition from an enemy bunker (958460) and were temporarily pinned. The company moved west and ran into some more pillboxes. Instead of hitting the town from the northeast as planned they entered it from the south.

NIEDERSGEGEN WAS cleared of the enemy by about 1400. Eighty-nine (89) prisoners were taken. The Bn CP closed in the town at 1700.

On the 20th the Bn attacked again at 1100. Company F swung north along the wooded ridge and hit SEMERICH (944472) from the northeast after a heavy artillery preparation had been placed on the town and on to the hill (937472) to the west. G company meanwhile moved southwest of NIEDERSGEGEN and attacked from the rear, a group of pillboxes which had resisted the 1st Bn so stubbornly. While a platoon of tanks from the 702nd Tk Bn fired direct fire at the embrasures the infantry moved up to make the final assault. There was little need for this, however, because the direct fire induced the German to surrender. When this group of pillboxes had been reduced company G moved north toward SEMERICH to tie in with F. Enroute they hit a command pillbox at the head of a draw (941468). From this they took a German Bn commander.

At 1200 on the 21st Feb the 2nd Bn moved up to the hill mass ~~xx~~ southwest of LAHR (963504) preparatory to an attack on GEICHLINGEN (948514) at 1500. The plan called for F company to move north along the ridge line supported by tanks and TD's. After passing beyond GEICHLINGEN the company was to swing west and then south, hitting the town from the north. While this was being done, G company was to attack the town from the southwest as E company moved down the draw from the southeast into the town to clear it. The town was smoked with white phosphorus and the attack was made under a rolling barrage which was lifted every 3 minutes in increments of 200 yards. As F company moved along the ridge line, it drew all types of fire from GEICHLINGEN. The other companies hit the town as planned after a TOT had been placed on it.. By 1700 it was clear of the enemy. Between

80 and 90 prisoners were taken including 3 officers.

Having taken GEICHLINGEN, the Bn was then ordered to take OBER*GECKLEN (966536). Therefore, while company G secured GEICHLINGEN, company E attacked north along the high ground followed by company F. A heavy walking barrage was placed along the zone of advance and neutralization fire was placed on the crossroad (963524) about 1000 yards southwest of NIEDERGECKLEN. At this location was a roadblock defended by infantrymen and 2 ~~+~~ tiger tanks. Companies E and F had reached the high ground west of OBERGECKLEN by nightfall. They dug in for the night.

By 0800 on the morning of the 2nd E company was moving into OBERGECKLEN from the west. F had swung around E and was attacking the town from the northwest. As the attackers moved in, the Germans withdrew to the southeast section of the town where 3 enemy tanks were located. There were five more German tanks in NIEDERGECKLEN about 1000 yards away. As companies E and F occupied OBERGECKLEN, G moved to join ~~them~~ them in the town after being relieved by an armored infantry Bn of the 4th Armd Div in GEICHLINGEN. The Germans had meanwhile infiltrated across the route of approach, isolating the companies and checking the advance of G. After artillery had been placed on the woods (962530) and the German strong point at the cross road, company G was able to reach the high ground north of OBERGECKLEN. Tanks and TD's which had been supporting the 2nd Bn were no longer operative. One tank had been lost from enemy tank fire; the remainder of the armor was in need of mechanical repairs. In the drive north there had been insufficient time for proper maintenance.

The movement of companies E and F into OBERGECKLEN constituted a narrow salient into the defensive zone of the 2nd SS Div. Both flanks

were exposed and the troops in the town were isolated. Supplies had to be hand carried into the town. F company's CP in OBERGECKLEN was counterattacked by the German infantry and tanks in the southeast of the town. The leading German tank was knocked out after a vicious pounding by our artillery but the others were untouched. They maneuvered out of range of our bazooka fire. When company F ran out of bazooka ammunition it was resupplied by a liaison (cub) plane. With the assistance of the artillery the counterattack was finally repulsed. Fifty PWs including 3 officers were taken in OBERGECKLEN.

Late on the evening of the 22nd the 3rd Bn, 319 Inf Regt, drove north and took the key crossroad south of OBERGECKLEN; they then seized the bridge across the small stream intact. About 0100 the following day the 4th Armd attacked through the 319th Inf to achieve a breakthrough and reach the Rhine. The 2nd Bn CP moved to OBERGECKLEN on the 23rd. The Bn had no further offensive action in February.

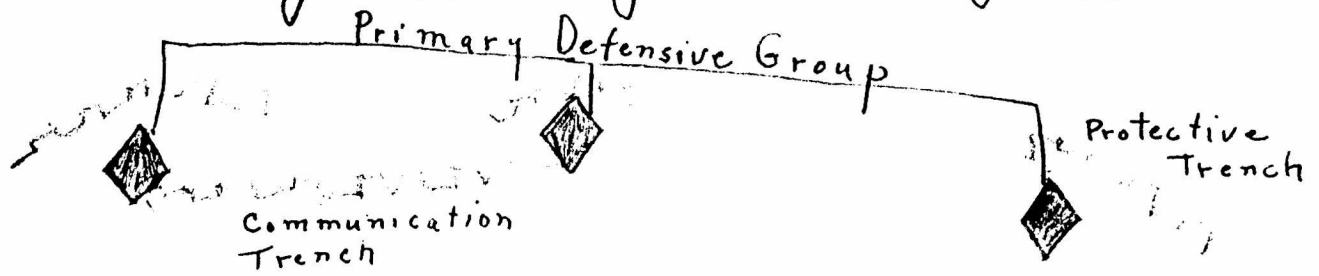
Following chart shows 2nd Bn losses 8 -23 Feb 1945: (Note: These figures don't include casualties of companies F and G while they were operating with the 1st Bn 9 - 11 February).

OFFICERS				ENLISTED MEN			
Date		WIA	KIA	MIA	WIA	KIA	MIA
February	8	3			15		9
"	9				12		2
"	10				6		2
"	11				7		
"	12				6	1	
"	13				5	18	5
"	14					5	
"	15				2		
"	16						
"	17	1			3	2	
"	18				1		
"	19				7		
"	20				15	4	
"	21	1			4	4	
"	22				11		
"	23	2			21	7	

On the 8th 1st Lt. L.J. Richards, communication officer
2nd Bn. assisted by some enlisted men from the heavy weapons company
succeeded in getting a wire line across the river. To accomplish
this a rifle grenade was used.. The end of some fine (#170)
communication wire was tied to the fins of a rifle grenade, the
remainder of the wire coiled in loose lazy eights on the ground
with the other end tied to regular (#110) communication wire.
The rifle grenade was fired across the river and a party already
across picked up the fine wire and pulled the regular wire across.
The line initially established had only been in two hours when it
was severed by artillery fire. Procedure was repeated again on the
9th but artillery knocked the line out again. It wasnt until the 10th
that permanent wire communication across the river was established.
before the wire was ~~XXXXXX~~ in SCB 300 were used. About 16 sets were
used and several relays had to be established.

Insert # 1.....

Mutually Supporting Pillbox Layout

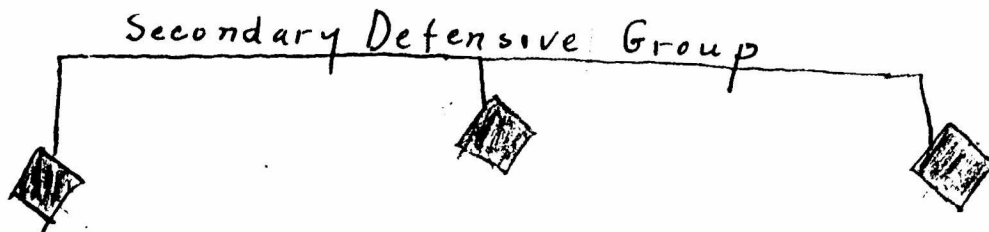


← Local wireline

Personnel {
Bunker {

◇ Command pillbox (Plat. or Co.)

← Direct Command Line (underground conduit)



Note:

Pillboxes in primary defense were much more carefully constructed and more impregnable than those in the secondary defense.

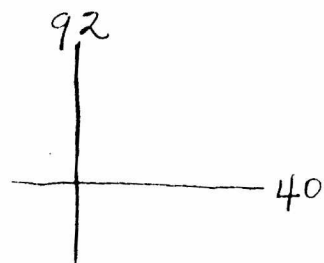
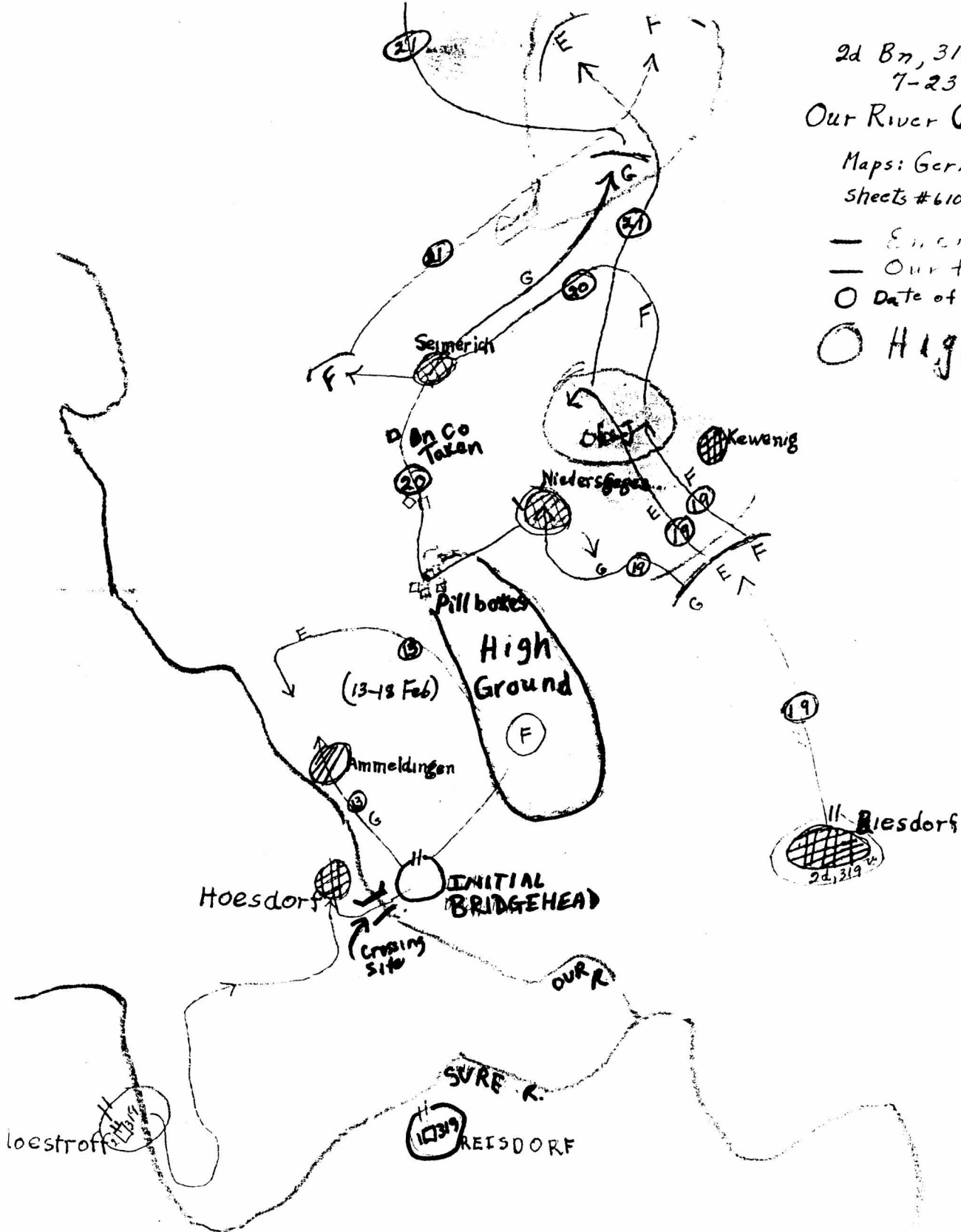
◇ Command pillbox (Co. or Bn)

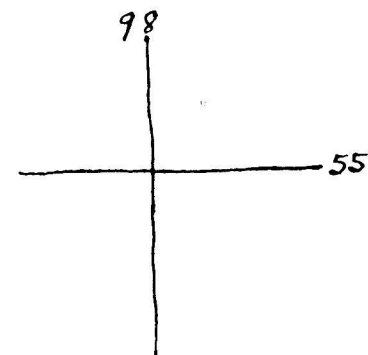
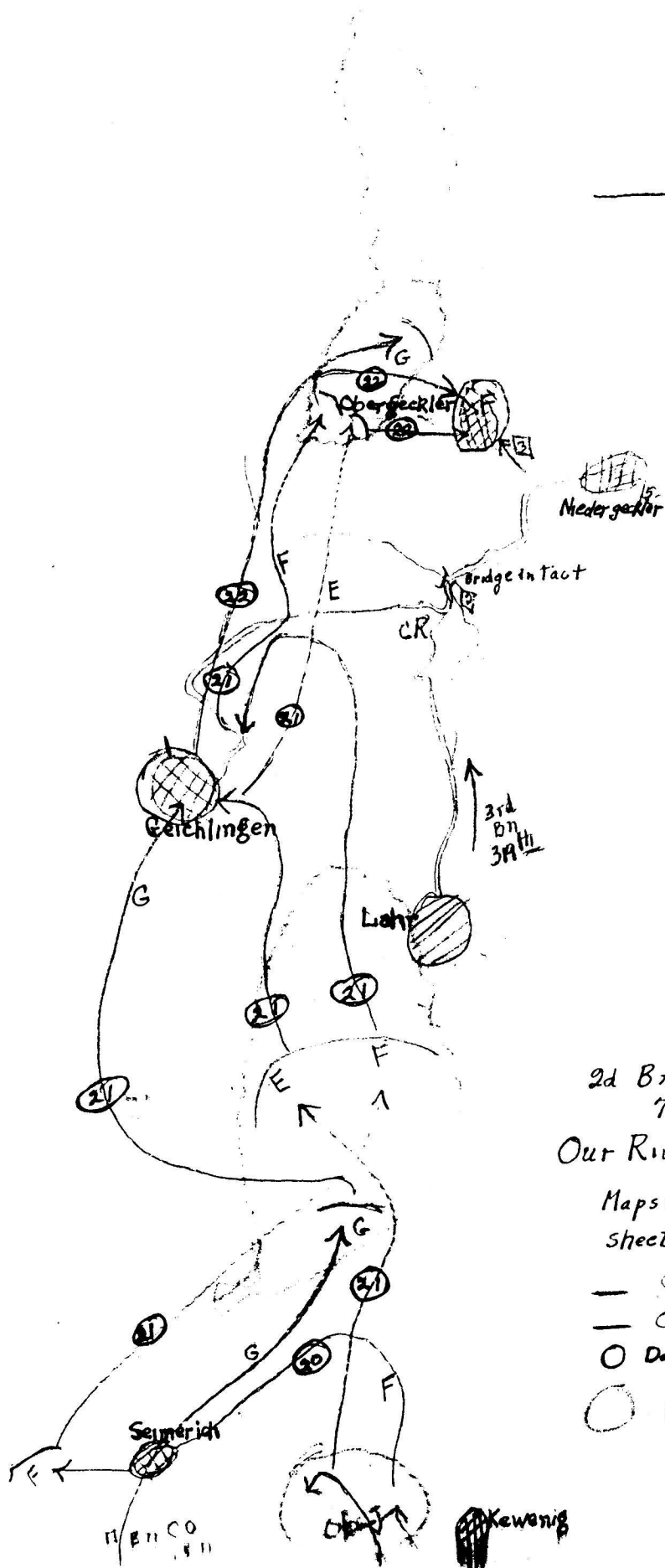
2d Bn, 319th Inf Regt.
7-23 February 1945
Our River Crossing and Push

Maps: Germany 1/25,000
Sheets #6103 (Hallendorf), #6003 (?)

— Enemy
— Our troops
○ Date of Movement

○ High Ground





2d Bn, 319th Inf Regt.
 7-23 February 1945
 Our River Crossing and Push North
 Maps: Germany 1/25,000
 sheets #6103 (Halleendorf), #6003 (Metendorf).

- Success
- Our troops
- Date of Movement
- High Ground