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George Kosmanski:

Thanks for your letter, asking information on "F" Company, 502, and their activities on D-Day. I am not much of a typist, but while things are quiet here at the office on Saturday PM, I'll knock off a few lines.

I won't fill out the form you sent, but instead will try to include in an informal narrative account some of the hazy details. First, I believe the best sources of information would be from Bill Starnes or Earl Cox, both of whom live in Akron, Ohio. Also, Earl Hendricks, Executive Officer of F Company on D Day, lives in Cleveland, and has a better memory than mine. Incidentally, Cox has some Company Pictures taken in Fort Bragg, with names identifying the pictures.

In the Marshalling area, one of the high points was a visit from Eisenhower, shaking hands, coming into the tents, pointing out he had one all he could do, etc. When he entered my tent, I jumped up, crashing my poor head against the upper bunk and damn near knocked myself out, requiring several stitches. We studied hell out the Sand Tables, got daily pictures of selected drop zones, and etc. Everybody got in perfect shape and we were fed and fattened for the invasion.

F company won a regimental competition and was given the "honor" of being the lead company, following the B attalion HG planes. I was in plane #9. In my plane was one Squad (12 men), plus Sgt Welsh (Ops Sgt who could speak French) a radio Op named Clay, and Dohun (Wax ~~xxxxxxx~~ Walter C), who later saved my life. I believe we also had a company clerk named Senger, Joseph W, who was later killed. Crammed in the plane, or under the plane, were either 4 or 6 bundles of Anti Tank Mines and spare Flame Throwing equipment. My Company Mission was to destroy 6 Coastal Artillery guns and some other concrete emplacements. The guns were on RR tracks, and were not completely ready to fire--at least, 2 of them were not.

D day was postponed, and on the day of the postponement, some Air Force Col notified me that Radar was being installed on my plane, and the racks and bundles must come off. This suited me, but I didn't know they would load the bundles in the floor of the plane. They did--these damn bundles are 5 or 6 feet long, and weigh one or two hundred pounds. I fought this issue, including asking the AF Col to step outside with me, but all to no avail. We were grossly overweight, and the poor pilot swore the plane would never get airborne.

When we reported to the plane on the afternoon of June 5th, properly face blackened, head shaved, I met with another miserable circumstance--I had a Naval Observer assigned to my plane. He was supposed to spot for the Navy and direct Naval Fire. He had a SCR 300 Radio bundled in a bag so padded and large that it took two men to push it into the door. You can imagine my state of mind.

We took off, or attempted to, about 5 PM, I believe. I was standing behind the pilot, and he was doing all he could to pull the plane into the air. It would mush up, then settle back down, and a stone fence was approaching. I am sure the pilot considered braking ~~andxxxxxx~~ but evidently was too far committed and we lumbered over the fence--we actually mushed back down and skimmed some bushes, but it got up. The pilot came back into the cabin ~~and~~ was deathly sick--He was shook.

The assembly was beautiful--we left from Membury A irport, and the hundred of planes curving behind me was awesome---I thought--GOD help the Jer ies. The Trip over was unevenful unt'l we Crossed the Jersey and Guernsey Isles, when the A A A rtillery started up, but we were beyond it, being in one of the lead planes. We hit the coast of France in Formation but then all hell broke loose as we ran into an impenetrable fog. Planes took individual action, and in no time at all, we seemed to be flying in circles, with planes coming and going every which way. (The fog soon was gone). I conferred with the pilot and he admitted he didn't know where in hell we were. We took a best estimate, put on the red light, and stood in the door. The pilot said all he knew for sure was that he wasn't bringing us back. Through the intercom phone, we agreed to go, and started pitching bundles out the door. Imagine Static lines hanging down, trying to retain the proper hold on the anchor cable, and shoving the bundles the length of the plane with your boots-- in the dark, and under normally trying circumstances, anyway. This, plus being trussed like Gulliver, weighted down with Chute, Hand Grenades, Tommy Gun, Ammunition, Food, Clothing, Gas Mask, Binoculars, Pistol, Raincoat, Maps, and weighty apprehension. I decided the Naval Observer should go first, and we had a hell of a time getting the bundle out the door. We did, however, and I was right behind him, shrieking and hollering like all the rest of the idiots. We had been receiving some ground fire, but not much, but but once we were out, all hell broke loose. I looked right down on a circular ring of AA emplacement. I could see the Naval Observer to my left, with the radio hanging from a rope. The Germans concentrated their fire on him, and I could see traceers streaming through his canopy, and probably him, I climbed by ~~sxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ suspension lines damn near halfway up and collapsed the chute, trying to slip away. I did this twice, I believe--we must have been pretty high up. I managed to slip over a hedge row, my chute catching in the trees on the hedgerow. I dangled about 10 feet from the ground, but with the hedgerow to my back. I used the jump knife to cut the line and fell into the ditch--full of briars. I scrambled out, hearing the German soldiers trying to get to me, and ran across the field to the next hedgerow, and hid in the ditch. I unlimbered the tommy Gun--we were only supposed to fire automatic weapons until daylight, and waited for them to come. After some discussion, they elected to leave me alone, and all ran somewhere. The silence was deathly. I waited few minutes and headed East, away from the AA position, which I assume they deserted. I kept walking through the hedgerow gaps until I came to a paved road. I hid in the ditch, and watched several good sized German Patrols go by. Finally I heard someone coming from behind me, gave the Cricket regognition signal and was

immediately answered. It was Lt. Nick Schiltz, from Charlotte, NC, a platoon cmdr in my company. He was later killed, at Zon, Holland. Nick had most of his squad with him---a squad, anyway. A lso, several men from my plane. We left, not using the road, in the General direction of the Coast. In the next hour, we must have accumulated over a hundred men, from all outfits. . We came to a town about 3 a m which I believe to have been Ravenville, but I am not sure, anyway, we were 6 miles from St. Mart in de Varreville, which was our destination. I figure we had been dropped about 9 miles from our DZ, or, so I later testified in a Hearing, shaking my fist at the pilot. We had to try 3 houses before anyone would answer, but Welsh, with his knowledge of the language, got the direction and distance pretty quick. WE---Welsh, Schiltz, Sgt Simmons, and 2 or 3 others had gone ahead, leaving the main group behind, until we could find out something. We were in a courtyard, surrounded by by high stone walls. We learned we were next to a German Barracks (a block away), which was pointed out to us. About this time the Allemands started dropping Grenades on us from the adjacent courtyards--they had us cold. We planned to all throw return grenades on signal, then take off--this we did, running away from the larger group. Welsh and I, the only two with automatic weapons, ran down the street away, then stopped, and sprayed the pursuing Germans. We did this 2 or 3 times, running between bursts. The Germans chased us through the town, and through a couple of hedgerows, but then left off the pursuit. We notified the larger group, orienting them, and giving directions to their various assembly areas. An Awarrant officer was in our group, and he was hit in the courtyard/ 2 or 3 others were wounded.

The Journey to St Martin de Varreville, was hectic, but little enemy action. Mostly, we ran at a fast trot, picking up men as we went along.

We arrived at a heavily mined area near a paved road, adjacent to St Martin de Varreville, a little before 0600. I had about 30 men, which, as far as I knew, comprised the force that was to destroy the guns and the enemy Headquarters, which was supposed to be about 300 men. We determined that the mines were not armed, and took off in approved Infantry School fashion, swarming over the area with no opposition. Col Steve Chappuis was there (X Batt. CO), with several men---by 0700 we had less than 200 men. We set about putting up a perimeter defense, and I was to destroy the guns. We found the British Heavies and American B 25's had all but accomplished our mission for us---great holes 150 feet in diameter were where the guns had been. Only two were near operative, and we put Bangalore torpedoes down the muzzles, in the breach, and under the RR tracks. The Germans made two minor attacks that A M, but they amounted to nothing. Chappuis and Capt Hank Plitt were "accepting" the surrender of the German troops in the underground area, which was a ~~huge~~ huge ~~affair~~ affair, like subway tunnels, with ammunition, food, and etc. The Heinies were sure chagrined when they came out with their hands up, and learned that they outnumbered the hell out of us.

The 4th Division was supposed to land on the beach---UTAH RED, but they were delayed because of high tides, or current, or something. We could see the ships plainly, and, in fact, observed them singig the old ships or barges, forming a breakwater. The 4th came in about Noon, or perps ^{ha} a little before. They were so keyed up at they almost took shots at us as we helped them from the landing boats. May I ^{point} out here that there was not a shot fired at the 4th as they landed---Maybe they should have used Parachute Troops at OMAHA ?

We spent the rest of the day getting the men in---some of them didn't come fo r 2 weeks. We picked up the bodies--fortunately there were only few--on both sides, and tried to get some rest. The Germans a ttacked ~~from~~ ^{from} the North about 4 PM, with about a battalion of men, but it only lasted an hour or so, and they went off licking their wounds, and hotly pursued by some ~~crackers~~ ^{crackers} from another batt.

Well, this is about it--too long, and very poorly typed. A ll the mistakes aren't typing errors, but some of them are. First time I have typed in years. I am a Region Manager foY Ryder Truck Lines, stationed in Atlanta. I am half blind, having been s hot in the head, as well as other places, in Holland.

I wish you luck with the book. I will close by saying there has never previously been assembled a better group of men than those who comprised the 101st A B, and more particularly, the 502nd Prcht Inf Reg. Writing you this letter has made me reflect with awe on the reckless courage and the sheer delight ~~and~~ mayhem that this group exhibited. I am glad they were on our side.

Sincerely

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Capt, Inf, --Retired fo. Disability