

MASS 17

Boston, Mass.

For Cornelius Ryan Book about D-Day

home fr. Laver
Ken has interviewed
him.
Pls. return
pictures!

THOUSANDS OF MEN, ON LAND AND SEA AND IN THE AIR, PARTICIPATED IN THE INVASION OF NORMANDY BETWEEN MIDNIGHT JUNE 5, 1944 AND MIDNIGHT JUNE 6, 1944. IF YOU WERE ONE OF THEM, PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

What is your full name?

Robert M. Murphy (34 York Way Westwood, Mass.)

What was your unit and division?

Co. A 505 Parachute Inf. Regt; 82d Airborne Div. Attached to Pathfinder squad for this jump.
Where did you arrive in Normandy, and at what time?

About 10:30-11:00 P. M. June 5, 1944 St. Mere-Iglis

Saw civilian
30 yards

What was your rank on June 6, 1944?

Private (never had any higher rank, either.)

What was your age on June 6, 1944?

18 years old (born 7/7/25)

Were you married at that time?
NO

What is your wife's name?

Joanne Murray Murphy (married May 11, 1946)

Did you have any children at that time?

silly question!

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What do you do now?

Trial lawyer. Member Mass. Bar & Federal Court.

Office: 11 Pemberton Square, Boston, Massachusetts

When did you know that you were going to be part of the invasion?

Sometime at the end of May we (Pathfinders) received our brief of the D-Z and mission plan.

What was the trip like during the crossing of the Channel? Do you remember, for example, any conversations you had or how you passed the time?

Somewhat calm except for a few airpockets, but when we were near the D-Z and flying at about 350 feet the plane started to bump which caused us to fall and it was extremely difficult to keep our balance. When tracers started to come up the man behind me said to look at the sparks come out of our engine. He was somewhat amazed when I pointed out that the sparks were flying in the opposite direction to the wind. He got the point that there were tracers.

What were the rumors on board the boat, ship or plane in which you made the crossing? (Some people remember scuttlebut to the effect that the Germans had poured gasoline on the water and planned to set it afire when the troops came in).

As we had been briefed down to a fine point on the D-Z and the opposition there were no rumors on my plane. It was an absolute necessity that each pathfinder know the job of every other man in the squad, so no rumors.

Your name Robert M. Murphy

Did you by any chance keep a diary of what happened to you that day?

Yes- letters that I wrote home were saved.

Were any of your friends killed or wounded either during the landing or during the day?

Yes. About 20 men

Do you remember any conversations you had with them before they became casualties?

Yes. A pathfinder, Pvt Devonchuck, who had refused to jump on several occasion because he had been hurt so many time on other jumps before said he was going to get as many medals as possible in Normandy to prove he wasn't chicken and that ~~hXXX~~ he would come up with one a day. After we jumped about ~~10:30~~ on 6/5/44 he was the first man killed by German arms at a few minutes past midnight on 6/6/44. He was going out for his first medal before the 6th. He made the Bronze Star Medal but never wore it.

Were you wounded?

Yes, but not on D-Day; it was around June 20th.

Do you remember what it was like--that is, do you remember whether you felt any pain or were you so surprised that you felt nothing?

Due to the heat of battle (and it was a hot one)(I received a piece of 88 schrapnel in the buttocks just as I hit the dirt) I felt only as if someone hit me in the rear with a baseball bat but no other pain for 3 hours later when I started to get paralyzed and loss of blood caused me to be taken to the medics.

Do you remember seeing or hearing anything that seems funny now, even though it did not, of course, seem amusing at the time?

As I was carrying the pathfinder Radar set I could not fit on my reserve chute and therefore had none when we jumped. We jumped at 300feet and I had counted to 3000 (1000, 2000, 3000- indicates 3 sec. and to pull reserve) and I said to myself 3-000 hoping I could stall it off but my chute finally opened and as ~~IX~~ I got the opening shock I hit the ground at the same time. None of the others had landed so I was probably the first parachutist to land in Normandy.

After hitting the ground it was difficult to get out of the chute so I took my trench knife from my boot and cut myself out of the harness, and at the same time I cut my 300 rounds of tommy gun ammo off and lost it. I did have my .44 pistol, though. Do you recall any incident, sad or heroic, or simply memorable, which struck you more than anything else?

As the gliders started to come in that first night and crack up all ove the fields and hedgerows, each of the pathfinders started to dig holes about 5 feet deep as there was no place to hide from them, and each glider that came in cracked up and only a few men got out uninjured. We dug the holes for our own safty so as to be out of their way.

Your name Robert M. Murphy

In times of great crisis, people generally show either great ingenuity or self-reliance; others do incredibly stupid things. Do you remember any examples of either?

As the gliders cracked up, one glider-rider came up to us after we hailed him over. He told us he had a 57mm cannon on the ship and would we help him set it up as the other men were dead. Three of us went over to get this choise piece of merchandise when we noticed canned milk, food rations and other eatables which we probably wouldn't see for 2 weeks as the paratrooper only had chocolate bars and a K-ration. We forgot about the 57mm. gun and packed off all the food we could carry. The glider raised hell and said he was going to report this to his C.O. We sent him off in the right direction?

Where were you at midnight on June 5, 1944?

Outside St. Mere-Eglis, Normandy.

Where were you at midnight on June 6, 1944?

La-Fiere bridge with Co. A, 505 Regt.

Do you know of anybody else who landed within those 24 hours (midnight June 5 to midnight June 6) as infantry, glider or airborne troops, or who took part in the air and sea operations, whom we should write to?

Yes. I gave a photograph to Mr. Kerr in N.Y.C. on July 4th, 58, which contained the photo of all the pathfinders and their names, as well as a mimo of the names ranks, and serial numbers fo every man in the 1st platoon of Co. A, 505.

HE WAS SUPPOSED TO PHOTOSTAT THEM AND RETURN THEM TO ME.
WILL YOU HAVE HIM DO SO AND RETURN.

PLEASE LET US HAVE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SO THAT WE CAN INCLUDE YOUR EXPERIENCES IN THE BOOK. WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE YOUR STORY ON SEPARATE SHEETS IF WE HAVE NOT LEFT SUFFICIENT ROOM. FULL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WILL BE GIVEN IN A CHAPTER CALLED "WHERE THEY ARE NOW; YOUR NAME AND VOCATION OR OCCUPATION WILL BE LISTED.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

Cornelius Ryan

Frances Ward
Research, The Reader's Digest

R
ROBET M. MURPHY
Pathfinder Company A 505 Radar Man

(DK)

34 York Way
Westood, Mass.

This interview is very spotty and I don't think we should consider it complete if I can get up to Boston or anybody else can go to Boston it would pay us to see Murphy again to fill in these blanks. This was late in the day and the alcohol was getting to all concerned.

~~Murphy~~

Pathfinders took off about 2100 on June 5 - Jumped about 2300 over La Fiere landed by rr tracks - Murphy had jumped twice before in combat in Sicily and Italy - he hit the ground hard after a delayed drop from 300 ft. - As they were coming in plane was attacked by heavy AA - plane was bouncing very much - Murphy was hanging on right hand on the static line - left hand on the bar of the door. This pathfinder team had been training since Voltorno Sept. or Oct. 1943. Signal light for pathfinders for the incoming planes was R.....Murphy was a radar man but he jumped carrying a tommy gun with 300 rounds. He lost most of the ammunition getting out of his chute. Except for what was in the gun and the 6 rounds in Italian ^{an}.44 he picked up in Sicily. But for the fact that they didn't have much ammunition was not much handicap since they were not to use their weapons, not to return fire unless in a desperate situation. He set up his radar to wait for the troops coming in and their group brought in 505. All of the pathfinders according to Murphy made their D Z at La Fiere. Murphy had to move his radar (which is a package about the size of an attache case 8" thick) While they were flying in 3/400 ft. there were patches of fog - you could see the farmers in the farm houses. The pilot cut the engines and they glided in. First stick landed at ~~1230~~ 0030 - hq landed 0020 - light men set up lights and turned lights on in time. They then moved into the landing zone to lead in the gliders and dug a slit trench to wait - between 3 and 4^{am} a.m. the gliders started coming in.

ROBERT M. MURPHY

-2-

Black as pitch - first one smashed - Murphy was almost hit by a glider coming in. He had no one to talk to - Then he started to dig a foxhole - it was farmland not rocky - he went out to one of the gliders and got a gun - he also got canned milk from the gliders - as a matter of fact he ate off the gliders for about a week - he can remember running across the field ^{jumping} ~~travelling~~ bullets to get milk from the gliders - from 9 to 10 a.m. he brought in the main glider force. Herewith ~~picture~~ picture Murphy's ~~xxxx~~ plane ~~xxxx~~ load and crew and roster @ 1st platoon Company A 505 Murphy kept a diary - he can't find it - but has other material - maps etc.