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MILITARY HISTORY

OPERATIONS OF COMPANY H
NINTH INFANTRY
(SECOND DIVISION)
THIRD PHASE OF THE MEUSE-ARGONNE
NOVEMBER 1-11, 1918

(PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A COMPANY COMMANDER)

CAPTAIN WALTER P. O'BRIEN, INFANTRY

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Van Horn, R. O. "Personal Letter"

Colonel Van Horn commanded the 9th Infantry during the period November 1-11, 1918. He personally ordered the first night march on Bois de Belval. His letter and the operations of the 9th Infantry in the official records are very similar. His information is undeniably correct.

Mattefeldt, Capt. C. C. Compiler "Records of the Second Division (Regular)" (8 Volumes and Atlas)

A work of nearly ten years compilation of orders and reports by units of the Second ~~Company~~ Division. The most accurate record of the company available.

New York Times Magazine "November, 4th, 1928."

An article written on the second night march. Based on a letter written to the author by Lt. Colonel Mile C. Corey, who led the march. An accurate account.

MARGINAL ABBREVIATIONS USED

VAN HORN	Personal letter
R.S.D.	Records Second Division
N.Y.T. MAG.	New York Times Magazine.

ORIENTATION

On October 10th, 1918, the 9th Infantry was relieved from the Champagne Sector after ten days of fighting. (1) The regiment had suffered many casualties among both officer and enlisted personnel. Every indication pointed to a trip back to one of our famous "rest" areas for replenishment of equipment and to secure and train replacements. On October 14th orders were issued for a movement to Courtisols-Quest. Subsequent orders issued finally placed the regiment in a reserve position behind the 42d Division which was located in the vicinity of Sommerance. About a third of a mile to the north was a strongly intrenched German position which had given considerable difficulty to the troops trying to overcome it. The 9th Infantry as part of the Second Division had been selected as the spearhead of the attack against this strong position. The regiment was commanded by Colonel R. O. Van Horn, an officer of the old school. Lt. Colonel Milo C. Corey, another old regular officer, was second in command of the regiment. Battalion commanders were officers of less than two years service. Company commanders had about the same service as their battalion commanders. The enlisted men were part regulars, part National Guard, and part drafted men.

BEFORE THE ATTACK

October 28th, 1918. Officers and men of Company "H", 9th Infantry, 2d Division, are assembled

in some woods a mile south of Exermont. The strength of the company is three officers and some two hundred and seventeen enlisted men. Their battle experience varies from the old soldier who had participated in every action with the regiment since the Boxer Rebellion to the untried draftee who first donned a uniform in a concentration camp in the United States some six weeks before. There were soldiers in this outfit from every branch of the white race. Soldiers who in the heat of battle had demonstrated their leadership and courage to the highest degree. Soldiers who followed their leaders without question. Soldiers whose courage had been questioned, and who had to be driven forward in the face of enemy fire. Soldiers who were so poorly trained that they had to be taught to take the canvas covers from their rifles. Soldiers who thought artillery "duds" were the same cannon balls that ornamented the lawns of their court houses back home. One of the officers, a Lieutenant, who, a few days previous had brought replacements to the regiment was technically absent without leave from his regiment in the service of supplies. However, an officer or soldier at that time who went absent without leave in the right direction was commended rather than condemned. It was my privilege to be second in command of the company and later to command it.

A general officer, under whom the Second Division is to operate, has caused the officers and

men of the Second Battalion, Ninth Infantry, to be assembled for a talk. After praising the splendid record of the regiment in wars past and present he leads up to the impending battle and says in substance:

"Good soldiers never get tired. They can always advance another step and fire another shot. The division which you are to relieve here has failed in its mission. You are to carry on where this division has failed. Do not expect relief or ask for it. Do not expect your rations on time as they probably will not arrive. You are members of one of the greatest divisions of the American Army. I have great confidence in your success. I know you will not fail. Goodby! I'll see some of you when you get back." With a farewell salute the general stepped into his limousine and left us to ponder on his words in our fox-holes in the woods. (Records of the Second Division do not contain any formal field order issued by the Ninth Infantry for the attack on November 1st, 1918. Colonel R. O. Van Horn, the Regimental Commander was acting in a dual capacity as Brigade and Regimental Commander at the beginning of the action.

(2) Vol. 2 R.S.D.

The Division Field Order (49) was issued at 7:00 AM on October 31, 1918 and, under paragraph 3 (i) assigned the regiment as part of the reserve to follow the "4th Brigade at about one (1) kilometer, occupying successive covered positions." The Division orders also permitted units of the reserve to adopt such formations and follow such routes as would best protect it from hostile fire. (3)

(3) Vol. 2 Fo. 49 R.S.D.

A G-3 memorandum from Division Headquarters, dated October 31, 1918 announced "D" day as November 1st, 1918 and "H" hour as 5:30 AM. (4) Sufficient copies of F. O. No 49, issued by the Division, were furnished to give copies to Regimental commanders. The Brigade Field order assigned the 9th Infantry the mission of following the 6th Marines at about one (1) kilometer, in column of battalions echeloned in depth. Special emphasis was stressed in the Brigade order, on the protection of the flanks. (5)

(4) A.C.ofsG-3 Memo No 9 R.S.D.

(5) F.O. 42 HO 3d Brig Vol. 2 R.S.D.

Memory fails me as to the issuance of the battalion order for the attack. However, I do remember that officers and noncommissioned officers of the company had ample opportunity, on the afternoon of October 31st, to study the map on which were shown our initial jump-off positions and our objectives.

MOVEMENT TO JUMP-OFF POSITIONS

On October 31st, under cover of darkness, the company left the wooded area south of Exermont and proceeded in column of twos to its jump-off position which was southeast of Sommerance. Fox-holes were dug during the night for protection against enemy fire. It was a night without much sleeping due to dampness, cold and shelling. Men and officers were on edge and there was much talking and asking of questions. (6)

(6) Vol. 7 R.S.D.

Map No 1 Overlay 1

At 3:30 AM on the morning of November 1st our artillery and machine guns started a two hour barrage

(7) Vol. 1
R.S.D.

prescribed by Division orders. (7)

At 5:30 AM the company formed for the advance as the right leading company of the Second battalion which was the reserve battalion of the 9th Infantry. The company occupied a frontage of 500 meters forming on the south side of Sommerance-Romagne Road. The formation taken was two platoons in depth with platoons in line of combat groups. During the period before the actual advance of the company enemy artillery was interdicting the rear areas. Many shells fell in the company area but caused no casualties.

Map 1
Overlay 1

THE FIRST DAY

The company started its advance at 8:15 AM and moved steadily north until 2:00 PM. There was very little shell fire during this period and there were no casualties in the company. The Marines at 2:00 PM "landed" on their objective, "had the situation well in hand", and had "dug in". We had reached a position of the road southeast of Chenery had "dug in" with the rest of the battalion remaining in this position during the night of November 1st and the next day. (9)

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Map No 1
Overlay 1

THE FIRST NIGHT MARCH

At 8:00 PM November 2d the regimental commander sent the following field message to the commanding officer of the Second Battalion:

U.S. Army Field Message

From: C.O. 9th Inf.	How Sent:
At: Bayonville	Parson
Date: 2 November 18	Hour 8:00 PM.

1. The enemy is in full retreat.

2. This division pursues. This regiment covering the right half of the division sector advances to heights north and west of Novart forming for attack in the following order - 1st Bn, 2d Bn, and 3d Bn.

3. The 2d Bn will proceed by marching with proper security by the most convenient route to woods 304-97.2.

4. All other details as per verbal orders.

5. This P. C. stands fast.

Van Horn

(10) Vol 5
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Colonel (10)

What caused the regimental commander to issue such an order to his regiment? Had he made a proper estimate of the situation or had he blindly ordered his troops to advance in column along a road through the enemy lines to be ambushed? His first orders were to relieve the Marine Brigade on outpost in the front. Orders issued later in the day changed these to an attack at 5:30 AM on the 3d of November. The jump-off line was designated as the "Division Exploitation Line" (N ouart-Fosse). This line was nearly two (2) miles in front of the Marine outposts. The enemy was holding in front. Terrain to the front was not known except that it was broken and wooded. Movements had to be made after dark. If battle formations were taken troops would not arrive in time for the jump-off, and when they did arrive they would not be in condition to attack. The answer to the wisdom of Colonel Van Horn's

(11) Van Horn

decision will be seen later. (11)

At 8:30 PM November 2d the company was formed and marched in column of squads with the rest of the 2d Battalion until the Marine outposts were passed when we formed column of twos. At this time the 1st Battalion of the regiment was leading the march and acting as the advance guard. The march was made without any unusual incidents occurring until we arrived at a point on the road leading into Nouart. At this point we were shelled by an enemy one pounder crew which apparently guessed but knew little of our movement during the night. While there were quite a few shells dropping in the vicinity we suffered no casualties until the "jump-off." (12)

(12) Vol 7 R.S.D.

DAYLIGHT OPERATIONS ON NOVEMBER 3d

At daylight the company was formed in combat groups and at 7:00 AM left the woods south of Nouart ~~and~~ advancing overland to a position northwest of Champy Haut. At this time the Second Battalion was in support of the First Battalion. German resistance was beginning to stiffen. We were beginning to get a few casualties and pick up prisoners. Machine gunners were beginning to come out of their holes and fire into our flanks. Those that could be stilled without halting our advance were put out, others were left to units in rear and on the flanks. German prisoners were bewildered. We had been last spotted the day before nearly five miles to the southwest. Enemy artillery was pounding the

Map 1 Overlay

back areas where they estimated that we would jump-off in the morning. We took prisoners, going to the rear, who believed that they would be safe from capture, at least until the following evening. (13)

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At 10:00 AM we had reached a position on high ground south of Bois de Belval and west of Champy-Bas where we met a determined resistance which definitely stopped our advance for the day. Our artillery apparently was having difficulty keeping up with us as we were getting no artillery support. A battery of German 77's was sniping at us from the south edge of the woods. Orders were given for Company H to deploy on the right of the First Battalion as there was a fairly large gap between our line and the 89th Division operating on our right. On going into position we were told to dig in which we did without any loss of time. Bois De Belval seemed to be filled with machine guns. It was some time around noon before our artillery was registering on the south edge of Bois De Belval. As soon as it did there was a noticeable slackening of machine gun fire but the 77's sniped at us all day. We had many casualties in this position, most of them being from artillery fire. To make matters worse, at 3:00 PM, friendly artillery began to fall short and caused some casualties in the company. The only balm connected with this was that we could see our artillery liaison officer having a bad time trying to dodge his own shells and those of the enemy.

not numbered

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AN ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION

Let us study for a moment the terrain which would evidently be the next days objective of the 9th Infantry. The attack would be due north through Bois de Belval, which, at this point is more than three miles in depth. About a mile from the south edge of the woods we find a pool or lake about half a mile in diameter. (15) Smaller ponds are found slightly to the south. Numerous streams are to be found flowing through the woods. There is only one road leading north available to the 9th Infantry in its zone of action and many roads running perpendicular to this road. To follow the road to the north meant a march of five miles. We knew from the bitter experience of the Marine Brigade at Belleau Woods where they had suffered 5000 casualties in June, that a daylight attack through Bois de Belval was to be no easy task. Again it was necessary for Colonel Van Horn, the regimental commander, to come to a decision to reach his next day's objective. He had previously pointed out that if any time was allowed to organize Bois de Belval defensively, that a great delay and loss of life might be incurred as had happened previously in the Argonne. His decision is best shown in his message to the Commanding General Third Brigade which is shown below. (16)

(15) N.Y.T. Mag.

Map No 1 Overlay 3

(16) Van Horn

"From: C.O. ~~Company~~ 9th Infantry
At: La Fontaine Aucronq Ferme
3d November, 1918.
To: C.O. 3d Brigade By Runner

Machine gun and artillery fire still coming from woods in our front. We could advance and occupy

northern edge of woods east of Bois Du Sommanthe (Maps Buzancy Special) this afternoon in my opinion. Objective would be eight (8) kilometers from here and we could reach it before midnight. Believe, however, it can be done. If done the division on the left should advance as far as Sommanthe with detachment holding road fork one and half ($1\frac{1}{2}$) kilometers north.

We could take and hold edge of woods three kilometers south of Beaumont. Enemy is holding at Beaumont, probably occupying to line of high grounds one and half ($1\frac{1}{2}$) kilometers south. Will await instructions this point. 23d reports itself on our left occupying objective.

Van Horn

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Colonel." (17)

THE SECOND NIGHT MARCH

Map 1 Overlay 3

At 1:45 PM an order was sent down from Brigade ordering the simultaneous advance of the 9th and 23d Infantry through the Bois de Belval on parallel roads. The road assigned to the 23d existed only on the map and so the plan was changed directing the 23d to follow the 9th. (18)

(18) N.Y.T. Mag.

Upon receipt of the brigade order Battalion commanders were assembled at the La Fontaine Farm and verbal orders were given for the march. The 3d Battalion was to lead sending out a small advance guard and the 2d and 1st were to follow without distance on the only road through the woods to the north there to establish a bridgehead guarding the exit of the road through the woods. (19)

(19) Van Horn

The Battalion Commander gave the necessary orders causing us to abandon our present positions at about three P.M. Co H. was the rear Company of the battalion and was ordered to maintain close contact with Company G in front. At 4:00 PM we formed column of twos on the road and began our march toward and through the woods. (20) It was almost dark at this time and apparently the Germans in the edge of the woods did not see us leave our positions. However, when we lined up on the road prior to the march, the company was subjected to artillery fire which caused some casualties. A heavy rain was falling that November afternoon in "Sunny France". It was a cold wet day. We had had no hot food during the day and our reserve rations were just about gone. Sleep, food and rest were the things that we craved most. A machine gun bullet or a sliver of a high explosive in the leg or arm where it wouldn't hurt too much would indeed be welcome now because it would send us back to warm food and warm beds. Things that we hardly believed existed. However, the General's talk was still fresh in our minds, "Good soldiers never get tired. They can always advance another step and fire another shot." The command "Forward" is given and we move out on one of the most reckless exploits of troops in France. There are no patrols on our flanks. A small advance guard is out in front of us. Moving in column of twos, progress was slow. Leaving the middle of the road open to cut down casualties as much as possible in case some alert

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machine gunner might rake the road with fire, we stumbled along the ditches on the side of the road. Talking and smoking was prohibited. Except in two instances the only voices heard during the march were those of our German speaking point and the enemy. Short distances off the road we passed by German artillery in position apparently firing on the position we had abandoned before the march. The guns were passed in most cases without being molested. In fact, the night lighting devices of the artillery and flashes from the guns were an aid in our stumbling march through the ditches. As we moved through the woods prisoners began to come back through the company. At times it looks like a German regiment passing an American regiment on a practice march. The word "Schweinhund" was used by men in the company without protest from the Germans going to the rear. A German soldier, apparently a runner, came out of the woods and recognized the column and, in his horror, instead of throwing up his hands began to scream in German "Don't Shoot!" It seemed to us that he could be heard back at German G.H.Q. In German and English he was told to be quiet. Instead he screamed louder. Finally an unknown man in the company shot him to keep him quiet. It worked. As time ticked on the going began to get more difficult despite the fact that we had no casualties. German prisoners were cluttering up the road. Men stumbled over German soldiers sleeping who had been passed by the advance guard. Men fell asleep at the shortest halts and had

to be awakened. Some slept while they marched, being shoved on by the men in the rear. Ripley may not believe this but its true. Good soldiers never get tired. Advance another step but don't fire any shots unless it is absolutely necessary. You're not Hungry. It's just your imagination. Further and further we creep into the forest. We pass La Forge Farm, a clearing in the forest used as a German ration and ammunition dump. There's some ammunition left, but the rations are gone. We didn't want food anyway. We must make the north edge of the woods before daylight. On we creep through the forest and the German lines until 1:30 AM November 4th, the pitch black darkness begins to fade, and we come into the open country. Objective reached! Orders are given to extend and dig in. It is still raining and as we dig out fox-holes they begin to fill up with water. Four days and four nights without the four hours sleep that even Napoleon needed. We weren't Napoleons anyway. We were those "Good soldiers who never got tired". The battalion commander, at about 2:30 AM sends a runner to me informing me that I am detailed officer of the day. Luck of the Irish! Instructions are given for the posting of sentries to prevent a night march through our own lines. Soldiers and officers lie in the open and sleep like dead men. For their beds they have fox-holes. For their mattresses the soft slimy mud of northern France covered with a sheet of water and for their blankets more water.

ATTACKING A MACHINE GUN NEST

Came the dawn, to use a poet's words. Men began to stir trying to get warm. Their bones ache. Outside of some welcomed food arriving nothing of importance has happened during the night. As men begin to move around machine gun fire begins to come from the north. As the fog lifts the fire becomes more intense and we are pinned to the ground. One platoon is moved about five hundred yards east of La Tuilerie Farm to protect the right flank of the regiment. (21) This platoon is in a bad spot and is being enfiladed by machine guns from the ridge. Cries of wounded and dying are heard. A soldier in the company is praying loud enough to be heard in the service of supplies. Our first aid men are all gone. We can't find a medical officer so we dress wounds the best we can. We have moved forward out of our foxholes to get better cover. Unable to dig we take advantage of available cover. A fox-terrier, apparently some soldier's pet, tries to crawl under me for protection. He didn't have a chance because you couldn't have shoved a piece of paper between me and the ground. What are we going to do? We can't stay here all day. The regimental commander is in the rear. Lt. Colonel Corey, who supervised the night march and is second in command of the regiment is with the regiment. With him is Major Hanford MacNider, acting regimental adjutant. Battalion commanders are ordered to report for instructions at La Tuilerie Farm. Colonel Corey had decided that the

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ridge to north must be taken. He issues an order for the attack to begin at 10:30 AM. The 5th M.G. Battalion is to support the attack from our own front lines firing through gaps left by the assault companies. The Howitzer Platoon of the regiment is to support the attack from a position near La Tuilerie Farm. Orders are issued by the battalion commander to platoon and company commanders. The platoon leader of our right platoon inquires as to whether or not his platoon must take part in the attack in view of the fourteen casualties he has had during the morning. He is told in no uncertain terms that his platoon will attack with the rest of the company. Ten-thirty comes and all hell breaks loose. Our own machine guns trying to tear off the top of the ridge and the enemy guns raking our lines. The stokes-mortar goes into action in rear of the company. The crew has three shells left. Two of them are fired in the general direction of the ridge without doing any damage. The mortar is finished for the day. Up the hill in line of skirmishers with five pace intervals we go. There is no firing from the men of the company. Artillery is now coming from our front, right rear and left rear. Machine gun bullets coming from the ridge.

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Map No 1 Overlay 3

(22) Our objective is reached at about 11:00 and as we arrive about fifty feet from two machine gun crews they put up their hands and cry "Kamerad". Soldiers close in on them and strip them of every button and ornament. To the northeast may be seen a group of about a hundred Germans disappearing into the woods.

A beautiful target. However, these souvenir crazy soldiers are hard to pry away from their captives and a golden opportunity is lost. The prisoners are finally sent to the rear and we occupy the fox-holes on the ridge used by the Germans. A low German plane comes over our position and after circling a few times drops a green flare over the ridge. In less time than it takes to tell about it a German barrage falls on the ridge nearly taking the top of the ridge off. Men were killed and wounded and the company commander suggested that we withdraw to the reverse slope of the hill. I disagreed with him and recommended that he inform the battalion or regimental commander of our situation and await instructions. I made this recommendation based on the fact that there was an officer of the company already in arrest for "withdrawing" and leaving his platoon on its own. The message is sent and orders are received for the company to withdraw to the reverse slope of the hill leaving two outposts to watch enemy movements. Capturing two machine guns and ten prisoners in the attack we suffered about forty casualties. (23)

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OPERATIONS FROM NOVEMBER 4-10TH

From November 4th to November 6th the company remained in its position near La Tulerie Farms, when a movement forward was ordered. We marched from our position at about 7:00 AM. The march was made in column of twos without incident until we were passing through the northern edge of Beaumont, where a heavy

shelling caused ten casualties. On arrival in Bois de Hospice, contrary to remarks made by one of our learned instructors, the company dug in under cover of the woods taking full advantage of all cover available and yet did not sacrifice its field of fire or observation. This position was held until the afternoon of November 10, 1918. (24)

Map 1
Overlay 4

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THE BRIDGING OF THE MEUSE

On the afternoon of November 10th a message was received from the commanding officer 2d Battalion P.C. at La Sartelle Farm. Upon arrival at the Battalion P.C. we were informed that we would assist G Company of the regiment and A and B Companies of the Second Engineers in bridging the Meuse River in the vicinity of Bois de Flaviers. Our duty was that of a carrying party. Another tough assignment. Carrying rifles and ammunition in column of twos we pushed forward on to our job. Following an improved road through Bois De Hospice we thought things entirely too quiet. Mark the fact that there was not a single shell hole in the road on that march up. Moving off the road to the east after emerging from Bois De Hospice we went through a small ravine which led down to the Meuse River. Orders were given to halt at a railroad fill some five hundred yards from the west bank of the river. Here, under supervision of the Engineer officer, we unloaded wagons which contained sections of rafts that were to compose the two bridges. (25) The bridges were merely a

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series of logs held together by skids and looked something like a railroad track turned upside down. The work of lashing the sections together was completed about 7:00 PM under intermittent machine gun fire which caused no casualties but frightened two of our men so badly that they "disappeared" in the direction of a concrete blockhouse a few hundred yards away, where we found them dead the following day. The bridges being finally lashed together we skidded them over the railroad embankment, down to the river and started pushing them across. There were about 200 men on each bridge and they were being pushed across about fifty yards apart. At 7:30 when the bridges were almost to the opposite side of the river a weak rifle machine gun and artillery fire opened up from our lines apparently to support the crossing. Immediately the Germans on the opposite side of the river began to work with their machine guns and shot up flares. One of these flares dropped in the middle of the group working on our bridge and following it came a green flare. Enemy machine guns fired faster and men worked faster. A heavy artillery barrage came from the German lines but failed to catch our group. However, machine gun fire caused many casualties, including the company commander. The marines were waiting under cover of the railroad fill and crossed over the bridge at about 9:00 PM. Our mission accomplished, we retraced our steps back toward the Battalion P.C. stopping at intervals for protection from shell fire. Going down the road

through Bois De Hospice we were greeted by a ghastly sight. One could hardly recognize the road as the one taken on the march up. A heavy artillery barrage had dropped on it and had almost torn the road to pieces. A Battalion of the 356th Infantry (90th Division) sent to support the Marines had been caught on the road during the German counter-barrage and the road was filled with the dead and dying. Upon arriving at La Sartelle Farm orders were issued to return to positions in Bois De Hospice. This position was held until 4:00 PM on the afternoon of November 11, when the company was relieved and returned to Beaumont prior to its march into Germany.

(26) Vol. 7 R.S.D. (26)

Three officers and two hundred and seventeen enlisted men started the action with the company. One officer and seventy-seven men were left at the time the Armistice went into effect. While there were some men evacuated for dysentery and flu most of the men were killed or wounded.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In the operation this company took in almost every phase of tactics. From the attack of fortified positions it reverted to open warfare. It engaged in the pursuit of an enemy who was routed at times. It fought against a stubborn rear guard action, which was strong in machine guns and had some artillery. It advanced with artillery preparation and without it. It suffered from its own artillery falling short.

It participated in a river crossing. It held a defensive position during a lull in the battle. It participated in two night marches through the enemy lines.

The company was a mixture of veterans and untried draftees. Two of the officers had been in command of platoons and companies in previous engagements. The talk given by the general officer had a very depressing effect on both the officers and enlisted men. It was not soon forgotten.

The first two days of the operation were of immeasurable help to the company. Officers and non-commissioned officers quickly learned the habits of the replacements and were able to teach them many things which would serve in good stead before they actually came in contact with the enemy. The new men were close enough to the war to get a good idea of it and yet not suffer from it. Traveling along those two days with very few casualties helped to heighten the morale of the men.

Indifference to danger and discipline of the veterans of the company were of great value in whipping the replacements in line.

Initiative and daring were responsible for the success achieved in the night marches made. The first night march so bewildered the Germans that they did not know what to expect. Lack of flank protection on the second night march is excusable in view of the circumstances under which the march was made. Had troops moved on our flanks it is highly probable that

there would have been lost troops and also our own troops firing into each other. There is no doubt that a daylight attack through Bois de Belval would have increased our casualties and lost time which would have given the Germans more opportunity to fortify his positions to the north.

The situation on the northern edge of Bois de Belval was a serious one and many casualties were suffered due to the failure of our Howitzer Platoon to function properly. Our own artillery was having a hard time keeping up with us and they cannot be condemned. German planes attacked us almost at will and while they did little damage their information to their own artillery must have been excellent. Not more than three of our own planes were sighted during the eleven days of fighting.

The proposed action of the company commander to withdraw after taking the ridge north of Bois de Belval was one that might have proven disastrous had it been carried out at the time. The movement of one unit to the rear might have precipitated a general withdrawal and caused the loss of the ridge.

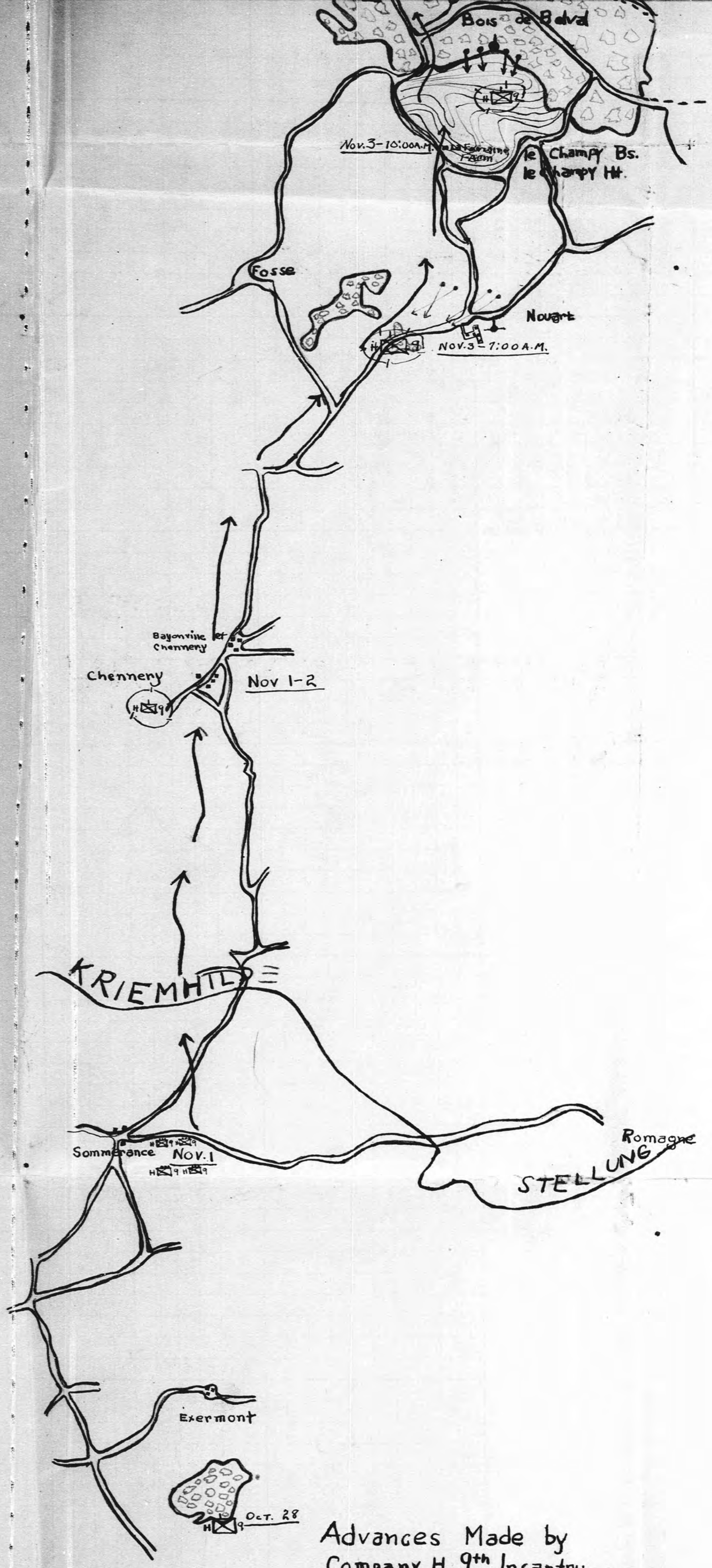
The use of a weak artillery and machine gun barrage to support the crossing of the Meuse was untimely. The obstacles presented by the Meuse and the dense woods to its east were such that unless a heavy concentration was put down it would have been better not to have a weak one which would do no more good than to disclose our intentions to the enemy.

LESSONS

1. If green men are mixed with well disciplined, seasoned veterans the unit will function well.
2. In the pursuit of a defeated enemy speed and daring are necessary to prevent that enemy from perfecting his defenses farther to the rear.
3. Friendly artillery falling on our own troops lessens their morale.
4. Howitzer platoons should save their ammunition for targets of opportunity.
5. The withdrawal of units after taking an objective should not be contemplated unless orders are received from higher headquarters.
6. If the air service desires the confidence of the infantry it must cooperate in combating enemy planes.
7. Troops should not be kept in close formations on roads during an attack.
8. Weak artillery and machine gun barrage help only in that they disclose our intentions to the enemy.

CONCLUSIONS

The success of this company during the eleven days battle was due to the initiative and courage of the regimental commander, Colonel R. O. Van Horn who ordered tasks that seemed both suicidal and impossible. The seasoned veterans of the company by their courage and leadership inspired the new draftees who after two days carried on like veterans.



Advances Made by
Company H, 9th Infantry
Meuse-Argonne Operation
Nov. 1st to Nov 11th, 1918

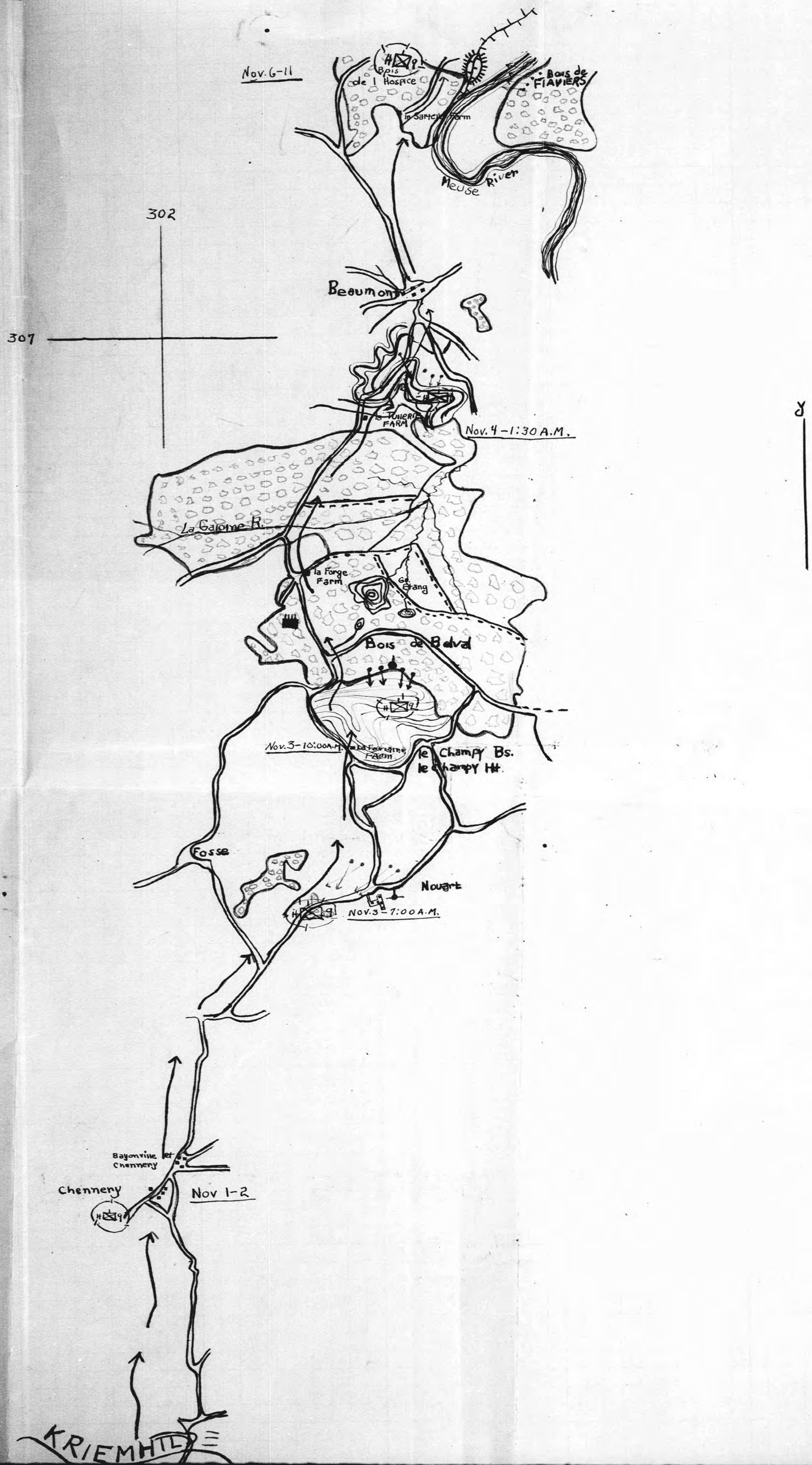
BUZANCY SPECIAL

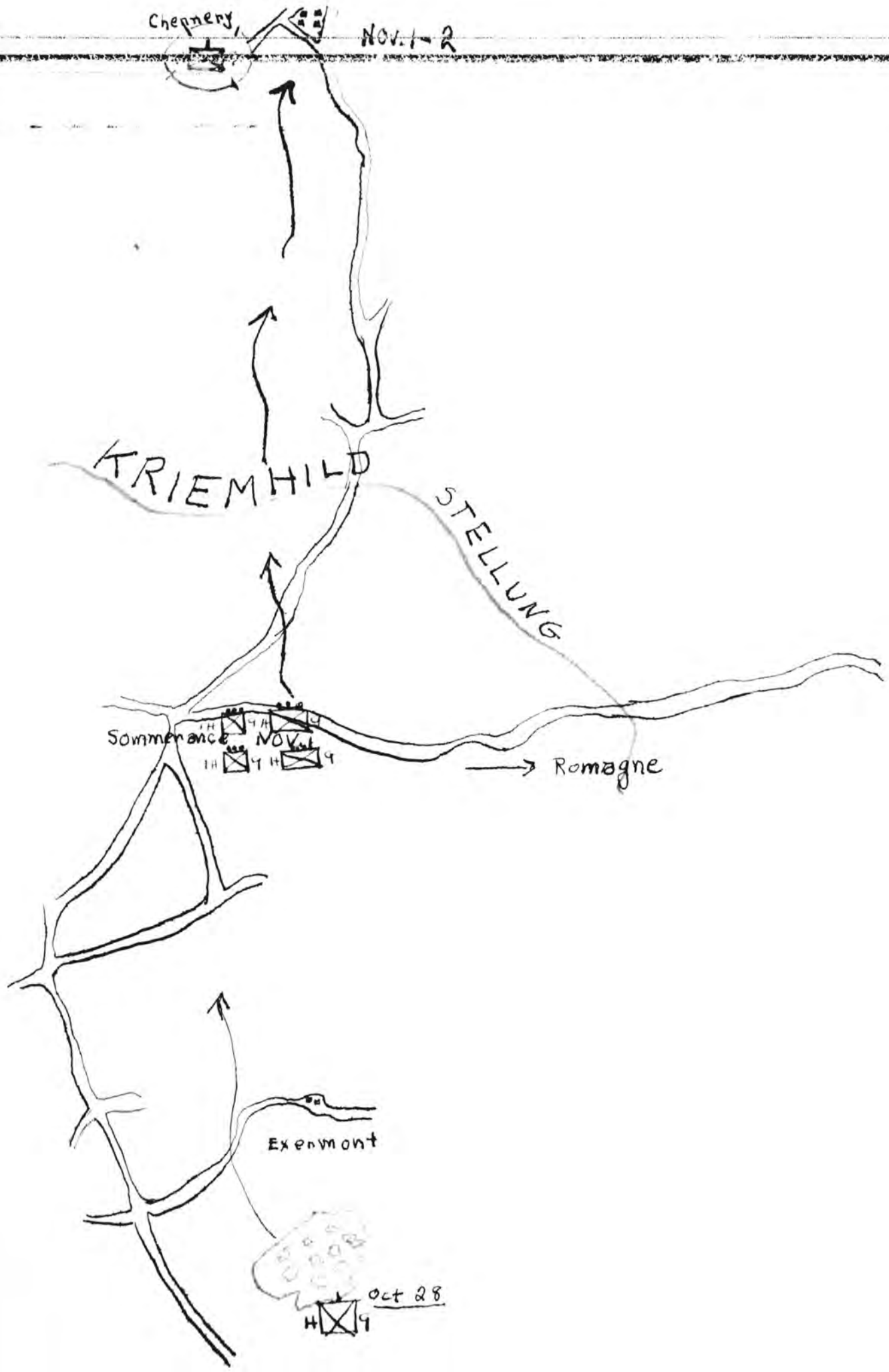
Scale = 1:50000

Prepared by G2C.
Capt. O'Brien

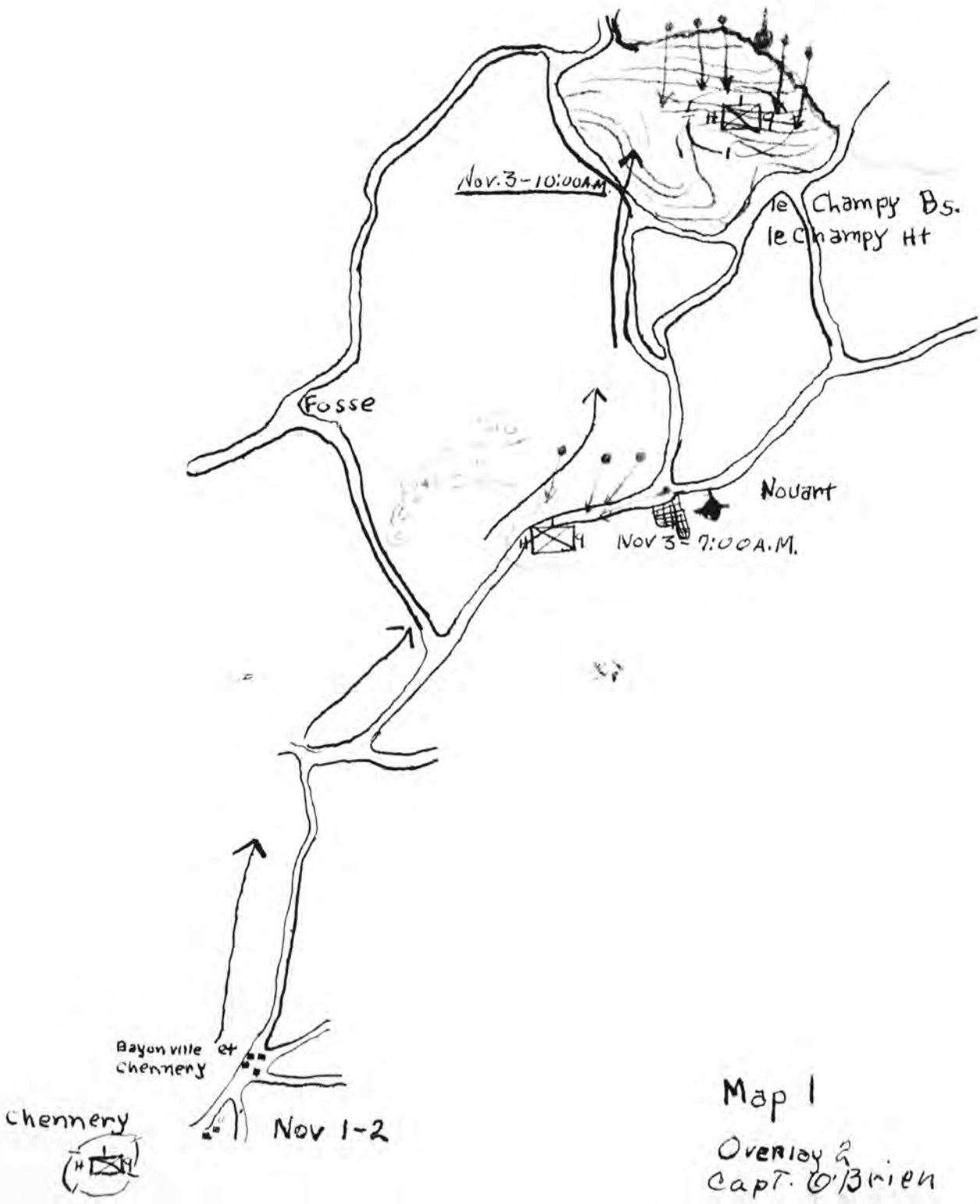
278

14


Nov. 6-11
Bois de l Hospice
Bois de FIAVIERS
la Sartelle Farm
Meuse River
302
Beaumont
307
la Tuilerie FARM
Nov. 4 - 1:30 A.M.
La Gaforme R.
la Forge Farm
Gr. Etang
Bois de Belval
Nov. 3 - 10:00 A.M.
la Forge Farm
le Champy Bs.
le Champy Ht.
Fosse
Nougrt
Nov. 3 - 7:00 A.M.
Bayonville et Chenneny
Chenneny
Nov 1-2
KRIEMHILD
Y

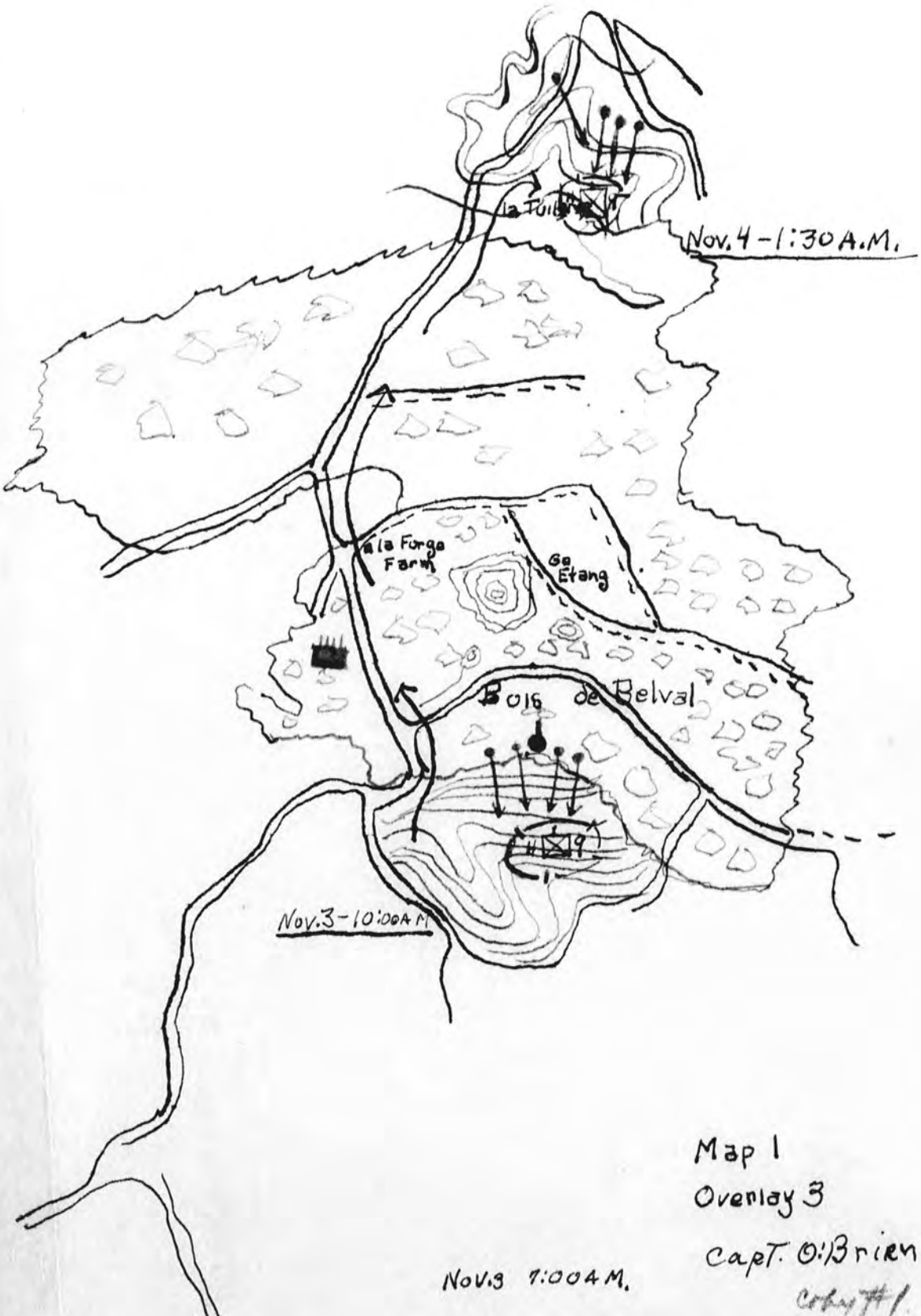


Map 1
Overlay 1.
Capt. O'Brien
Copy #1.

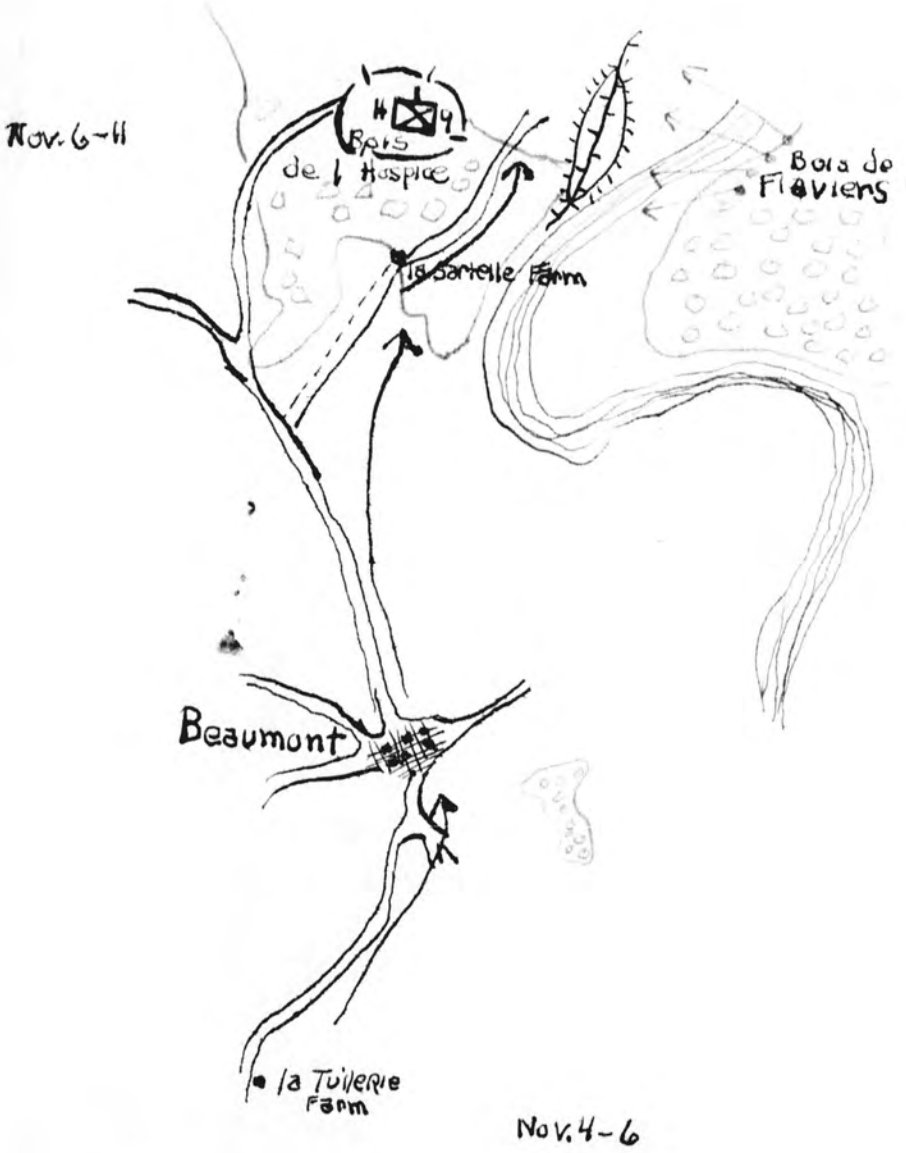


Map 1

Overlay of Capt. O'Brien



Map 1
Overlay 3
Capt. O'Brien
Copy #1



Map 1
Overlay 4
Capt. O'Brien
Obj #1.