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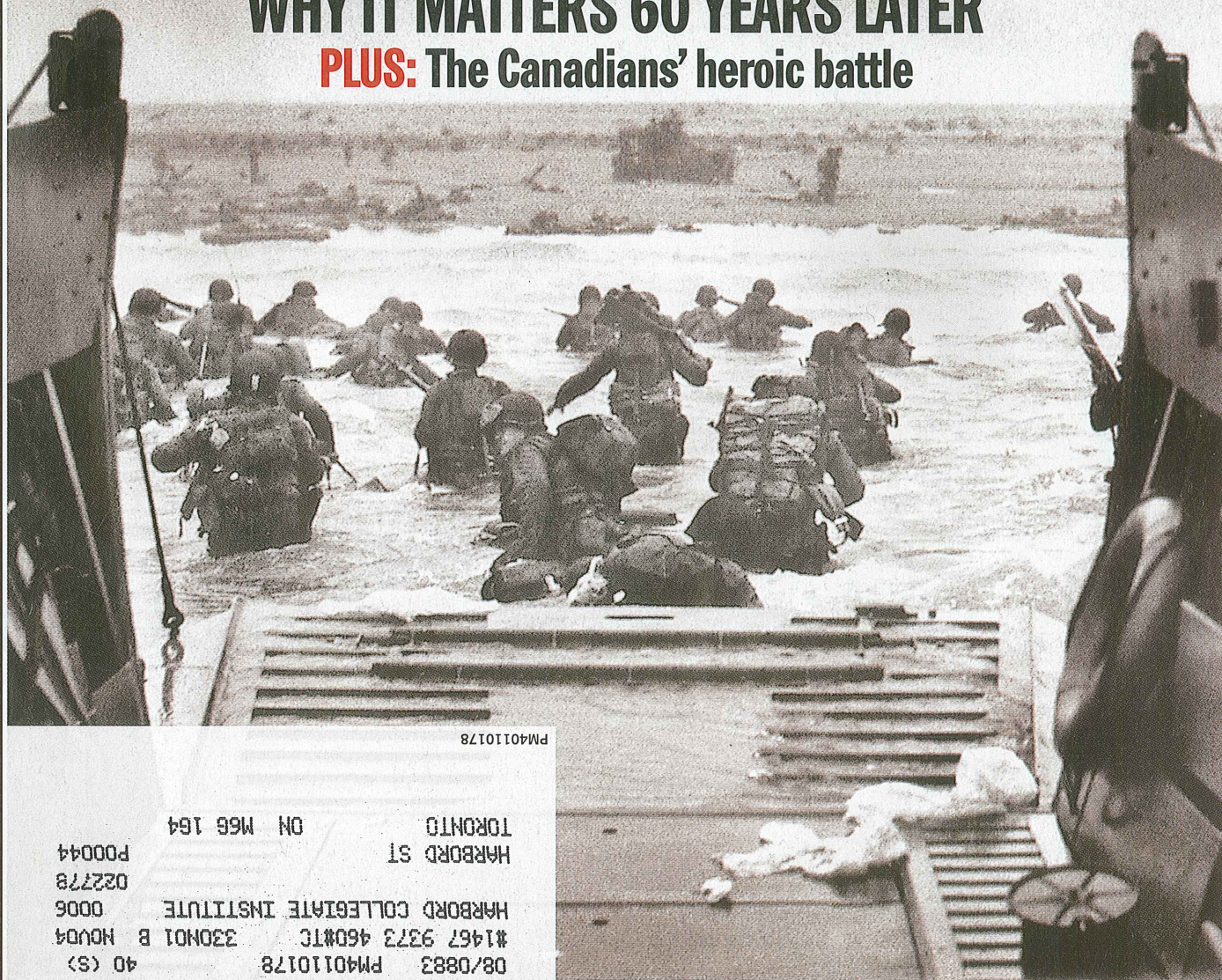
IN-DEPTH REPORT
CANADA'S ELECTION

TIME D-DAY

WHY IT MATTERS 60 YEARS LATER

PLUS: The Canadians' heroic battle

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TIME

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U.S. soldiers
and equipment
hit the beach
the day after
D-day

COVER

The Lessons of D-day Sixty years ago, the U.S. and its allies launched the greatest invasion in history. Are there echoes of that noble struggle in Iraq, or is Vietnam a more apt analogy? **28**

In Their Own Words Ten veterans of the Normandy landings remember the chaos and fury of that pivotal day **33**

Canada's Triumph: A David among the twin Goliaths of the United States and Britain, Canada prevails in the daunting task of seizing Juno Beach. Two veterans recall that day **46**

MIDDLE EAST

CHALABI'S WOES: He used to be America's favorite Iraqi. Now he's accused of spying **10**

AL-SADR: On the ground with the Iraqi insurgent leader **16**

COVER: Photograph by U.S. Coast Guard

CANADA

The Election Gambit The Liberals believe this is the moment to call a vote. Here's why it may be a risky bet **18**

Plus: Exclusive essays from the top party leaders

STEPHEN HARPER: A hockey dad explores what matters **20**

JACK LAYTON: A call to put passion back into politics **23**

PAUL MARTIN: Why he's calling this election **24**

GILLES DUCEPPE: The roots of one man's inspiration **25**

ON THE TRAIL: Stephen Handelman reports on the emergence of a new breed of devoted, grass-roots candidate **26**

SPORT

CANADA'S TEAM? The Calgary Flames head to the Stanley Cup finals, taking along fans from all over the nation **51**

ARTS

TV'S MAN PROBLEM: Young males want what America's networks aren't allowed to air. What to do? **52**

LETTERS **2**

NOTEBOOK **3**

MILESTONES **8**

YOUR TIME **57**

PEOPLE **59**

ESSAY **60**

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THE GREATEST DAY

BY NANCY GIBBS

Every war is born with hateful

qualities, like the promise of waste and cruelty. So to be considered good and honored in memory, a war must overcome its very nature, leap past means to ends. World War II remains the model Good War, and D-day, its greatest day—one of those rare hinges of history that might have bent the other way. It had taken years for the U.S. to embrace its urgent necessity and hurl itself into the battle. The invasion plan, two years in the making, was still a mad gamble; though the force was overwhelming, the outcome was never assured. The 150,000 men who landed that June dawn carried a copy of General Eisenhower's "Order of the Day," which declared that they had embarked on "the Great Crusade." By the end of that day, thousands would be dead, yet by then few would question whether the price had been worth paying for the prize of Hitler's defeat.

America now finds itself in the middle of another war—or two wars, depending on how you count—allied once again with the British against an implacable enemy. When President Bush visited the 101st Airborne troops in March, he recalled how on the night before D-day, Eisenhower went down to the airfield where the troops of the 101st were preparing to load onto C-47s for their flight to Normandy. He told the men not to worry because they had the best leaders and equipment. One of them looked at him and said, "Hell, General, we ain't worried. It's Hitler's



FIRST WAVE:
A landing craft
hauls American
invaders ashore

U.S. COAST GUARD—AP

turn to worry." "That spirit," Bush told the soldiers, "carried the American soldier across Europe to help liberate a continent. It's the same spirit that carried you across Iraq to set a nation free."

This is Bush's own crusade, in which his faith remains steadfast. To critics who charge that he has dragged the country into another Vietnam, he responds that World War II is the more apt analogy. "America has done this kind of work before," he says. "We lifted up the defeated nations of Japan and Germany and stood with them as they built representative governments ... America today accepts the challenge of helping Iraq in the same spirit, for their sake and our own." Perhaps the greatest difference is that this time the actual invasion feels like the easy part. "While we can't be defeated militarily, we're not going to win this thing militarily alone," General John Abizaid told the U.S. Senate last week. "We have to get everything together: economics, politics, intelligence, you name it ... It's really one of the hardest things that this nation has ever undertaken in this part of the world or anywhere else."

On D-day, the battle was the hard part. Nothing that followed—not the bloody path to conquest through the Ardennes, not the fits and starts of rebuilding Europe from the ruins, not the forging of the postwar balance of power—surpassed in difficulty

or cost the demands of that one day, when luck and fate and genius and nerve worked to give Freedom her victory. As we approach another significant anniversary, as President Bush takes his turn honoring the memories on those haunted beaches, there's no avoiding the comparisons. To look back on that day from the middle of this new war, to see the Atlantic alliance under historic strain, see the U.S. feared and reviled in countries whose freedom was redeemed at such high cost, to hear embattled coalition soldiers wonder if they will return home to a parade or a protest, while politicians argue over whether the U.S. and its allies went in with a plan or just a prayer, is to envy that great generation its gifts: unity, certainty and the chance to inspire all who followed.

WHERE'S THE SACRIFICE? SENATOR JOHN McCain wants to know in the midst of an argument over cutting taxes during wartime. For those who do not live in a military town or have a cousin serving overseas, the Iraq war can feel far away, so long as the TV is off. World War II was much more intimate, and not only because any son could be drafted to serve. Women went without their nylons and saved their bacon grease to make explo-

1944 NORMANDY Soldiers who arrived in the first wave guide landing craft to safer spots

sives and planted victory gardens. People on the coastlines drove 30 km/h after dark, their headlights partially blacked out, or volunteered as air-raid wardens or donated their rubber raincoats and tires and bathing caps, even though they couldn't be recycled for military use. It had the effect of pulling people together, uniting them behind the cause.

Now that the U.S. is tangled in a debate over how much manpower is necessary to achieve victory, it bears remembering that D-day was a day of overwhelming force. German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and his fellow officers had 500,000 men stretched across 1,300 km; many were middle-aged or conscripts from Eastern Europe. They would ultimately face 1 million men by July—not just Yanks and Brits but Canadian, French, Polish and Dutch troops swarming across the Channel from southern England, which had turned into a vast base—163 new airfields, 2 million tons of supplies, 1,500 tanks, 5,000 boats. The Luftwaffe's 183 fighter planes that day faced 11,000 Allied aircraft.

And yet all that power brought no guarantees. No advocates of war sat comfortably on Sunday morning talk shows promising that the invasion of Europe would be a cakewalk. The plan was not obvious, not safe or certain. And it was a gamble for colossal stakes. However much the Allies had gained since the worst months of 1941,

Hitler might yet have survived to cut a deal that left him in charge of most of Europe. After Eisenhower watched the first troop convoys preparing to depart, he scribbled a note to himself, what he would say if the worst happened: "Our landings ... have failed ... The troops, the Air and the Navy did all that Bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt, it is mine alone."

Nor could the Allies rely on superior technology to win the day, though being able to listen in on coded German communications certainly helped. There was no Kevlar; there were no nightscopes, no cruise missiles or stealth fighters. Instead, Allied engineers invented artificial harbors to tow across the channel and moor once the beaches were won; sawtooth steel tusks were attached to the front of tanks to cut through the Normandy hedgerows; paratroopers used the little clickers that sound like crickets to find one another in the dark. Most of their radios and 60% of their supplies didn't survive the jump.

D-day's success depended on knowing the enemy, anticipating his reflexes, using his strengths against him. The Germans were nothing if not logical and disciplined. They knew an invasion was coming and calculated when and where; the Allies needed to throw off those calculations. Do you hit the easiest point, Pas de Calais, only 45 km from Dover, where

Rommel and his men sat waiting? Allied bombers kept shelling the Calais area as though softening it for an invasion, even building dummy landing craft in southeastern England, rubber tanks, fake warehouses and barracks. In Operation Fortitude, Lieut. General George Patton commanded a fake Army group, sending fake messages about the phony invasion to come. It all made so much more sense than doing what no invaders had managed in centuries: crossing the 150 km to the Normandy beaches and plunging ashore; so only 70,000 German troops were waiting there.

As for June 6, that made no sense either, especially once God smiled by making the weather bad enough to convince Rommel and the Germans that no invasion was coming but good enough, during a crucial 36-hour window, to make it possible after all. It was raining sideways the day before, Eisenhower recalled, as the commanders listened to weather reports. Assured that the Allies would have to pass up this optimal alignment of tides and moon because of the impenetrable storm, Rommel got to slip home to celebrate his wife's birthday. Wars are won and lost over decisions big and small. "How stupid of me," Rommel said when

he heard the news. "How stupid of me!"

And once word came, the Germans were fatefully slow to respond. Hitler jealously controlled the armored regiments, and his aides were reluctant to wake him up before 9:30. Had the Luftwaffe been there to rain fire on the beaches, had the weather turned worse rather than better, had Rommel stayed on the scene or had Hitler sent his tanks, it is entirely conceivable that the whole landing force could have died on those beaches or been forced to turn back. As it was, at one point Lieut. General Omar Bradley, hearing of the carnage of Omaha Beach, said he feared that "our forces had suffered an irreversible catastrophe" and considered sounding the retreat and waving off the reinforcements. The decision to press on through iron rain gave his forces the day.

All great battles, including the victorious ones, go wrong in some way; and all plans are only a starting point because war changes the landscape as it unfolds and you need to keep checking your route if you hope to arrive at victory. Morale matters—and flexibility. On that day, as on few others in history, the valor of a few men altered history's course. They put their faith in both luck and faith. "Sometimes at night," recalled Matthew B. Ridgway, commander of the 82nd Airborne, "it was almost as if I could hear the assurance that God the Father gave

2004 FALLUJAH Marines from Easy Company battle Iraqi insurgents in April



SUNSHU CHO—POLARIS FOR TIME

another soldier, named Joshua: 'I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.'

The food was so good the night before the invasion that the soldiers called it the Last Supper. For many, it was. We talk about how much the coalition can stand, how many casualties it is prepared to endure; the answer means nothing without knowing what is bought with those lives. The carnage of D-day, though horrific, was less than most planners had feared. Of the paratroopers in the first wave, some were shot as they dangled from trees and church steeples; some were dropped into the sea or so low that their chutes never opened. Of those in the 1,500 landing craft, at least 10 boats foundered, one losing 30 of 32 men. One company saw 96% die within the first 15 minutes. Of the first 32 Sherman tanks that landed, supposedly equipped with devices to help them make it to shore, 27 sank in the churning seas, drowning their crews. "Two kinds of men are staying on this beach," shouted Colonel George Taylor to the men of his regiment on Omaha Beach. "The dead and those who are going to die. Get up! Move in! Goddammit! Move in and die!"

"Every man who set foot on Omaha Beach that day was a hero," Bradley later wrote, remembering the carpet of corpses, men burned alive or blown apart or drowned. All told, by the end of the first day, at least 150,000 men had landed by sea and air, and there were 10,000 casualties. But by August the Allies were speeding toward Paris on their way to victory. The German surrender came 11 months later.

SIXTY YEARS LATER, THE POWER OF THAT day has, if anything, grown, the mythology swollen in movies and memory. The U.S. got to embrace an image of its place in the world and its wars that has shaped every fight that followed. Americans are the ones who ride to the rescue, vanquish the enemy, get hailed as liberators, set everything right and then come home having left a place better than we found it. The facts are never that clean, but the expectation has its own power, and every leader who sent soldiers abroad has followed a similar script. Ronald Reagan invoked the lessons of World War II as the reason for sending

peacekeepers to Lebanon, Clinton did so in defending U.S. involvement in Kosovo, and another President named Bush likened a tyrant with a mustache and a taste for torture to the original in making his case for going to war.

When U.S. Joint Chiefs Chairman General Richard Myers paid a surprise visit to Baghdad, the general quoted Alaska Senator Ted Stevens in his effort to lift today's soldiers and Marines into that hallowed company. "They've written about the World War II generation as being the greatest generation. But he said it's this generation right now that is the next greatest generation." Some members of the military, however, wonder

Marines is acute, even as opinion about the present war still divides and doubts begin to conquer even former supporters. Respect for the troops is the one thing Americans have in common when nothing else can be shared. Far from bringing shame on all soldiers, the Abu Ghraib scandal elicits fury on behalf of the thousands of soldiers whose lives just became harder. People are aware of the holidays missed and the family occasions postponed as tours are extended, and the only thing certain is that nothing about this war is certain.

It took less than a year after D-day to end that long war in Europe; the coalition is now more than a year into the conflict in Iraq and has yet to pacify that country. Most of the allies are divided at home and beleaguered abroad, and the continued fortitude of the coalition on the ground in Iraq is all the more inspiring because the prospects of success seem to grow fainter in spite of their efforts.

For a war to be good, it must also be necessary, and it must be won; there is small solace in a glorious defeat. So while the U.S. and its allies press ahead toward a vision of a new Iraq arising out of all

that darkness, they're not even sure if the war has ended yet or when it will and whether they'll even recognize victory if they see it. Some have argued that Iraq's national pride and hope of moving forward depends on doing this themselves, on not having it done for them. The coalition may want to give this great gift of freedom, but in the giving, the value is lost; it must be taken, won, earned. And so the coalition's victory can come only as a result of victory by Iraqis and Afghans.

If the memory of D-day and all that followed have provided 60 years of inspiration, they also set a trap. Anticipating the scene in Baghdad once the G.I.s rolled in was so easy; the allies remember Paris. Presuming gratitude for their generosity and sacrifice was only natural; think of the U.S.'s Marshall Plan. How much easier it was for war planners to ignore the warnings, dilute their planning with wishful thinking, when on the most fateful day in the history of modern warfare, so many wishes actually came true. ■



THE GENERALS Like Eisenhower, Abizaid is facing the challenge of a generation, and the military campaign is only part of the battle

whether he was telling them the truth or just what he thought they want to hear. Dispatched to Kuwait and waiting for the signal to invade in the early months of 2003, the coalition's soldiers and Marines who heard about the millions of antiwar marchers in the streets wondered how they would be viewed when they came home. In the midst of the prison-abuse scandal, the concern emerges again. "Now we wonder what people back home think of us," a young U.S. officer in Karbala told the *New York Times* last week. "Will it be like Vietnam, where everyone who's fought there is labeled a baby killer?" If nothing else, Vietnam taught the U.S. the price of fighting wars whose original noble purpose itself becomes a casualty.

But the reactions then and since suggest the soldiers needn't worry. In the U.S., if many of a certain age feel guilt about their failure to separate their opposition to the Vietnam War from the men who fought it, they have been deterred ever since not to repeat that error. Sympathy for the soldiers and



American soldiers on Utah Beach

WHAT THEY SAW WHEN THEY LANDED

Everything about the day was epic in scale, but the best way to appreciate it is to hear the story one soldier at a time

By DOUGLAS BRINKLEY

IT WAS QUITE A SIGHT. THERE WAS THE oldest man in the D-day invasion, 56-year-old Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt Jr. (son of the former U.S. President) barking orders at Utah Beach. Although he had a heart condition, Roosevelt insisted that his presence and leadership would help boost troop morale. With German artillery exploding all around him, he paraded up and down Utah Beach, ordering U.S. tanks to secure the flanks and U.S. engineers to breach eight 50-m lanes through beach obstacles. He refused to wear a helmet, preferring to don a knit wool hat. "We have landed in the wrong place," shouted Roosevelt, who would receive the Medal of Honor for his valor that day. "But we will start the war from here."

Everything about D-day was dramatic—the overarching strategy, the vast mobilization, the sheer number of troops. But it's the daring boldness and intrepid courage of the men that stand out. One can read biographies of Dwight Eisenhower or watch film footage shot by John Ford,

but the only way to understand D-day, the largest invasion force ever assembled, is as a battle at its smallest: that is, one soldier and one reminiscence at a time.

The landing target of the D-day invaders was an 80-km stretch of shoreline in the middle of the Cherbourg-Le Havre crescent in France. On the night of June 5, the operation began as Allied paratroopers boarded planes and gliders. "O.K., let's go" was Eisenhower's direct order. Just after midnight, June 6, they began landing behind enemy lines, with orders to attack and destroy German gun batteries. Meanwhile, an armada started making its way toward the designated beaches. Allied troops began landing at 6:30 a.m. Wading through the water onto French soil, they met vastly different fates. At Utah Beach, the farthest west, bombardments had decimated the German defenses. Moreover, an opportune navigational mistake had landed the troops at a practically unguarded stretch of the beach. The Americans who landed there sustained relatively few casualties. The British and Canadian forces who landed at Gold and Juno beaches fought their way ashore, according to plan, and were soon followed by tanks, the mere sight of which

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR TIME BY DAVID BURNETT—CONTACT

swept most of the German resistance away. The fighting was harder at Sword Beach, where German defenders stiffened against the specter of the Allies' capturing the nearby city of Caen. The hardest fighting of all raged throughout the day on the fifth beach, Omaha. It was a relatively narrow strand of shoreline overshadowed by 30-m cliffs. Troops trying to land there found themselves in a horrifying position, vulnerable to machine-gun and mortar fire from above. The only route out lay through four ravines carved by the wind and water through the cliffs. American soldiers were bewildered, their officers were confused, and their comrades were lying dead all around, in the water and on the beach. In the chaos, there were not even any boats to evacuate the wounded, many of whom died on Omaha of injuries that would have been treatable on any other beach. By late morning, amid the crushing noise, violence and justifiable fear racing through

the air, some troops managed to drag themselves up the cliffs in small fighting forces. By the end of the day, at a cost too high to be measured in mere statistics, they took the beach and carved out a piece of Free France 3 km wide and 10 km long.

Operation Overlord was not over on D-day. With astonishing speed, the stage managers of the operation moved tons of materials onto the Allied beachhead, building floating docks to receive thousands of tons more. Even Omaha Beach was a vast and busy port by June 9. D-day had made an Allied victory inevitable. To be more precise, the men of the invading force had made an Allied victory inevitable. Here are their patriotic voices, recalling the day they—and world history—will never forget.

Douglas Brinkley is the co-author, with Ronald J. Drez, of the new book Voices of Valor: D-Day: June 6, 1944

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“WE KNEW THAT SOMETHING ABSOLUTELY OVERWHELMING WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

—John Robinson

A pilot with the 344th Bomb Group, Robinson, 24, flew two successful sorties over Normandy on June 6

WE FLEW MARTIN B-26 MARAUDERS, which were, without any doubt, the best bombers in the whole world. Several weeks prior to June 5, the squadron doctor had passed out a small pill to each crew member. He said the pills were intended to keep the crews awake in case we had to work around the clock. Everybody knew that this was in preparation for D-day. I don't know how they worked on anybody else, but they kept me awake for three nights and three days, completely unable to sleep.

It was our job to prepare the ground to enable the infantry to get ashore, to stay ashore and fight and win. We also hoped that they'd kill a whole bunch of those damned antiaircraft gunners for whom we had no love and no pity. A couple of hours after dinner on June 5, someone came into

the hut and said quietly, “Get to bed early tonight, fellows.” We'd all seen the loading list on the bulletin board. From the size of the list, it looked like a maximum effort. I climbed into bed and went right to sleep. It was probably 2 a.m. when some guy who had the duty that night shook my shoulder and told me to get up, have breakfast and report for briefing. We got dressed, and as I was walking past the bunk of Hank Avner, who wasn't going that day, he raised up on one elbow and said, and I quote exactly, “Bite them on the ass for me, Johnny.”

We rode our bicycles down to the mess hall, had breakfast and rode the bikes to the briefing room. It was dark, and it was raining, and the cloud cover was complete. We just sort of felt our way around. Inside the briefing room, the crowd was quiet. The big map at the end of the room was covered as usual with its drawstring curtains. Pretty soon, in came the colonel, and he went to one end of the curtains. A captain went to



BOMBER PILOT John Robinson, at home, far right, in South Carolina, helped prepare the beach for the infantry to come ashore



the other end and held the drawstrings. They looked at their watches—looked at each other. The colonel nodded his head to the captain. The captain began to draw open the curtains, and Colonel Vance said in a quiet voice, "Gentlemen, this is it."

And, by George, there it was, all laid out with ribbons leading from our base to a point on the English coast. From there, the ribbons led to the French coast, then along the coast to the drop zone described as Utah Beach. Someone asked if we could expect much fighter opposition over the target. The colonel answered that one very simply by saying, "There will be approximately 3,500 Allied fighters over the beach this morning." That brought a big sigh of relief from the group.

We gave our personal things such as wallets and other identification to the guys in the security room, picked up our parachutes and steel helmets, got into the trucks and rode out to the planes. It was still raining and quite dark, and we knew there would be no delay on account of weather on this day. It had begun to sink in that we were involved in what was to be one of the greatest moments in history.



PARACHUTE INFANTRY Drifting to the ground, Dwayne Burns, now in Halton City, Texas, thought: "Now I'm in combat. This is for real!"

“THE PLANE IS BOUNCING LIKE SOMETHING GONE WILD.”

—Dwayne T. Burns

A private with the 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Burns, 19, landed behind enemy lines, far from his drop zone

AT 22:30, ALL OVER ENGLAND, ENGINES started. We were ready to go. Now here we sat, each man alone in the dark with his own thoughts and fears. "Lord," I prayed, "please let me do everything right. Don't let me get anybody killed, and don't let me get killed either. I really think I'm too young for this. I should be home having a good time. Who ever told me I was a fighter anyway?" We blacked our faces with burnt cork. Some of the guys cut their hair Mohawk style. Some shaved it all off. Each trooper was going into combat in whatever style that suited him best. I left mine in a crew cut.

Finally, the signal came down to us to get aboard. We shook hands and wished one another good luck, saying, "We'll see you on the ground." We chuted up and pulled the adjustment straps down good and tight because we knew we were so loaded that we were going to get one hell of an opening shock. The two chutes, rifle, two

bandoliers, cartridge belt, first-aid kit, shovel, canteen kit, jump knife, trench knife, bayonet, gas mask, land mine, rations, billfold, clean socks and underwear, toothbrush, New Testament and message book, plus other odds and ends—I must have weighed well over 150 kg. Once we were chuted up, we had to stay on our feet because it would be impossible to get back up without help. We pushed and pulled one another up the steps just to get up the plane.

In the air, we start picking up flak, light at first. I know we have just crossed the coastline. Flak is getting heavy as we stand waiting for the green light. Now the plane's being hit from all sides. The noise is awesome. The roar of the engines, the flak hitting the wings and fuselage—and everyone is yelling, "Let's go!" but still the green light does not come on. The plane is bouncing like something gone wild. I can hear a ticking sound as machine-gun rounds walk across the wings. It's hard to stand up, and troopers are falling down and getting up; some are getting sick. Of all the training we had, there was not anything that prepared us for this. Then the red light goes out, and the green snaps on. We shuffle out the door into the dark fresh air.

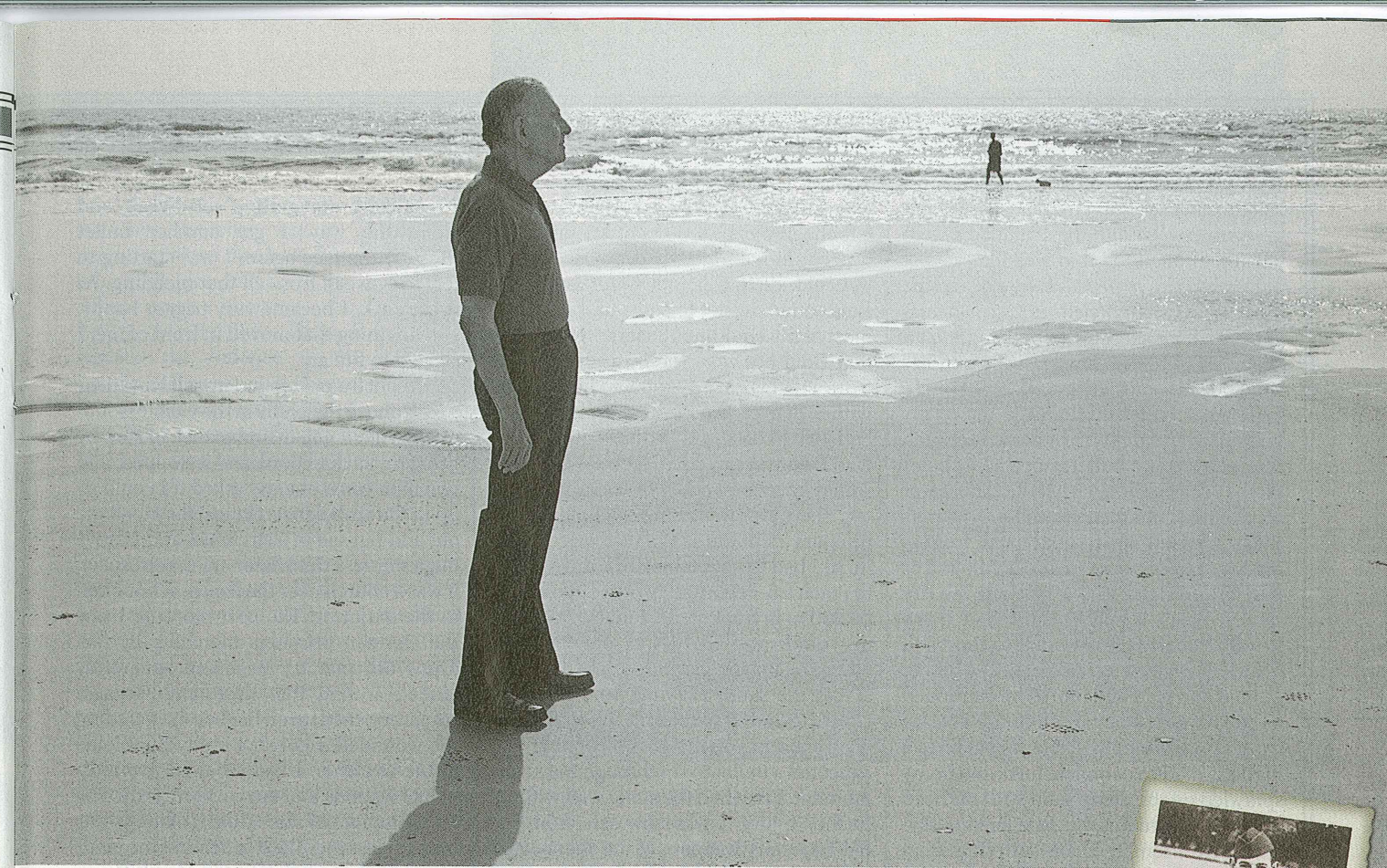
I'm amazed at how quiet it is outside. We were to jump at 180 m, but it seems to be much higher than that. I hear the sound as the ship fades away. I seem to be far south of our drop zone. It looks like I'm on the outer edge of all the action. To the north, I see tracers arcing across the sky. And in spite of all of this going on, I think of how beautiful they appear.

I look down. I can just make out rows of trees. I think to myself, This is France, and now I'm in combat. This is for real. I landed in a long, narrow field with two antiglider poles in it, and I hit hard and roll over on my back, tangled in my shroud lines. I see one chute go down behind the trees on the other side of the field, so I know that I'm not completely alone. I've landed on good solid ground. I lie in the grass trying to get out of my harness. In my mind's eye, I can see Germans running with fixed bayonets to kill me, and I'm having trouble with the harness buckles. To say I'm scared is an understatement. I reach down to my right ankle and pull out my trench knife and stick it in the ground beside me. I think at least a knife is better than no weapon at all. Then I unsnap my harness, untangle myself, stand up

and run to the hedgerow where I saw the chute go down.

"Flash" was our code word, and countersign was "Thunder." We also had been given a child's cricket snapper. One snap was to be answered by two snaps ... or was it the other way around? "Oh, hell," I mutter. "Just snap the damn thing a few times." In reply, I get, "Look out, I'm coming over." It sounds good to me, and I say, "Come on."

The two of us went back across the field that I had landed in and found some troopers coming up the hedgerow. I didn't know who they were, but right now it didn't make any difference as long as I was with somebody. We moved north about 100 m and stopped. It was there I saw my first German. While we were stopped, I thought I'd have a look over the top of the hedgerow to see what was on the other side. I climbed up and slowly looked over, and as I did, a German on the other side raised up and looked over. I couldn't see his features, just a square silhouette of his helmet. We stood there looking at each other, then slowly each one of us went back down. I sat there wondering what to do about him. I could throw a grenade over, but I might kill more troopers than Germans. While I sat there thinking, we started to move again, so I left him sitting on his side of the hedgerow wondering what to do about me.



RIFLEMAN "It was a total sacrifice," says Harold Baumgarten, at home, above, in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, of his decimated battalion

“MY UPPER JAW WAS SHATTERED; THE LEFT CHEEK WAS BLOWN OPEN.”

—Harold Baumgarten

Baumgarten, 19, a rifleman with the 116th Infantry, was wounded five times during the battle for Omaha Beach

HAVING MY COLLEGE EDUCATION AND a good background in American history and wartime battles, I realized that it was not going to be easy, and I did not expect to come back alive. I wrote such to my sister in New York City—to get the mail before my parents and break the news gently to them when she received the telegram that I was no longer alive.

We left the marshaling area with full battle equipment, about 50 kg per man, and went in trucks to the huge seaport of Weymouth, England. That night we boarded a liberty ship, *Empire Javelin*, which was to carry us across the Channel to Normandy. The harbor of Weymouth was crowded with ships of every size, shape and description, most of them flying the Stars and Stripes. We had the old

battleships *Arkansas*, *Nevada* and *Texas* with us. On the evening of June 5, the harbor came alive. I could see one ship signaling to the other that this was it.

At 3:30 a.m., we left the *Javelin* on British LCAs [landing craft assault]. It was pitch black, and the Channel was rough. The huge bluish-black waves rose high over the sides of our little craft and batted the boat with unimaginable fury. [The waves] broke our front ramp, and the boat began to fill with icy Channel water. The water reached my waist, and things looked black for us as our little boat began to sink. But the lieutenant rammed his body against the inner door of the ship and said, "Well, what the hell are you waiting for? Take off your helmets and start bailing the water out." All our equipment as well as ourselves were wet. Our TNT was floating around the boat. We were dead tired from pumping hand pumps and bailing out water with our helmets. Our feet were frozen blue.

At about 6:30 a.m., I saw the beach with its huge seawall at the foot of a massive bluff. An 88-mm shell landed right in the middle of the LCA [to] the side of us, and



splinters of the boat, equipment and bodies were thrown into the air. Bullets were passing through the thin wooden sides of our vessel. The ramp was lowered, and the inner door was opened. A German machine gun trained on the opening took a heavy toll of lives. Many of my 30 buddies went down as they left the LCA.

I got a bullet through the top of my helmet first, and then as I waded through the deep water, a bullet aimed at my heart hit the receiver of my M-1 rifle. The water was being shot up all around me. Clarius Riggs, who left the assault boat in front of me, went under, shot to death. About 2 or 3 m to my right, as we reached the dry sand, I heard a hollow thud, and I saw Private Robert Dittmar hold his chest and heard him yell, "I'm hit! I'm hit!" I hit the ground and watched him as he continued to go forward about 10 more meters. He tripped over a tank obstacle, and as he fell, his body made a complete turn, and he lay sprawled on the damp sand with his head facing the Germans, his face looking skyward. He seemed to be suffering from shock and was yelling, "Mother, Mom," as he kept rolling around on the sand.

There were three or four others wounded and dying right near him. Sergeant Clarence Roberson, from my boat team, had a gaping wound on the left side of his forehead. He was walking crazily in the water, without his helmet. Then I saw him get down on his knees and start praying with his rosary beads. At this moment, the Germans cut him in half with their deadly cross fire. I saw the reflection from the helmet of one of the snipers and took aim, and later on, I found out, I got a bull's-eye on him. It was my only time that rifle fired—due to the bullet that hit my rifle. It must have shattered the wood, and the rifle broke in half, and I had to throw it away.

Shells were continually landing all about me in a definite pattern, and when I raised my head up to curse the Germans in the pillbox on our right flank who were continually shooting up the sand in front of me, one of the fragments from an 88-mm shell hit me in my left cheek. It felt like being hit with a baseball bat, only the results were much

worse. My upper jaw was shattered; the left cheek was blown open. My upper lip was cut in half. I washed my face out in the cold, dirty Channel water and managed somehow not to pass out. I got rid of most of my equipment. Here I was happy that I did not wear the invasion jacket. I wore a regular Army zippered field jacket, with a Star of David drawn on the back and THE BRONX, NEW YORK written on it. Had I worn the invasion jacket, I probably would have drowned.

The water was rising a couple of centimeters a minute as the tide was coming in, so I had to get moving or drown. I had to reach a 5-m seawall, which appeared to be 200 m in front of me. Finally, I came to dry sand, and there was only another 100 m or maybe less to go, and I started across the sand, crawling very fast. The Germans in the pillbox on the right flank were shooting up the sand all about me. I expected a bullet to rip through me at any moment. I reached the stone wall without further injury. I was now safe from the flat-trajectory weapons of the enemy. All I had to fear now were enemy mines and artillery shells.

Things looked pretty black and one-sided until Brigadier General Norman D. Cota rallied us by capturing some men himself and running around the beach with a hand grenade and a pistol in his hand. [He] ran down the beach under fire and sent a call for reinforcements. Every man who could walk and fire a weapon charged up the hill later on in the day toward the enemy. I got hit in the left foot while crawling by a mine.

At the end of June 6, we were only in about 800 m. As the evening progressed,

I felt like I was getting very weak, and along the way, I got another bullet through the face again. I was starting to feel very weak from all that bleeding. As it got dark, I became very trigger happy, and anything that moved in front of me, I started to fire at.

About 3 a.m., I found myself lying near a road above the bluffs in the vicinity south of Vierville. I got an ambulance to stop by firing [in its direction], and it stopped, and two men came out and asked if I could sit up in the ambulance. [Later] they took me out and put me in a stretcher, and I saw a huge statue. I think later on, in retrospect, it was a church near the beach, silhouetted in the darkness. The next morning I saw the German prisoners marching by me. The 175th Infantry Regiment apparently landed around that time, and German snipers opened up on the beach, including the wounded. I got shot in my right knee in the stretcher. I had received five individual wounds that day in Normandy. The 1st Battalion of the 116th Infantry was more or less sacrificed to achieve the landing and was completely wiped out. It was a total sacrifice.

“I SAW AN ARMADA LIKE A PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS. THE NUMBER OF SHIPS WAS UNCOUNTABLE.”

—Anton Herr

The German officer, 24, commanded a dozen tanks in a company stationed near Falaise

GERMAN TANK COMMANDER Anton Herr, at home in Bogen, Germany, led tanks attempting to repel the Allied invaders



IT WAS ACTUALLY A RELIEF for me when the invasion finally happened. I was having trouble keeping my crews in a state of readiness. I knew it was coming off when a young man from the chateau where we were staying brought me a tract to translate that had been dropped from an Allied plane. It ordered him and his family to get out of the chateau into the surrounding fields because they were going to start bombing it. I told him instead to take all the civilians to the deepest cellar, where they'd have a better chance of surviving. That was good advice, since I learned later that they all survived.

We left at around 5 a.m. for Caen. The whole way up, we were never fired at. But when we got to Caen, the Allies were bombing the bridge over the River Orne. I noticed the cadence of the bombs, and I sent my tanks over one by one between the bombs and didn't lose any of them. We were the first of the tanks over that bridge, and we continued north. The town seemed completely untouched by war at that time.

None of the German tank companies were communicating with the others. We'd been told to keep radio silence so the Allies couldn't pick us up. We were like an orchestra without a conductor, and there I was playing flute. I continued all the way up to the coast, and when I got there, I saw an armada like a plague of locusts. The number of ships was uncountable, and the Allies' superior firepower was obvious. But in war, what you lose first is reason. I wanted to attack. I wanted to vanquish them.

We were fired at, and one tank took a direct hit—I never knew whether from the enemy or our own tanks—and the whole crew was killed. After we took another hit, we found a little wood and dug in. The order to all tank units, maybe from the Führer, was not to yield a single meter. Before I slept that night under my tank, I wrote an angry letter home. As a young officer, I thought we could have broken the invasion if we'd been better led.

“I PULLED MY LEGS UP AS FAR AS I COULD TO GET AWAY FROM A STREAM OF TRACERS.”

—Edward Jeziorski

A paratrooper with the 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Jeziorski, 23, was dropped into the inferno over Normandy

OUT THE DOOR WE WENT. JUST AS I peeled out, it seemed that the whole world lit up right underneath me. A tremendous ball of fire. And a bunch of black smoke mixed in with the red fire, just a great fireball. And I said to myself, The bastards are waiting for us. I tried to slip away from the thing, and tracers were coming up and through the silk. They were coming up just in strings. I can remember them being so close that I actually pulled my legs up as far as I could, my knee into my stomach, to get away from a stream

PARATROOPER Edward Jeziorski, in Virginia, above, landed far off course

of tracers. I slammed into the ground, and I was immediately pinned down by machine-gun fire. There was no way to raise up. Every time I tried to turn, the machine gun would open up. Every time I tried to move, there would be a burst. Apparently the great big ball of fire was a C-47 that had been shot down, and I was silhouetted between this guy's gun and the ship, and I couldn't move. I finally was able to bring my right leg up close enough to where I could get my jump knife out of my boot. I cut the harness loose.

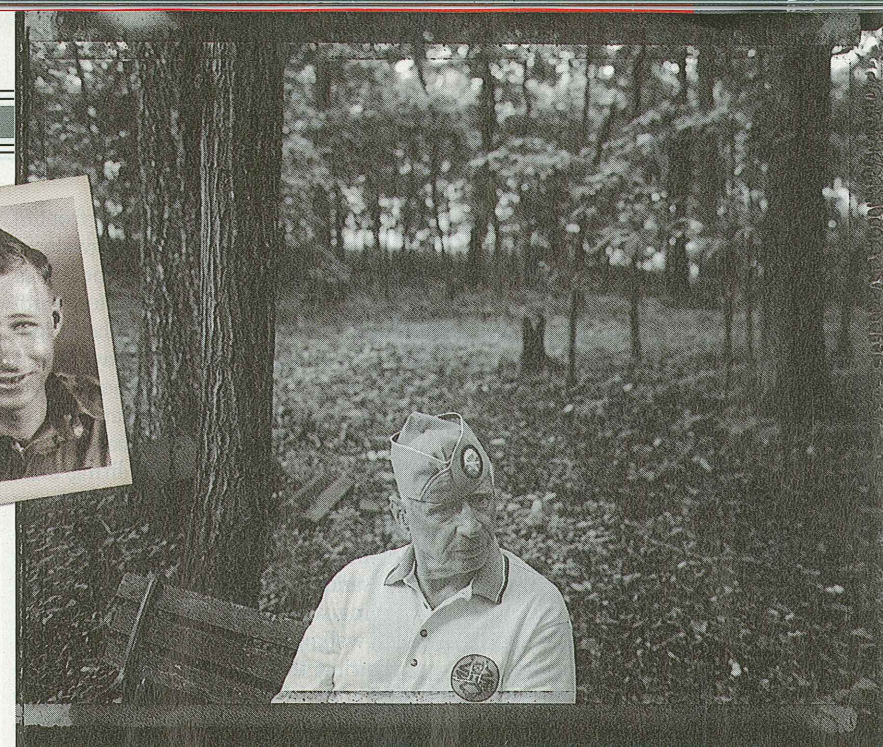
In the meantime, this guy is still shooting. When I cut loose, I rolled over in a little depression; fortunately, it was deep enough. I had my hand on my rifle, and I was able to squeeze off a couple of rounds where the fire was coming from, and that eased it up real quick. He stopped. I'm sure I didn't hit him, but at any rate, by golly, it got his attention that I was now in a position to start working on him.

Just a little bit after that, there was a good deal of thrashing going on on the other side of the hedgerow. It [turned out to be] my assistant gunner, Grover Boyce. There were two of us together now. It seemed like a better world all of a sudden. [Soon] we located a parapack, and believe me, we were fortunate. One of the packs we opened had a machine gun. We really felt pretty good having that thing in our hands. We didn't know where we were, but we knew that we weren't anywhere near where we were supposed to be. We were getting ready to go ahead and set up some sort of a decent roadblock in both

directions when somebody yelled, "Here come the Krauts!" A little stone fence or hedge was leading on into the end of the town. A squad of Germans was following the hedge toward us. Guys popped their rifles at them, and they fired back at us. By then I was ready with my light machine gun, and I turned loose a couple of bursts, and they gave it back with an MG42, and we just traded for a couple of bursts back and forth. I took the Jerry out of there. There wasn't any more noise from him. We moved on after that.

We backed off about 200 m and, son of a gun, here came another group of Germans. All of D-day, we just moved, moved, moved, and we never seemed to get away from activity by the Germans. It was one fire fight after another. Getting up into the afternoon, pretty late, we went back inland a couple of hundred meters. We picked out a pair of good and decent spots, and we were going to take a break. I remember lying down and lighting a cigarette, and that's all I recall until I felt something nudging me and a real soft voice, kind of a questioning voice, was saying, "De lait, de lait, de lait." It was an old man who had just finished milking his cow and was offering me some of the warm milk. I took it, against all regulations, by golly. By gosh, I drank it. Not since being a kid did anything taste so good as that did.

That's the way D-day went for us. I don't believe any group anywhere in Normandy tied up any more of the enemy, proportionately, than this little gang did.



And not a scratch on anyone. But I lost my best buddy. We found him and cut him down where he had been shot in an apple tree where he had gotten entangled.

“AS OUR BOAT TOUCHED SAND AND THE RAMP WENT DOWN, I BECAME A VISITOR TO HELL.” —Harry Parley

Private Parley, 24, carried a flamethrower in the first wave on Omaha Beach with the 116th Infantry Regiment

THERE WAS SOME HUMOR TO BEING the flamethrower. While waiting to be loaded onto the ships at dockside, I would often light a cigarette using my weapon. Being experienced with it, I knew all the safety factors. I could, without triggering the propelling mechanism, light a cigarette by simply producing a small flame at the mouth of the gun. In doing so, it produced the same hissing sound as when the thrower was actually being fired. When my team would hear the terrifying sound, I would immediately be the only one on the dock.

The liquid used in the flamethrower [for training] had always been a pinkish-red in color and had a consistency similar to warm Jell-O. As we made ready for what we thought would be just another practice run, and as I filled my tanks, I saw that the liquid was not the usual Jell-O-like substance. What I was pumping was a mucus-like liquid both in color and consistency. I realized that morning that the invasion was on.

In the landing craft, I covered with the others as we circled, waiting for our signal to approach. I remember looking back and seeing the Navy coxswain at the controls of our boat standing high above us completely exposed to enemy fire, doing his job as ordered. As our boat touched sand and the ramp went down, I became a visitor to hell. Some boats on either side of us had been hit by artillery and heavy weapons. I was aware that some were burning and some were sinking. I shut everything out and con-

centrated on following the men in front of me down the ramp and into the water. I stepped off the ramp into a deep pocket in the sand, and went under completely. With no footing whatsoever, and with the weight of the 35-kg flamethrower on my back, I was unable to come up. I knew I was drowning, and made a futile attempt to unbuckle the flamethrower harness. Inadvertently, I had raised the firing arm, which is about a meter long, above my head. One of my team saw it, grabbed hold, and pulled me up out of the hole to solid sand. Then slowly, half-drowned, coughing water and dragging my feet, I began walking toward the chaos ahead.

During that walk (I was unable to run), I got my first experience with enemy fire. Machine-gun fire was hitting the beach, and as it hit the wet sand, it made a “sip sip” sound like someone sucking on their teeth. Ahead of me in the distance, I could see survivors of the landing already using the base of the bluffs as shelter. Due to my near drowning and exhaustion, I had fallen behind the advance. To this day, I don’t know why I didn’t dump the flamethrower and run like hell for shelter. But I didn’t.

What I found when I finally reached the seawall at the foot of the bluffs is difficult to describe. Men were trying to dig or scrape trenches or foxholes for protection against

incoming fire. Others were carrying or helping the wounded to areas of shelter. We had to crouch or crawl on all fours when moving about. Most of us were in no condition to carry on. All were trying to stay alive for the moment. Behind us, other landing craft were attempting to unload their equipment and personnel in the incoming tide and were coming under enemy fire as well. I realized that we had landed in the wrong beach sector and that many of the people around me were from other units and were strangers to me. What’s more, the terrain before us was not what I had been trained to encounter. We could see nothing above us to return fire to. We were the targets.

By now we were being urged by braver and more sensible noncoms and one or two surviving officers to get off the beach and up to higher ground. But it would be some time before enough courage returned for us to attempt it. One or two times I was able to control my fear enough to race across the sand to drag a helpless G.I. from drowning in the incoming tide. That was the extent of my bravery that morning.

By now, clear thinking was replacing some of our fear, and many of us accepted the fact that we had to get off the beach. Word was passed that a small draw providing access up the bluff had been found and that attempts were being made to

blow up the barbed wire with bangalore torpedoes and find a way up through the mines. As I started up, I saw the white tape marking a safe path through the mines, and I also saw the price paid to mark that path for us. Several G.I.s had been blown to death, and another, still alive, was being attended to. As I passed, I could see that both his legs were gone, and tourniquets were being applied by a medic.

The rest of the day is a jumbled memory of running, fighting and hiding. We moved like a small band of outlaws, much of the time not knowing where we were, often meeting other groups like ours, joining and separating as situations arose. I remember one time, while moving along a road, suddenly coming under fire from some sort of artillery piece around the bend. I could also hear the clank of a tank or half-track of some kind. Terrified, I turned, ran like hell, and dove into a deep covered roadside ditch. Already there was a tough old sergeant from the 1st Division lying on his side as one would relax on a sofa. Knowing that the 1st Division was combat experienced, I screamed at him, “I think it’s a tank—what the hell can we do now?” He stared calmly at me for a few seconds, poker-faced, and said, “Relax, kid, maybe it will go away.” And sure enough, it did go away.

“IN A FIELD OPPOSITE, WE SAW THE MOST TERRIBLE CARNAGE. THERE WERE GLIDERS UPENDED ON THE POSTS AND DEAD MEN EVERYWHERE.” —John Kite

Kite, 23, a special-forces sergeant in the British army, took part in the assault on Juno Beach

OUR DESTINATION 8 OR 10 KM inland was Douvres-la-Délivrande; our primary objective was the radar station, then the school, which had to be cleared for an HQ. The night before, I handed the men cards to write out their last will and testament, and a little note that could be sent to their parents without being censored (we would be away by the time they got them). I also gave the men 40 francs each. We studied everything thoroughly, over and over again. I told them that if anyone was hit, you don’t pick him up, there were

others detailed to do that; the assault could not be held up. All told we carried a load of 35 kg on our backs. And we had a silly rubber ring—it was supposed to keep us afloat. We used it afterward as a pillow.

When we were due to land, we were told to get down in the hull of the ship. I had my last words with the men and said, “Make peace with your Maker; good luck.” I was so scared, all the bones in my body were shaking. I said to myself, Pull yourself together, you’re in charge and supposed to show an example. When the ramp went down dead on 0600 [hours], I looked around, and there were pools of water by my men. It wasn’t seawater. The Canadians revved the tanks up before we left the ship; the noise was huge, and it helped.

We went into the water and luckily were able to touch bottom. We could see a 2½-m wall on which the engineers had put up wire mesh for us to climb. We waded through the water, avoiding mines, and my platoon eventually got to the beach. Jim, my other sergeant, took the men up the sand dunes and over the wall, whilst I reported to the beach master the number of troops I had brought ashore and my code number. He said thank you, get off this beach . . . quickly.

In a field opposite, we saw the most terrible carnage. There were gliders upended on the posts and tree stumps left for that purpose by the Germans. There were dead men, and dead cattle and horses everywhere. The men [in our unit] had shot a couple of Germans, and we rolled them off the road into a ditch so that they wouldn’t be run over. We walked single file up the road, as the verges could have been mined. There was sniping. I gave instructions that the section leader should give a burst of fire at any thick foliage or any windows that were open. The windows soon shut. We stopped to have a cup of tea; we stayed in the ditch, and one of the men who could speak fluent French brought back a pail of boiling water.

At Douvres-la-Délivrande we checked out a school and ensured it was free of booby traps so it could be used as a brigade HQ. My next job was to go to the radar station—a concrete blockhouse, a huge hexagon with apertures all round. The Germans were inside, but the Royal

BRITISH SPECIAL FORCES John Kite, above in London, says he was scared but tried to set a good example



Marine Commandos were outside. We went on to Hermanville, which was on the main road to Caen. When we arrived it was 5 p.m. We had been up since 3 a.m. We dug a trench at the corner of a field and slept.

“THE ENEMY WAS LEANING OVER AND THROWING DOWN HAND GRENADES BY THE BUSHEL BASKETFUL.”

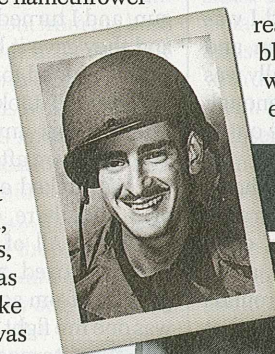
—James Eikner

Eikner, 30, was a communications officer with the 2nd Rangers Battalion, which scaled the cliffs at Pointe du Hoc to eliminate fortified German gun emplacements

POINTE DU HOC WAS EQUIDISTANT between Omaha Beach and Utah Beach. The six 155-mm guns had a 25,000-m range, and they could rain destruction down on either of the beaches and reach far out into the sea and cause tremendous damage to naval craft. So this installation was [considered] the most dangerous within the invasion area. Toward the sea the cliffs dropped off about 30 m on the average, from vertical to near vertical to actually overhanging.

We put the landing craft into the water, and of course it was pitch black and nothing could be seen. The waves were headed right into us, and water began to leak in through the front ramp. Just as

FLAMETHROWER After coming ashore on Omaha, Harry Parley, below in Delray Beach, Florida, spent much of the day lost, “running, fighting and hiding”



there was enough daylight to make out the headlands, things didn't look right. Our little three-company flotilla was three or four km east of Pointe du Hoc. Colonel Rudder, who was leading the attack, convinced the British officer who was in charge of that craft that he was in error and made him flank left, and then we had to parallel the coastline for a couple of kilometers. We landed at Pointe du Hoc some 40 minutes late.

We were on our own then. Some of the rockets we carried had grappling hooks that trailed ladders made of ropes, and we got into position a certain distance from shore so that the angle was proper. We would fire two at a time. Some of the ropes didn't make it to the cliff top because the ropes had become wet and heavy. Some of the others pulled out, and the enemy cut some, but we did have enough in order to get the job done.

Most of us had something in the way of equipment to take off the boat, and my responsibility was to take off a cloverleaf of 60-mm mortar shells. So I ran down the ramp and in the water up to my knees, and headed on across what I thought was the beach. But I stepped into a shell hole that was covered with water and went down over my head. Some of our people were getting hit, and I remember one young man who was hit three times on the landing craft and twice more on the beach. Believe it or not, that young man survived.

I laid my mortar shells down under the cliff, and there was a rope right in front of me. So I started up that cliff—there were two or three guys ahead of me—and the enemy was leaning over and shooting at us and throwing down hand

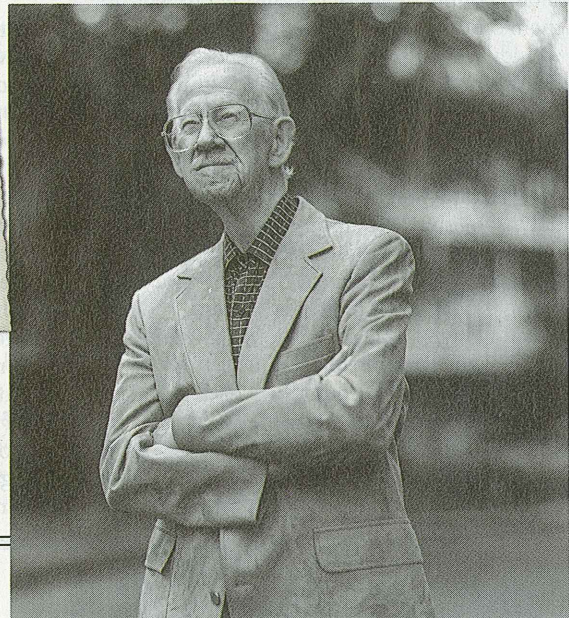
grenades by the bushel basketful. Before we got to the top, about two-thirds of the way up, a tremendous explosion occurred just above us. It brought down tons of rock and dirt, and of course we all went back down the cliff. I caught on a little ledge; I was covered up to my knees.

The enemy was still up there shooting and throwing down grenades. I got my tommy gun out, took aim at one of the characters up there, and—my gun wouldn't fire. So there I was in the grandest invasion in history with no weapon. I looked around and spied a youngster with a radio on his back down in a cave beneath Pointe du Hoc at water level. I scrambled down the cliff, went to him and asked if he had sent any messages yet, but he said that he hadn't. I had a number of priority messages to get out, and I sent the message, "Praise the Lord." This was a code phrase that meant all the men were up the cliff.

As some of you may have read, the big guns were not in place. One patrol led by a sergeant from D Company ran upon the big guns about a kilometer inland. The enemy had moved them up there for better protection. So while a buddy of his was standing guard, the sergeant sneaked into the area where the guns were being camouflaged and put thermite grenades in the breech blocks to make them inoperable. There was a large stockpile of shells there all ready to go, and had we not been there, we felt quite sure that those guns would have been put into operation and it would have brought much death and destruction down on our men.



RANGER As James Eikner, now of Austin, Texas, scaled Pointe du Hoc, he realized his gun wouldn't fire



“WE CAUGHT UP WITH MY OWN COMPANY. I WAS WITH MY VERY CLOSE BUDDIES. THAT WAS A GOOD FEELING.”
—Robert L. Williams

Williams, 21, a sergeant with the 101st Airborne Division, landed in 1 m of water in a flooded field behind Utah Beach

OUR PILOT HAD TO TAKE EVASIVE ACTION and fly very low, about 200 m, so our paratroops ended up being widely scattered. I joined up with three other paratroopers, and we started walking north, directly toward a German machine-gun nest, as it turned out. There was a burst of gunfire, and I realized something had gone through my left pant-leg pocket. I crouched in shallow water, with just my nose and mouth exposed. I was unhurt, but two of the men I was with were killed. I kept moving, crouched in the water, until it was only half a meter deep, and it started to get light.

At dawn that morning, I saw formations of B-26 bombers making their run along the beach, about a kilometer away. I was exhausted, and the weight of my wet clothes and equipment was too much. I lay down across a big rosebush growing out of the water—I didn't care about the thorns. A few minutes later, I saw three men moving toward me with their rifles pointed in my direction. Luckily they were our guys. We could see a barn in the distance. We

101ST AIRBORNE Robert Williams, above in Kentucky, faced an ambush

headed for it, but then we got pinned down by rifle fire. I was tired of the water and continued to head for the barn and dry ground. Fortunately the sniper was a lousy shot.

The next morning, we caught up with a group that consisted mostly of my own company. For the first time I was with my very close buddies. That was a good feeling. Midmorning we moved toward the village of Vierville and were ambushed in the center of town. The Germans had a machine gun in a church tower and a line of infantry entrenched parallel to the road. Sergeant Benjamin Stoney took a burst of machine-gun fire in the face as he peered around a stone wall to return fire, and was killed. He had jumped just ahead of me from plane No. 48. He was fourth; I was fifth. The battle lasted most of the afternoon around his body. We began to run low on ammunition.

We heard a tank approaching. It was one of ours. We pointed to the church tower, and with one shot the tank blew a big hole in the tower. Our platoon leader, Lieut. Baranowski, climbed on the tank and got the crew to mount the big .50-cal. machine gun on top. He manned that gun like a madman, killing Germans left and right as fast as he could shoot. We captured more Germans than we knew what to do with—125 prisoners, 125 dead. We had six wounded, one dead.

“FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I TOUCHED A DEAD MAN.”
—Elbert Legg

Legg, 19, a sergeant with the 603rd Quartermaster Graves Registration Company, flew into Normandy on a glider

OUR GLIDER CAME IN OVER A HEDGE-row of trees about 25 m high and nosed down into a level pasture. It was a hard, pancake-type landing. The front strut came through the wooden floor of the glider and ripped toward the rear, barely missing the legs of some of the troops. We had landed a hundred

meters from the personnel-assembly point at the crossroads of Les Forges. It was early evening, and we had about four hours before dark. After a quick check of the surrounding area, I selected a large field adjacent to the Les Forges crossroads as the first work site. Four dead paratroopers already lay in the corner by the crossroads. As I examined

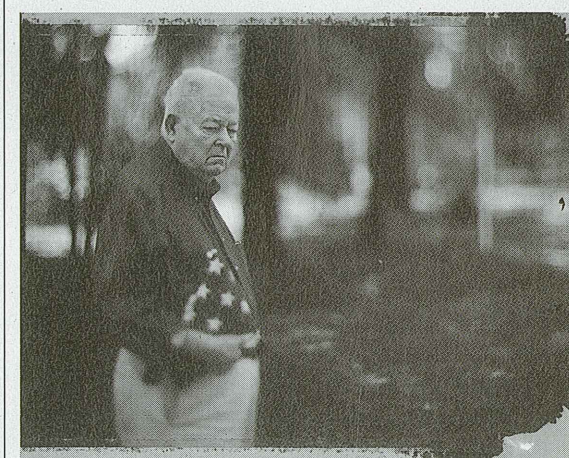
the site, two jeeps with trailers loaded with bodies drove in and were directed to the corner of the field where the other bodies lay. The drivers made it clear they were delivering but not unloading. I sized up the situation and decided the time had come for me to act like the graves-registration representative that I was. For the first time in my life, I touched a dead man. I grabbed the leg of one of the bodies and rolled it off onto the ground. As I struggled, the drivers gave in and assisted me with the remainder of the bodies. There were now 14 dead lying in a row, and more loaded vehicles were driving into the field.

After studying the surrounding terrain, I went to one corner of the field and stuck my heel in the ground. This would be the upper left corner of the first grave. I found an empty K-ration carton and split it into wooden stakes. I paced off the graves in rows of 20 and marked them with the stakes. I had no transit, tape measure, shovels, picks or any other equipment needed to establish a properly laid-out cemetery.

Lieut. Fraim returned and said he had arranged for about 35 Frenchmen to start digging graves. The next morning, I could see them coming my way, carrying a mixture of picks, shovels and lunch pails. All the men were very old or crippled in some way. There was little conversation, since I spoke no French and they spoke no English. The long row of bodies and marking stakes made it apparent what was to be done.

I began the job of processing bodies. There were plenty of parachutes in the field, so nylon panels served as personal-effects bags and body bags. Each body was searched and all personal effects were secured, but no inventory was taken. A ruled tablet served as Graves Registration Form No. 1. Both identification tags were left with the body until it was ready to be placed into a grave. One tag stayed with the body after burial, and the other was attached to the stake that served as a grave marker. Today a small monument at the Les Forges crossroads marks the cemetery location and records that 6,000 Allied troops from the Normandy invasion were buried there. Later, the bodies were moved to permanent cemeteries in Normandy or sent back to the U.S. for burial.

Interviews for this story were drawn from the oral-history project at the Eisenhower Center for American Studies in New Orleans as well as reporting by Helen Gibson/London, James Graff/Paris and Barbara Maddux/New York



QUARTERMASTER Elbert Legg, at home in North Carolina, left, oversaw soldiers' burials



U.S. CG-4A Waco Glider

Carried 15 soldiers or about 9,000 lbs. (4 metric tons) of equipment. Most broke apart on landing

C-47 Transport

Workhorse aircraft also carried paratroopers but not while towing gliders

Tow rope with communication wire

GLIDERS AND PARATROOPERS

The vanguard of the Allied armies was supposed to swoop in silently behind enemy lines, but little went according to plan. **Paratroopers** were scattered for miles across the countryside, some coming down directly into towns. Many **wood-and-canvas gliders** were raked by German fire or crashed into unexpectedly large hedgerows. But by the end of D-day, British commandos had captured key bridges near **Caen**, and Americans held large pockets inland from **Utah Beach**

Air Armada

Allied bombers and fighters flew more than **14,000 missions** on D-day, pounding German troop concentrations and strong points along the beaches

D-DAY THE MAP

INVASION!

How the most complex attack ever conceived turned the tide of World War II

Lost in the flood
Many airborne troops found themselves landing in water, miles from the beach. The Germans had flooded many inland fields

D-day objective line

The goal was for the Allied armies to link up and reach this point by the night of **June 6**

D-day penetration

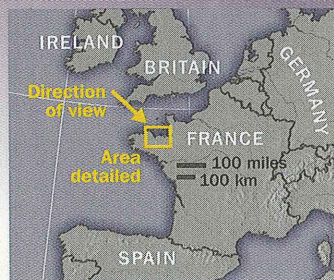
Actual Allied positions at midnight on June 6. More than **150,000 soldiers** had landed

Stalemate at Caen

The Allies hoped to take this key city on D-day, but German resistance stiffened. The town didn't fall for **six more weeks**

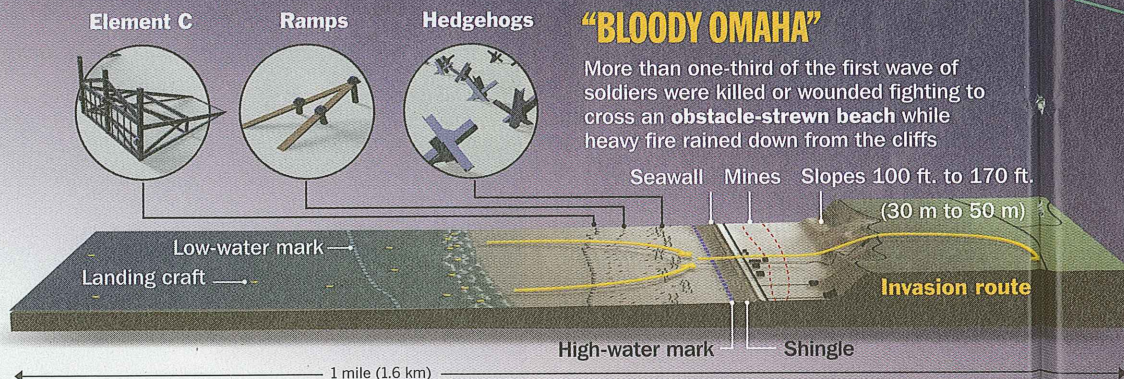
Sea Armada

Before the invasion, 200 ships bombarded the landing zones. Then more than **130,000 men** streamed ashore along a 50-mile (80 km) front



Sources: U.S. Army in World War II, European Theater of Operations: Cross-Channel Attack, by Orlando Ward; The Penguin Atlas of D-Day and the Normandy Campaign, by John Man; D-Day Gliders, by Philippe Esvelin; D-Day 1944, Omaha Beach, by Steven J. Zaloga

TIME Graphic by Ed Gabel, Joe Lertola and Jackson Dykman



"BLOODY OMAHA"

More than one-third of the first wave of soldiers were killed or wounded fighting to cross an **obstacle-strewn beach** while heavy fire rained down from the cliffs

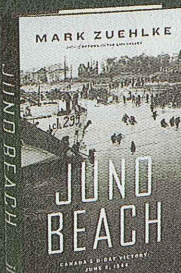
- German resistance point
- German strong point
- Beach/sand
- Rocky areas
- German artillery battery
- Road
- Cities/villages
- Flooded areas

Cotentin Peninsula



CANADA'S TRIUMPH AT JUNO

By MARK ZUEHLKE



FOR THE CANADIAN soldiers who landed on the Normandy coast on June 6, 1944, D-day was truly the longest day. Their goal: to take an 8-km stretch of sand along the Normandy coast code-named Juno Beach. Access to Juno

was hindered by hundreds of underwater obstacles, thousands of mines, mazes of barbed wire and, of course, the heavily armed German soldiers inland, who fought from concrete bunkers, fortified houses and deep trenches. About 3,500 Canadian men, crammed into hundreds of small landing craft, took part in the initial assault. In the surging seas, many of the men vomited their guts out along the way. A few hardy souls kept spirits up singing songs until the first bullets ripped into their boats. Then they became silent and serious.

As the Canadians piled out of the landing craft into chest-deep water, they were lashed by machine-gun bullets and shrapnel from exploding shells and mines. Dozens died before reaching the sand. One company of the Regina Rifles was shredded: only 28 of its 120 men were still standing when the fight for the beach ended. The Canadian Scottish, true to their name, went in with the bagpiper blaring marching tunes even as they dropped their ramps

and plunged into the surf. To clear the Germans out of the pillboxes, the advancing troops had to move right on top of them. Tanks blasted shells through enemy gun ports. Infantry chucked grenades through firing slits or kicked in backdoors and attacked with bayonets and rifle fire.

It was a terrific fight that would help change the course of the war. Canada stood like David in the company of two towering Goliaths—Britain and the U.S. Despite having a population that was not even a tenth that of the U.S. and less than a third of Britain's, Canada was assigned a pivotal role in the invasion—to win one of the five beaches. Only when those were secure could the Allied armies move out from their precarious toehold on the edge of Fortress Europe to carry the war into the German heartland.

Canada's contribution went beyond the men who took Juno. An additional 9,700 Canadian sailors served on Royal Canadian Navy or Royal Navy ships. And more than 20,000 Canadians serving in the air crews of the Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Air Force squadrons took part in supporting missions. One thing distinguished them from their American and British counterparts. All were volunteers. Not until that November did Canada's armed forces start taking conscripts.

This no doubt increased their esprit de corps, as did the fact that the army raised its battalions regionally, so that soldiers



BATTLE READY: Canadian troops cross the rough seas en route to Juno Beach

GILBERT MILNE—CP

marched into battle alongside men they had known in civilian life or even their brothers and cousins. Former workmates and neighbors prepared to hit the beach together. Each battalion's officers generally hailed from the same communities as their troops, which lessened the gulf between leaders and led. So close were the ties that the majors leading ashore the two assaulting companies of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada were brothers, Charles and Elliott Dalton. Both survived the day, although Charles was badly wounded. Sergeant Jack Springer of the North Shore (New Brunswick) Regiment had five brothers in the service, two in his own unit. He found his youngest brother Marvin wounded on the sand. "I'll be back," Marvin said. "You go back to England and stay there," the battle-weary Jack replied.

The task of taking Juno was assigned to the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade. The plan called for a total of 14,500 soldiers from these units to land over the course of June 6 and fight their way 16 km inland to seize the strategically vital Carpiquet Airport and sever the Caen-Bayeux Highway. A bold plan and, as one of the Canadian officers behind it had told a group of news reporters a few nights earlier, there was no contingency plan for

failure. The Canadians would either win Juno or die on the sand.

Because of troubling tidal and beach conditions, the Canadians landed just before 8 a.m., well after the British and Americans had gone ashore on the other beaches. Consequently, they waded from the water into a line of fire thrown up by fully alerted German troops. When the beach eventually was won, they advanced inland, overcoming one German emplacement after another to gain ground. By day's end, the Canadians were about 10 km beyond the coast and had reached their first objectives. Theirs was the deepest advance of any Allied forces on June 6 and the only one to attain an assigned inland objective.

These gains were won in blood. Of the 14,500 who eventually landed on Juno, 366 were dead or dying of their injuries by nightfall and 548 others lay wounded. Northwest of Juno Beach, 543 Canadian paratroops had landed, and of these 19 were dead, 10 wounded and 84 lost as prisoners because, as with all the air-borne troops that day, they had scattered badly during the nighttime drop.

But standing tall beside the large-

er, more powerful American and British forces, Canada's soldiers had won a beach from which they and the other western Allies would go on to win the war.

Mark Zuehlke is the author of Juno Beach, Canada's D-Day Victory: June 6, 1944 (Douglas & McIntyre), coming in June

“I WONDERED IF I'D EVER COME BACK”

—Al Leeson

Sergeant with the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa

THEY DIDN'T COME OUT AND TELL YOU there was going to be a big invasion, but we trained for it. We knew it was coming. We were confined to a camp near Portsmouth, England. We went from there to the boats, leaving after dark. I wondered if I'd ever come back. I was scared; we were all scared. What really was kind of morbid was just before we shipped out that night they came along and put white crosses in the back of our gun carriers. I was the section commander. I had a driver and a range finder. So they popped in three white crosses, each about 60 cm high by 45 cm. They gave us instructions: If any of your chums got killed, you took their dogtag and put it in a jar and buried it and put the cross with it.

We were about an hour late. You could see the shore coming in. I wondered if I would ever get across that beach. There were a lot of dead bodies floating around. The infantry was pinned down behind the wall because a German was up with his machine gun in a three-story house spraying the beach. The men didn't dare stick their heads up. So I opened up on him with two machine guns, and I don't know whether we hit him or if he took off. Somebody said they heard a motorcycle go off, so maybe it was him.

We had to get through the wall. We took one of the big tanks, removed the normal gun and put in a big charge of dynamite. It blew the wall all to hell. They dropped the bulldozer blade down on the

front of the tank and pushed the stone away. We stayed right behind and followed through the wall.

When we got into the village, the people were all out cheering for us. The infantrymen were on the road in the ditches, and another machine gun hit them there. One guy got hit in the back, and you could hear him screaming for miles. I got my machine gun, the big one, out of the carrier. There was a clump of cedars. I don't know if the German was in there, but we put three belts—750 rounds—into that clump of cedars. He quit firing. We got rid of him, and the infantry were able to move on.

We were late getting to our objective. At the site, we set up our guns. We heard trucks pass by, and we thought, Somebody's coming back for supplies. But it was six armored tanks. We didn't think it was the enemy until they opened up on us with machine guns. It was the Germans! We got a platoon of prisoners, killed a few.

We searched the prisoners for handguns and knives. We didn't treat them as enemies, really. Most of them were Poles. I remember one had a big hole in the side of his neck and wanted somebody to put a dressing on it. He said, "Me wife, two kids." We knew the Polish army were forced into it, and that's what this outfit mostly was. There were a few SS taken. They weren't treated very well.

The next few days are a daze. We went up farther and farther until we ran into Caen. We had little radios. We'd pick up things from Britain. We knew what was going on behind us, that we had established beachheads where they could unload and were coming in by the thousands. That made us feel good.

“I WAS NO HERO. I JUST LANDED WITH THE REST OF THEM”

—George Frederick Johnson

Lance corporal with the Fort Garry Horse Regiment

WAS IN THE SECOND WAVE. THE TANKS and infantry went ahead of me. We were about a half hour behind, in water up to our necks. My vehicle, a jeep,

PERRY ZAVITZ—KUPREX FOR TIME



THE SUPPORT George Frederick Johnson, now living in Nanaimo, B.C., provided key ammo, food and fuel to Canadians at the front



had been waterproofed so you could go into water up to nearly 2 m. When you were in the water, you didn't change gears. You didn't put the clutch in because if it broke, then you'd have water in your clutch and you couldn't go anywhere. We were damn glad to put our feet on dry ground again because it was an awful, awful rough ride over.

But getting up on the beach was a bit of turmoil. There were tanks knocked out. We drove off the landing craft with strict instructions to drive straight ahead because if you turned left or right, the one coming up beside you would squish you. My biggest recollection was a chap in a bulldozer trying to smash down a wall so the vehicles could get into town. He was going up and down checking for a weak spot. He finally found one and whacked that wall down. The vehicles went through, myself included. We got into town.

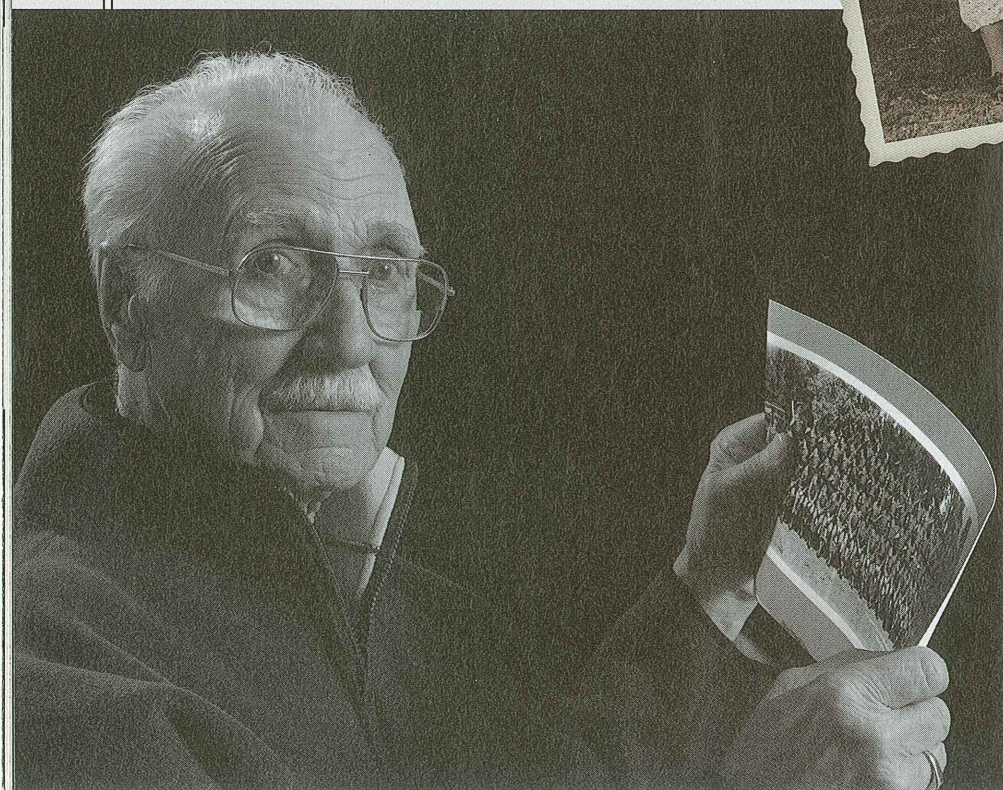
I didn't go with the tanks, as I had another job to do. I was to find a location, someplace we could harbor ammunition and the fuel trucks that were coming in

the next day or two. I had maps—they were tourist maps of France. We also had aerial photographs. I was looking for a farm with trees where we could camouflage the ammo, food and trucks loaded with fuel for the tanks. At night, I was to lead these transport trucks up to the tanks when they'd stop to refuel and reload. When I reached the tanks that first night, I saw some of the wounded coming back. We lost about 12, 13 guys from my regiment—killed on the beach that day. And I think there were another 15 or 16 wounded. I lost one of the kids I went to school with. He was killed on the beach along with another guy in his tank.

Was I frightened? Continually. There were times when you hit the deck. But you're so busy you don't have time to reflect. I think war is a foolish thing to start with, but what are you going to do when you have the Germans running over smaller countries? And it looked like they would come across the Channel into England and take that country. That was when everybody said enough is enough.

I was no hero. I just landed with the rest of them and went along with it. ■

RECOLLECTION Al Leeson, of Beachburg, Ont., with his mother the day he left for the military; below, remembering his regiment



PAUL COURETTE FOR TIME