

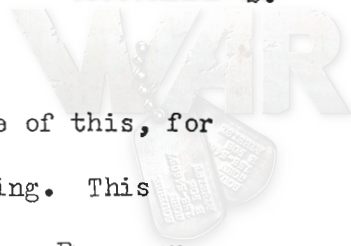
FORTY DAYS IN FRANCE

On the third of June, 1944, we embarked on the boats to make the invasion of Normandy. Our boat was APA (assault transport) Charles Carrol. It carried about 1200 men and several landing craft. On the night of June 5 we left the port of Weymouth. We received good-will messages from Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery over the public address system. I talked to my buddy, Red Watts, a long time before going below to get a few winks of sleep. Naturally we talked about D-Day and our chances of coming through. We admitted they weren't too good. One fellow, Dick Thompson, said we didn't have a chance. He was very pessimistic and thought we'd be wiped out. I found out later he was killed on the beach.

I had a very fatalistic opinion on the subject of combat. I figured if I was going to get it I was going to get it and there was nothing I or anyone else could do about it. However, I had a sort of premonition that I was coming back. I don't know what the cause of this was, but it was there. This premonition kept my hopes up all during my fighting. Somehow, I couldn't see myself dead on a battlefield. I came pretty near getting killed, but I was very lucky and lived to tell my story.

Getting back to the bull session on board the Charles Carrol, I finally told Red that I thought it was best to get some sleep, for we didn't know when we'd be able to rest again. Just before I went down I saw about a hundred Lightning fighters go overhead. It sure made me feel better to know that the beach was being softened up. When I got down below I went straight to my bunk and surprisingly enough went right to sleep. About three hours later we were awakened for breakfast. The chow line wound around the deck. I remember talking to a couple of sergeants. It was very cold and the water was exceedingly rough for assault boats. We prayed for the sea to calm down. I also noticed that we were anchored. Everything was quiet, aside from a few explosions. We were too far out to hear much of the aerial bombardment, which was going on at that time. I took very little for chow that morning, because from my experiences of riding in assault boats I knew it was best to eat just a little.

After breakfast I went below to my quarters to get my gear together. Of course I

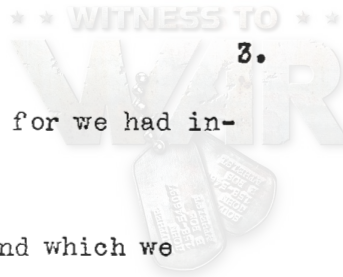


had my MI (Garand) rifle, which was clean and well oiled. I made sure of this, for I knew my life might depend on it. We were to wear impregnated clothing. This clothing was treated with a chemical for protection against poison gas. Even our shoes were treated with this substance. We also had an assault gas mask, a life belt, and an assault jacket.

This assault jacket had several large pockets. It also had several holes, which could be attached <sup>to</sup> canteen, first aid kit, hand grenades, and a small shovel. In the first aid kit were a syringe containing a half grain of morphine, a large bandage, sulfa powder, and sulfa pills. I had various items in my jacket. In the rear pocket I had a raincoat, three K ration units, three D emergency ration units (enriched chocolate), extra socks and underwear, disinfecting powder, water purifying pills, a pound of TNT, percussion cap, and safety fuse. In the side pockets I had approximately 200 rounds of ammunition and four hand grenades.

About four o'clock in the morning we got the order to put on our equipment. We then went on deck to board the assault boats, which carried about thirty men. These were called LCVP's (landing craft, vehicles or personnel) by the navy. We were then lowered into the water. As soon as we hit the water we started to toss and roll and pitch. The water was very rough. Inside of fifteen minutes we were all soaked to the skin by the water splashing against the front and sides of the boat. The army issued us two paper bags each in case we vomited and we sure used them. I doubt if there was a man who was not sick. I think that was the worst ride I ever had and I'll never forget it.

After we had ridden awhile the naval barrage opened up and we began to see the flashes from the big guns and rocket guns. Things were starting to pop and I was getting very excited and nervous. As we neared shore I heard the clatter of machine guns and the explosions of artillery and mortar fire. Before I knew it I heard someone yell, "The ramp is down! Everyone out!". We dashed out into water waist deep and ran the three hundred yards to clear the beach. I remember a burst of



machine gun fire landed about ten yards from me, but I kept on going, for we had instructions to get off the beaches as fast as we could.

At the end of the beach was a sand dune covered with rocks, behind which we took refuge. I knew we had to get off the beach, for the Jerries were starting to zero in <sup>on</sup> our positions with mortar and artillery fire. However, we couldn't raise our heads above the reef, for it was covered by small arms fire. I knew our position was very difficult and we'd be lucky to get out of it alive. I asked my platoon sergeant what to do, and I could see by his face he did not know. I then got the funniest feeling I have ever experienced. I felt like the young soldier who said, "A guy could get killed here". I wanted to run---I didn't know where---but I wanted to get out of there. I finally controlled myself and set about the task of figuring how to push on.

We were on the beach about two hours. During that time the shells burst all around us. I saw one shell burst among a group of soldiers just as they were running off the assault boat. I turned my head quickly so I wouldn't see the result. Finally I saw some members of my boat team crawling through a bombed out pill box. This served as protection from the machine gun fire covering the sand dune. I heard bullets whiz over my head as I crawled through.

The ground sloped down a little for about fifty yards and behind this was a big hill. This hill was booby trapped with anti-personnel mines. The fellows at the top yelled a warning to us as we approached. We went up the hill single file, for we knew if the man in front of us didn't get blown up, we wouldn't either. I didn't see anyone hit a mine, but I heard that one of my best friends hit one as he neared the top and was blown all the way down to the bottom of the hill.

As we reached the top bullets started whizzing over my head again, and we hit the ground. We took cover behind a hedgerow and were pinned down there for a couple of hours. I still hadn't seen a German to fire at because they were so well dug in and camouflaged. While we were pinned down here the Jerries started to shell the beach with rockets. What an eerie sound! I thanked God I was off the beach.

Finally we started advancing again across a field covered by machine gun fire. We crossed this field by leaps and bounds; that is, running twenty-five yards, hitting the ground, and running again. At the end of this field was a very steep hill, at the bottom of which was a small village. There were a couple of Germans in the houses yelling their heads off because they were so scared. We took them prisoner. I saw a group of Frenchmen and asked them where the Germans were. They all started to yell at once so I didn't get any information from them.

We advanced down the steep hill and crossed the highway leading in to town. As I crossed the road I saw the first dead man I ever saw in my life, a German. He was in a sitting position, leaning against the hedgerow. His eyes were open and he was staring straight at me. He must have been killed by shell concussion, for I did not see a mark on him.

We crossed the road and as we neared the top of the next hill my boat team was called up to spearhead the advance. The Jerries set up a trap for us. They let us advance about two hundred yards and then opened up on us with small arms fire. The field was so flat that the Heinies could almost hit us when we were lying flat.

Therefore, we had little freedom of motion. We tried to move forward but were unable to spot any of the machine gun nests. Two of my buddies were killed trying to get the Germans. We tried to lay mortar fire down, but this didn't do any good. We were pinned down for about three hours. I never thought we'd get out of this predicament, for the Germans seemed to have us. However, the order finally came to crawl off the top of the hill. Two hundred yards was a long way to crawl, especially with twenty pounds of equipment and a rifle. I think it took about thirty minutes for me to get beyond the edge of the hill, so I could stand up without being hit. I remember that about twenty-five yards before I reached this point I tried to get up on my hands and knees, but almost had the seat of my pants shot off.

My whole battalion withdrew to the valley between the hill we had taken and the hill where my boat team was pinned down. Things were really looking glum. We

we were surrounded on three sides by Germans and on the other by the sea. We were unable to get but a few tanks and artillery pieces on shore. Therefore, if the Jerries attacked with a few tanks, it looked as though we would be wiped out. That was a helluva feeling, but that's the way things looked. Our air force and navy had made any sort of attack impossible, but at that moment I wouldn't have given two cents for our chances.

About an hour later our company of about two hundred men tried to push around the hill. We managed to advance about a thousand yards before we were stopped. As it was getting dark we decided to dig in at that spot. All night long the Jerries sprayed the hedgerows with machine gun fire. The healthiest idea was to keep your head down. I didn't have to be told this. I received news that my buddy, Red, had been shot through the knee on that hill. He couldn't be evacuated because of the enemy fire. However, one of our medics managed to get to him and give him first aid. He was evacuated the next day.

June 7th---During the night another regiment of my division, the 115th, landed on the beaches. The next day we withdrew from our positions to let them spearhead the attack inland. A few men from my boat team couldn't leave their fox holes because of the German machine gun fire. They saw the 115th come through. From all reports they really gave it to the Jerries. They had plenty of bangalore torpedoes and pole charges filled with TNT. They blew up plenty of Heinies, much to my enjoyment. We followed them for a mile or so to a town and then passed them by. Just as we neared the end of this town we were caught in some German 88 fire. We suffered more casualties. I had a few close ones, but we ran to an open field and took cover behind some hedgerows. I saw a 2-1/2 ton truck go by with plenty of wounded thrown in the back. It sort of turned my stomach. Another good friend of mine had a hand grenade go off in his hip pocket, and from what I gathered he was pretty badly blown up. He had a wife and kid he'd never seen.

Just as I got in the field a sniper opened up on me and a few of the fellows around me. Someone yelled "Up in the trees!" and I fired a clip of eight rounds into

the tree. That was the first time I had fired my rifle.

This field was filled with both German and American dead. As I ran in I tripped on a few. It actually stunk; the smell of dead. There was plenty of American equipment abandoned, so it looked like our boys were ambushed. This was only the first of many ghastly sights I was to see.

We tried to advance some more, but found too much opposition. We went forward a short distance, but the 88's started cutting us down and we retreated to the field and were told to dig in pronto. We did not need much persuasion. Another fellow and I got a hole dug in a hurry. Just as we got through, which was after dark, my platoon was told to get ready to move into the next field to act as outposts. The next field was mined, but luckily just with anti-tank mines which need more weight than that of a human body to go off. I remember digging in a little and then I was allowed to go to sleep for a couple of hours. When I awoke I felt something hard at my head. Just a mine! Another one of my luckier moments, because it did not explode.

While I was awake I remembered I had eaten only a bar of chocolate and a little bit of K ration in two days and nights. I tried to eat one of my K rations but I was too dry to swallow, as I had emptied my canteen by the end of the first day. It is a heck of a feeling not to be able to swallow.

June 8---The next morning we found the Jerries had withdrawn, and a half track was able to reach us with ammunition and water. We were organized into our respective platoons and found our casualties to be about a third. Fellows I had lived with for a year wounded and killed. It made me pretty bitter.

We then were marched a few miles and were told to rest in a field. A few hours later we were told to get ready to move out. We did not know whether we were going to attack or go to a rest camp. As I pulled out a cute little cocker spaniel started to tag after me. I would have liked to have taken him with me, but the word came back to prepare to attack and I soon forgot about him.

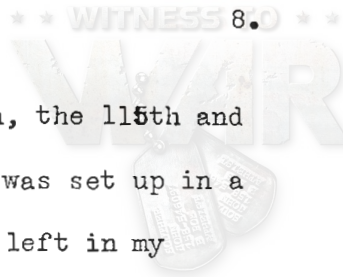
My battalion had a hard nut to crack this time. My company was to spearhead

the attack on the fortified town of Grandcamp. One attack of Rangers had already been repulsed. There was only one road into Grandcamp and we had to advance down this because all the fields were mined. Therefore, we were excellent targets, being a straight column down the road. We had a few tanks supporting us but they could get only to within three hundred yards of the town, so they did not give us much support. The Jerries had some machine gun fire covering the road. These guns were dug into the hedgerows along the road and about two hundred yards from us, and they forced us to keep low.

Our mortars started the attack by blasting the enemy in the town. This apparently did not do much good, because when we riflemen started to advance, we did not get far. We were about to give up trying to take the town, but our colonel said Grandcamp had to be taken. The mortars started firing again and we began to advance into the town. It was a miracle I did not get clipped, because we were all firing every which way at anything that moved. There was plenty coming back at us, too. It was a tough fight but we finally drove the Jerries out. Each squad was then given a few houses to search. There are twelve men in a squad. We took a few prisoners. I saw several Germans who had gotten drunk in order to put up a stiffer fight. My squad searched the village commander's house. My buddy and I searched his bedroom where there was a big feather bed complete with sheets. We sure felt like flopping into it, but we didn't dare because we had been told so many times about booby traps.

The Germans started throwing a couple of 88's into the town, so we decided to move out. As we turned a corner leading out of town, about twenty-five Frenchmen and women, who must have been in the cellars, cheered us as we left. It sort of raised our spirits. But our spirits were soon lowered because we marched in circles for about three hours. What for I'll never know, but I guess the officers knew what they were doing. I got my usual amount of sleep for the night---about four hours. We got a break in the morning for we did not move out until the afternoon, so I cleaned my rifle and ammunition and caught up on my sleep to some extent.

About June 10---My regiment was put in divisional reserve for two days. We were



to hold a strong point while the other two regiments of our division, the 115th and 175th, crossed the large swamp about five miles inland. My platoon was set up in a defensive position around a very small town. As I was the only one left in my platoon who understood French, I accompanied my lieutenant to speak to a few of the villagers. They told me that a German patrol had been there that afternoon, so we were on our toes in case they returned.

I got some rest during this period, for each fellow was on guard two hours and off four. I also was able to get off my first letter home. I had made an acquaintance in the village and I went back to him and got some eggs for my buddies. We boiled them and they tasted like a \$5.00 steak to us. That was my first fresh food since we left the boats. I washed my face and hands for the first time since D-Day. I even managed to dig up a razor and blade and got a fair shave. We took stock of our casualties. Almost 50% were dead or wounded. Boys I had lived with for a year, slept and eaten with, boys I had shared all my troubles with. Quite a blow to realize they were no longer with us. We had to keep going with no new replacements.

A few days later we were told to get ready to move out again. For the next couple of days it seemed to me we walked all over France. We hiked all day, dug in at night, and took turns on guard. It was a pretty tough grind, but I guess we were trying to confuse the Germans. I know the men did not know what was going on, but of course the higher-ups did.

Finally one night we were told we were going to move out. After marching all day with sore feet I was in a pretty bad mood and this night march did not help me. It is no fun going over hedgerows and through creeks when you can't see what you are doing. We had been marching for about three hours when we started up a hill. As we neared the top my squad leader warned me about a fox-hole that he almost stumbled in. Before the words were out of his mouth two Germans stood up in the hole with their hands up yelling, "Kamarad" and "Nous sommes francais". I told him the hell they were French. Here was someone for the squad to take their wrath out on. We knew if we took them prisoner we would have to take them back to regimental head-



quarters, which was a long way back. I assure you we were in no mood to do that. We wanted to kill them and our squad leader said O. K. The Jerries knew what we were going to do and started to yell for an officer. Just then an officer came over and told us to take them back. We said we couldn't because it was too dark to take any chances with them. He finally took the prisoners off our hands. I don't know what eventually did happen to them.

We continued a little way further. I don't remember ever hearing the command to go to sleep, but I was so tired I just fell asleep where I lay. I don't think we had any guards posted for the remainder of the night, but I was so dead tired I didn't care what happened. I remember waking up once and hearing a couple of officers giving someone hell because there were no guards, but as I say, I didn't care what happened.

The next morning our battalion started pushing on again. My company was not the spearhead this time. We were marching down the road when I saw the worst sight I have ever seen or want to see. There were several American dead along the road. There was one Yank with half of his body on one side of the road and the other half about ten yards away. Not a very pleasant sight to look at. I'll always recall it when they start talking about the "glories" of war.

We came to the town of St. Clair, and about half of the company got through when the Jerries started shelling the town. The 88's came so fast that my half of the company was forced back out of the town. Of course we had to join the other part of the company. The only way we could do this was to go around the town. This proved to be the worst wild goose chase that I had ever been on. We really got lost, for after about a half hour of walking we found ourselves behind the German lines. We were walking down the road when a Jerry anti-tank gun opened point blank on us, killing several of our group. Then everything seemed to open up. We ran behind some hedgerows and finally got reorganized. We started out again down this same road, when all of a sudden a German scout car spotted us. They saw us about the

same time we saw them. They made a complete circle back to where they came from and we jumped behind the hedgerows.

By this time I had given the situation up as hopeless. I never thought I'd see my outfit again, but towards evening we happened to bump into one of our tanks which was covering one of the roads leading into St. Clair. They told us there were some troops near them, and they turned out to be our company. A little while later we joined the rest of the company.

Just as we got into position to dig our fox-holes for the night, the Germans started to counter-attack with light armour. The company was in a wood so we had a good defensive position. However, we were the most advanced company in the regiment so we were somewhat of a threat to the Jerries. They wanted to remove our threat, but were unsuccessful. We knocked out a couple of armoured cars with our bazookas and anti-tank guns. We managed to get word to a tank that we were being attacked. The tank came up with its 50 caliber machine gun blazing and did quite a job on the Jerries.

I was pretty well worn out by the time the attack was over. We had not gotten any rations for forty-eight hours, so I was hungry and thirsty. I'd had very little sleep since we'd landed, and I had not had hot food since D-Day. I came to the conclusion that war was much worse than hell could ever be. Just before dark they were able to get rations up to us. I still had my fox-hole to dig, but I could not dig very deeply. I was too tired and disgusted to dig. I wanted to get all the sleep I could before it was my turn to go on guard. However, a little later the Jerries started shelling our position, so in the middle of the night I started digging in again. You never can get much rest when your life depends upon how much work you do.

The next morning I decided to dig in with another boy in my squad. He was the second scout. I had been appointed first scout of my squad a few days before this because of our casualties. This meant that when my squad was the attacking squad, I went first. Not a very nice job, but I had no choice in the matter. Bob Office,

the second scout, and I became inseparable buddies after this. We were always together, at night and during the day.

In the afternoon word came down to get ready to attack again. That word "attack" was becoming a synonym for death and misery. This time we were going to try to push the Jerries back because the rest of the battalion still could not get up on line with my company. However, the Germans were a little too strong for us and we were not very successful in relieving our position. We suffered a few more casualties and the Germans managed to capture a few of our boys. We had to retire to our original position. In fact, we had to make a run for the woods, for we were almost cut off.

We stayed in those woods for a few days. I got a little more sleep than usual, which came in very handy. We also discovered we could heat our field rations by using the wax paper wrappings as fuel. We could have a fire only if there was no smoke. This was the only way we could do it. Hot food is such an improvement over cold rations.

A funny thing happened while we were in this position in the woods. A Jerry came walking up the road. He evidently thought he was in German territory for he walked along as though taking a Sunday stroll. We were so surprised that we let him walk about twenty-five yards before we opened up on him. Then Everything opened up on him; machine guns, automatic rifles and rifles. He sure was air conditioned when we got through with him. I guess the boys took all their hate out on him.

About June 22nd another company came up to relieve us. We were told to move back about five hundred yards to a battalion assembly area. As we started to move out a few snipers opened up on us. We had to run nearly the whole distance, taking cover from the snipers. I got my first crack at scouting. It sure is a funny feeling when you are out in front, not knowing what you are going to run into. The battalion used a field which had been a Jerry defensive position, so there were plenty of holes. We stayed there for the night. There was a dead American in the field. The Germans had tied him to a tree, evidently with intent to booby trap him, but they were

driven out before they had a chance.

The next morning we started to attack again. We gained about two hundred yards when we were stopped by small arms fire. I do not know why, but we started bunching together like fools. The Germans started lobbing in 88's at us thick and fast. This was one of the worst shellings I have ever experienced. A couple of shells landed fifteen feet from me, a close call. We suffered many casualties, several dead.

After the first few shells came in so close, a few of us jumped over a hedgerow to get out of the shelling. A machine gun opened on us, but we stayed down and they missed. Rather be under small arms fire than 88's. The shelling lasted about ten minutes. Then we crossed the hedgerow back to the field that was so heavily shelled, in order to join the company---or what was left of it. What a sight greeted our eyes. About fifteen of my buddies were lying there moaning and groaning. The field was covered with wounded. I saw one fellow who was shell-shocked. He had had his finger scratched, and he was yelling and carrying on terribly. The hardest part was to pass these boys in order to press the attack, but those were our orders and we had to keep going. This was just one of the many times our artillery saved us from certain annihilation. They spotted the 88's by means of the Piper Cub---"eyes of the artillery"--- and they let them have it.

A little while later we reached our objective. They asked for some volunteers to help carry the wounded back. The medics had done a wonderful job and taken care of all the wounded remarkably well. However, the dead were still there. One of my closest buddies was killed by shell concussion. He was sitting up against a tree, without a scratch on him. He was engaged to a girl back home. They wrote each other every day. Too bad he was killed, but those are the fortunes of war.

That night we dug in pretty deep, just in case. There were very few of us left. We had not received any replacements, but still kept going. I often wondered when my turn would come to be a casualty. I knew it had to be sooner or later. I just hoped I would be wounded, not killed.

All that night the Jerries kept firing their machine guns and machine pistols.

However, we were not foolish enough to stick our heads over the hedgerow. I guess it made them feel braver to fire, not at any specific target, but just to fire. In the morning we started attacking again. We were about five miles from St. Lo, so their defense was starting to strengthen. We got only about two hundred yards before we were stopped. After all, there was only about a third of us left. Just to show the irony of this situation, our artillery shot short and caused a few more casualties in our own ranks.

We finally got to our objective. We set up a defensive position about five miles from St. Lo. We stayed here about ten days in order to build up enough position to take this town. This was to be the toughest battle of all. These ten days were sort of a breather, but we still got a little sleep and no hot food. Every night we had guard duty, on two hours and off four. However, during the day I managed to sleep pretty well. The front was fairly quiet, except for occasional artillery barrages. At least I had a fox-hole to get in. One unpleasant feature was the rainy weather. We had had dry weather up to this time, but after we got into this position we had a shower almost every day. It's no fun when you have no shelter from the rain and you have to sleep in a mud hole.

A few days after we reached this defensive position everyone was fitted with new clothing from head to foot. What a relief to get out of the clothes we had worn since D-Day. There was a French well near us, so we got some water in our helmets and took baths. Here we were on the front lines, stark naked, taking baths as if we were a thousand miles away from war. We just did not care. We wanted to get clean so we did, Germans or no Germans. I can't tell you how much this raised our morale. After this we got our rolls, which included blankets and toilet articles. These necessities were the height of luxury to us. And then came the greatest surprise of all---MAIL! I'll never forget what trouble I had reading my mail. It was raining when we got it and I had to wait for the rain to stop before I could begin to read. Eventually it stopped. After I read a couple of letters the Jerries tossed over a couple of 88's and I had to dive in my fox-hole. I got the letters pretty muddy

but I finally got them read.

The boys in the squad got about five packages. I got a package of brownies which were eaten in about five minutes. Bob got a box of Milky Ways which tasted wonderful, and we gobbled them up fast. We even got some fresh bread and one piece of apple pie. Where they came from I'll never know, but we certainly appreciated them. There were plenty of cows around which needed milking. Who were we not to take advantage of this? Fresh milk---what a treat! The field had an awful stench from several dead cows and Germans lying around. Decaying flesh is the worst smell in the world.

We got some replacements here. I'll never forget how one of them came running down with a hand grenade in his hand. He had pulled the pin and then decided not to throw it. He was running around with it in his hand holding the handle down so it wouldn't explode. We was afraid to throw it, and for all I know he is still holding it.

A couple of days after mail call our squad was detailed to establish an outpost at the next hedgerow out from the one where we were. Bob and I were told to cover three of the squad who were going to dig in. I guess Jerry had an itchy trigger finger for he sure was after us. I took cover behind a wooden gate when a machine gun on my flank opened up and missed me by inches. The boys told me later that they could see the wood fly on the gate. Then another machine gun opened up in front of me. That was a hot corner and I got the hell out of there but fast. We tried to spot them, but they were so well camouflaged that we couldn't see them.

After the outpost was established, it meant that we were out there one day out of three, and had to be awake all the time we were on outpost duty. After about a week of this it started to tell on me. One morning, after being on outpost duty, I came down with 102° temperature. To add to my discomfort, I was vomiting liver bile. They sent me a few miles back of the lines to a hospital. They gave me a few sulfa pills and the next morning my temperature was normal, so they sent me up to the front again. Nice of them, huh? At least I got my first full night's sleep since D-Day.

I slept on a stretcher with real blankets.

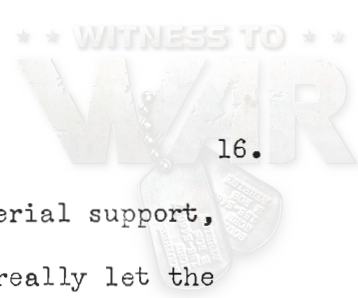
When I joined my company they were at a rest area, a thousand yards behind the line. We got replacements for our company, which was down to about a third of its original strength. Our cooks brought up some hot food, which was a real treat. The regimental band even came up to play for us.

After two days we were up on the front lines again. This place sure had a battlefield smell. There were several dead in no-man's land and they did not perfume the air. One night while we were here, a Nazi fanatic tried to sneak up on us. We wounded him, but it was so dark he managed to escape. However, he left his personal belongings. Bob sneaked out and got them. He had a swell camera, some Parisian perfume, and several letters and photographs. It was a lot of fun going over these.

One evening word came down that the St. Lo attack was to begin. The Germans must have known the attack was coming, for we had a fairly strong counter attack that night. They opened up with a heavy artillery barrage. They caused high casualties, and I had a pretty close call. They knocked out our platoon sergeant, guide, and radio man, which was a heavy blow. After the barrage lifted, their infantry started to attack. A few Jerries got through but our artillery was very prompt in coming to our rescue and cut them down before they got very far.

A very amusing incident occurred during the artillery barrage but we didn't think it was very funny that evening. Bob and I were dug into the same hole, and when the barrage started we flattened out in our hole. Between shells we kept jumping out of our hole to see if the German infantry was trying to advance. Just as one shell exploded near us, someone jumped into our hole and landed on Bob. It was very dark and I couldn't see who it was, German or American. My imagination started playing tricks on me and I thought this mystery man had a knife and was trying to stab Bob. I was paralyzed with fright for a few seconds, but soon recovered and was all set to hit him with my rifle when he turned his face towards me and I saw it was one of my buddies, much to my relief.

Early in the morning a tremendous American artillery barrage began, signify-



ing the beginning of the bloody attack. We were supposed to have aerial support, but the weather was too bad. Our artillery was marvelous and they really let the Jerries have it. However, there were still plenty of Germans when we tried to advance. Each company had four tanks supporting it.

Another battalion was to spearhead the attack for about a thousand yards, and then we were supposed to push on to our objective. The tanks came up to our position and started to pound the enemy while the infantry advanced. Our battalion did not start to follow for about an hour because progress was very slow. The tanks drew a lot of 88 fire, so we had to keep down. Our artillery was giving a lot of support, but still our casualties were high. One of the companies was just about wiped out.

Finally the order came to move out and we followed the other battalion and then started to push on to our objective. We met only one pocket of resistance. We took care of this with grenades and small arms fire. Towards evening we pulled up behind a hedgerow and began to dig in. We got our holes dug and then were told to prepare for a night attack. This was called off, and we went back to our holes.

In the morning we were told that our objective was to cut the main road leading into St. Lo. This was the first paved highway I saw in France. We didn't have any tanks supporting us for the ground was too hilly. We advanced about five hundred yards before meeting any resistance. Then we got caught in an artillery barrage. We were advancing down a hill and the Jerries were on top of the next hill, so they could fire right down our throats. The first shell hit a tree right above me and exploded, knocking me down against the ground. A small shell splinter hit my chin, but it felt as though half my face was blown off. Thank God the shell hit the tree or I would not be here now. The shells came down pretty fast, but our artillery opened up on the 88 guns and soon quieted them down.

We started to advance again. At the top of the hill, in back of which was the highway, we ran into some more Jerries. One of my buddies got shot through the head right in front of me. We wiped out this pocket and advanced across the road leading to St. Lo. My platoon established an outpost. We were up all night and on the alert.



We felt certain there would be a counter attack, but there was none. It was so dark it seemed likely that a Jerry would sneak up on us, but no.

The next morning we pressed the attack further to about two miles from St. Lo. We reached our objective, encountering only moderate resistance. Then I was exposed to the worst artillery barrage I ever was under. The 88's really came thick and fast. One shell hit a tree and the tree fell on one of the members of the squad. One big chunk of metal missed me by inches. At the end of the day my hands were raw from digging. Our artillery was very helpful and finally quieted the Jerries. After dark we were moved back to an area behind the lines. We thought we were going to get a rest, but the next day we were briefed for an attack on a suburb of St. Lo. We had about 30% casualties during the last three days, including all our medics, but we got some replacements, and thank God, a couple of medics. The day we were briefed for this attack I did not think I could take any more of this hellish war. Near my fox-hole there was a dead American with his leg blown off. I asked myself if this was to be my fate. I knew my turn was coming soon for only about thirty boys of the company that landed on D-Day were still with me. The next day I got mine, but I was one of the luckier ones who got back.

That night we moved up to the front lines to attack. The Jerries were trigger happy that morning and started shooting at us. Finally our two supporting tanks came up and scared them off. Our artillery barrage started; the tanks commenced to fire; and then our infantry started to attack. My squad was the attacking squad, so we went first. We crossed the first hedgerow, meeting only light resistance. The engineers blew the hedgerows and the tanks came up to us and fired into the next field. Then we advanced across that field to the next hedgerow. The Jerries had placed booby traps on this next hedgerow and about twenty feet out in front of it. My squad was one of the first to go, so we did not know about these mines. Just as I neared this hedgerow a booby trap exploded. I was hit in the stomach. I fell backwards, and as I hit the ground another mine exploded and wounded my left arm. The abdominal wound paralyzed my right leg so I could not walk. The Jerries

were in back of this hedgerow tossing hand grenades over the top at us. So the boys had a little game of catch on the front lines with hand grenades.

About twenty minutes later a medic came up and bandaged my wounds. He gave me sulfa and morphine. I remember going to sleep and then waking up as the boys were retreating to the other hedgerow. I crawled into a hole and a machine gun opened up on me. I played dead so the gunner wouldn't fire on me. I could hear the Jerries talking behind the hedgerow. Here I was in no man's land with both sides lobbing shells on each other. Quite a predicament, so I went to sleep,---the effect of the morphine.

When I woke up some American medics came out with a white flag to take me back. I told them I couldn't walk, so they went back for a stretcher. I heard the damn Jerries talking again, but they let them come out to evacuate me. I was taken a couple of hundred yards and then put in a jeep which took me to the battalion aid station, about a thousand yards behind the lines. They bandaged me up some more and then I was evacuated to a hospital behind the lines. I know very little of what went on here, for I was kept unconscious for about seven days. The Red Cross wrote letters for me and helped me in other little ways. I also was given some blood. I want to thank that American Somebody, for it meant more to me than he or she will ever know. The doctors operated on my stomach. Those front line doctors, their names unknown to most of their patients, have saved many a life.

After ten days in this hospital I was flown to England. I had been in England two weeks when the doctor said I was to have my wildest dreams realized--evacuation to the States!! I was so happy I felt like kissing him and everyone in the hospital. Two weeks of waiting, and then word came that I was to leave. I arrived in Boston the last of August. I realized the irony of this war when I reached my first hospital in the States. I was still a stretcher case, so I had to be carried off the train. I nearly jumped out of my bed when four German prisoners came down the aisle to carry me off the train.

And that is the account of one man's small part in this gigantic struggle. I just pray that the millions who have paid the supreme sacrifice will have done <sup>that</sup> the world may find a true peace. When the soldiers have won their battles it <sup>I</sup> be up to the statesmen to make certain that it was not all in vain.