

January 31, 1966

*Joined A Company
after Normandy*

Dear George:

I will try and give you an account of what I can remember prior and during the invasion of Normandy.

I was a pfc attached to the 2nd Battalion as a demolitionist. We were at the Merryfield marshaling area, and as I recall it was all fenced in with guards at all gates and no one was allowed to leave. We did calisthenics every day and went to the big tent twice a day to be briefed on the invasion and what our assignment would be. We had plenty of time to write letters and just lay around and think. Our hair was shaved off and some of the troopers had a cone left down the middle of their head and there were a few who didn't want their hair shaved off. The food was good and we had plenty to eat, at least I couldn't complain about the meals. During the day we would go to the hangers and get the para-packs ready and put them on the C-47's, and when we were issued live ammunition, demolition kits, a supply of K-rations and French Francs we knew the real thing was coming off.

As the hour of D-Day approached it seemed to get very quiet in the area like a lull before the storm. Services were held for members of all faiths and I am sure everyone attended. After the services we all assembled in an area and listened to a speech by Col. Johnson our Regimental Commander, and after he finished talking he shook the hand of every man ~~jumping~~ in that area who was making the jump into Normandy and wished us the very best. We then departed for the airstrip, our faces blackened with burned cork (we sure must have looked a mess), we drew our kit bags which we had previously packed put on all of our equipment and had our 'chutes adjusted then boarded our plane. The only men I knew in the stick I jumped were ^{there} two other demolitionist, Sgt. Butkovitch and Pvt Boland. Our plane took off about 11 pm bound for the French mainland. *LT. PETERSON*

Everyone in our plane seemed to be pretty quiet on our trip across the channel. We could see ships in the channel and it seemed like the fighter escort was all around us. As we approached the mainland we had been given the command to "stand-up and hook-up" and everyone given the OK. The flak was very intense and it seemed as if it were hitting the aircraft. We could see fires burning on the ground where the heavy bombers had hit just before the jump. I was the 11th man in the stick and I think it was one of the few times that I really wanted to get out of the plane. It was about 1:10 am when we got the go sign and it seemed like I was in the air only a few seconds when I hit the ground, but what I saw in that short time I'll never forget. With all the tracers and flack in the air it was one grand display of fireworks, the only thing was that it was meant to kill.

I landed in a cow pasture and there were about 6 or 7 cows around when I finally got out of my 'chute. I had to cut a few of the shroud lines to free myself. I didn't even have to snap my cricket when pvt. Boland came up to me and we headed for the hedge row and about at this time we came under enemy fire as one mortar round landed about 25 ft. from us. It wasn't long before we had ten men in our group and by 5 am there was about 40. The only officer I can remember in our group was Lt. Peterson from Reg. Hq. 501. We started out for St. Come Du Mont and I can remember walking thru a swamp with the water at times coming up to my neck. When we contacted the enemy Lt. Peterson

sent me and pfc. Harden back to get more help. We took a dirt road back to avoid the swamp and we stayed about 50 yards apart because the road was under machine gun and rifle fire and we had to do a lot of running and crawling to get to a covered area. At this point we found Capt. Brown (I think he was from D Co., 501). He had several men (do not recall how many) but somehow we ended up at the La Barquette Locks, this was later called Hells Corner. It was here that we made contact with some of the troops that had hit the beach. It was a great feeling to see these fellows for you then knew that a beach head had been secured and more troops would be able to land. On D-plus 3 the 501 assembled near Vierville. We re-organized and were given more rations and equipment. I also found out that Lt. Peterson had been killed and several men who was with him were killed or wounded when they were caught in a artillery barrage. It was quite a shock as I had been with him before he had sent Harden and myself for more help. I could not give the names of any of the other troopers killed. *Lt. Brown took over our Squad and Lt. Patton*

The demmolition section ~~was~~ had one squad assigned to each Battalion and we were to distroy bridges, railways, roads or whatever necessary in order to slow down or stop the enemy from sending reinforcements to the beach head. All of this was changed when the invasion forces were able to secure the above mentioned and it was of a great advantage to us. We terefore ended up as riflemen and also layed a few mines, although the engineers did most of the mine laying. *section 2 64882*

I cannot think of any medics or cmmunications men in our Battalion. Several names have popped into my mind the pass few days but I had better not commit myself as to what their duties were because I really can't recall.

I hope that this report will help you a little bit George, and I will send you a list of "A" Company men that I can remember from after the Normandy Invasion until the 501 was split up. I will list them on the back of the green sheet.

Please excuse all the misspelling and grammer used in this report as this is the most I have type written since I graduated from high school 30 years ago.

Sincerely,
Laverne