

The Night

to be on fire. Then he saw German soldiers and French civilians running frantically about. Most of them, it seemed to Steele, were looking up at him. The next moment he was hit by something that felt "like the bite of a sharp knife." A bullet had smashed into his foot. Then Steele saw something that alarmed him even more. Swinging in his harness, unable to veer away from the town, he dangled helplessly as his chute carried him straight toward the church steeple at the edge of the square.

Above Steele, P.F.C. Ernest Blanchard heard the church bell ringing and saw the maelstrom of fire coming up all around him. The next minute he watched horrified as a man floating down almost beside him "exploded and completely disintegrated before my eyes," presumably a victim of the explosives he was carrying.

Blanchard began desperately to swing on his risers, trying to veer away from the mob in the square below. But it was too late. He landed with a crash in one of the trees. Around him men were being machine-gunned to death. There were shouts, yells, screams and moans—sounds that Blanchard will never forget. Frantically, as the machine-gunning came closer, Blanchard sawed at his harness. Then he dropped out of the tree and ran in panic, unaware that he had also sawed off the top of his thumb.

It must have seemed to the Germans that Ste.-Mère-Église was being smothered by paratroop assault, and certainly the townspeople in the square thought that they were at the center of a major battle. Actually very few Americans—perhaps thirty—dropped into the town, and no more than twenty came down in and about the square. But they were enough to cause the German garrison of slightly less than one hundred men to panic. Reinforcements rushed to the square, which seemed to be the focal point of the attack, and there some Germans, coming suddenly upon the bloody, burning scene, seemed to Renaud to lose all control.

About fifteen yards from where the mayor stood in the square

"If you have read all the accounts of D Day or none of them, if you were in the fighting or on the sidelines, you will be spellbound, as I was, by this magnificent telling of a glorious and tragic story." Lt. Gen. James Gavin

JUNE 6
1944

THE LONGEST DAY



CORNELIUS RYAN



Posts: 130
Nov 7 13 5:56 AM
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It looks like your father was in the Radio Section but just mentions his name, not his MOS like Scott or his buddy his buddy Ward as well as men from other Platoon/Sections as well. It proves he was not in St. Mere Eglise with Co F. The Manifest above shows some of the men who saw your father and men from that stick. They all landed on the DZ and were Hq & Hq Company men.

From page 137 of A Matter of Pride by Bob Fielder

"Scott remembers seeing me on the ground as the first person after the drop, then Ernie Blanchard, Capt John Boyd, Captain Talon "Woody" Long, M/Sgt Elmer Ward, and Cpl Bill Barnett, all regimental headquarters company."

Since Scott in the book written by Fielder mentioned your father by first name, that yes he was most likely a Commo Platoon man. I have no problem correcting a mistake.

Here is a link to the book that actually has your father in it.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/13995475/A-Matter-of-Pride-by-Bob-Fielder>

On your father's discharge (53-55) it should show Communications School.

I'm not sure why you are so set on your father jumping in with Co F.

Also your father came to the ground with Hq & Hq Co and flew from a different airfield.

Serials

17	505 th Prcht Inf 2 nd Bn	01-36	Cottesmore	316 th	44 th 01-18, 45 th 19-36	O	0151
18	505 th Prcht Inf 3 rd Bn	01-45	Cottesmore	316 th	37 th 37-54, 36 th 55-72	O	0157
	456 th Prcht FA Bn 2 Sec						
19	505 th Prcht Inf 1 st Bn	01-45	Spanhoe	315 th	34 th 37-39, unknown	O	0203
	82 nd Div Hq, 505th Prcht Inf Hq & Hq Co						
	307 th Abn Engr Bn (C) Co B 3 rd Plt						

Above shows the fact that Co F left from a different airfield than where your father flew from.

BN Siddall